Palacky University

Faculty of Education

Institute of Foreign Languages

Bc. Kamila Kadlčáková

Using memes in ELT

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Supervisor: Mgr. Ivan Čipkár Ph.D.

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The present diploma thesis aims to pursue the topic of memes in ELT at a Czech lower-secondary school. The purpose of the thesis is to answer the question of whether memes can be used as a tool to teach phrasal verbs and if memes affirmatively, negatively, or neutrally influence the learning process of Czech lower secondary school learners. Secondly, the thesis aims to describe the relationship that learners might have towards memes.

The thesis is divided into a theoretical section and a research section. The theoretical section provides the necessary theoretical background to understand the concept of the meme, its definition, the logic of replication of the meme and remixing of the meme, the genres that memes might be attributed to, the virality and globalization of memes, the platforms and websites that are generally found to share and create memes and review of studies that focus on the usage of memes in ELT. The research section describes the motivation for the research and characterizes memes used in the research, introduces the detailed data analysis, and summarizes the findings in the discussion section and conclusion of the thesis.

Keywords

memes, ELT, humour, meme template, lower-secondary school, action research, phrasal verbs

Anotace

Předkládaná diplomová práce se soustředí na téma memů ve výuce anglického jazyka na druhém stupni základních škol. Záměrem práce je odpovědět na otázku, zda lze memy využít jako nástroj pro výuku frázových sloves a zda memy pozitivně, negativně či neutrálně ovlivňují proces učení českých žáků na druhém stupni základní školy. Sekundárním cílem práce je sledovat a popsat vztah, který mohou mít žáci k memům.

Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a výzkumnou část. Teoretická část podává potřebná teoretická východiska k pochopení pojmu mem, jeho definice, logiky replikace memu a remixování memu, žánry, do kterých lze memy zařadit, viralitu a globalizaci memů, platformy a webové stránky, jež jsou využívány pro sdílení a tvorbu memů, a přehled studií, které se zkoumaly využití memů ve výuce anglického jazyka. Výzkumná část popisuje motivaci k výzkumu a charakterizuje memy použité ve výzkumu, představuje podrobnou analýzu dat a shrnuje výsledky výzkumu v diskusi a závěru práce.

Klíčová slova

memy, výuka anglického jazyka, humor, meme šablona, druhý stupeň základních škol, akční výzkum, frázová slovesa

Table of contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

The Internet – as well as language – might be considered a structure that is gradually evolving and constantly changing to certain extent, in which new elements might appear. Language as a system of communication involves the use of words, grammar, and syntax to convey meaning, being encompassed in spoken and written form. On the other hand, Internet memes are a form of visual and textual communication that often rely on humour, irony, or satire to convey a message. Memes can include images, videos, GIFs, or a combination of these elements. Nonetheless, it's important to note that while memes can exist without language, the majority of memes in popular culture do involve some form of textual content or captions, as language often adds an extra layer of context or humour to the meme. However, the visual nature of memes allows for broader accessibility and the potential to reach a wider audience beyond linguistic boundaries. Therefore, the combination of these elements ensures the understanding based on both, visual and linguistic message, being accessible and easier to read and shareable on a global scale.

It is widely known that young people tend to spend a large amount of time on the Internet, especially on social networks, where no culture is isolated from another, therefore the Internet is the resource through which young people often access and naturally come across humour in English, which is often presented via the medium of memes.

This thesis aims to find a learning tool that would be enjoyable, interesting and knowledge-enriching, modern-world reflective, humorous and would convey visual and linguistic elements to create a whole unique pop-cultural message that might be used in ELT classroom. By way of explanation, the thesis aims to answer the question whether memes can be used in the Czech educational environment in English lessons and serve as an efficient teaching tool. To my knowledge, no research has been conducted focusing on the same topic in the Czech educational environment.

To conclude, the theoretical section is going to introduce the necessary background to understand the conceptual attributes that are involved in the creation and replication of the meme to understand the importance of this Internet humour genre, providing the necessary background to understand the research, followed by chapters about virality and globalization of the memes, meme platforms and websites. The research section is going to describe the motivation for the research and describe the memes used in the research, introducing the detailed data analysis, summarized in discussion and conclusion.

1   Theoretical section

The theoretical section of the thesis presents the necessary context for a precise and clear understanding of the research section of the thesis. The following section introduces the phenomenon of memes and their culture and explores the history and context of their use. It also explores the factor of humour in the educational process focusing on classroom interaction and explores methodology, while developing various language skills.

1.1   Memes as a phenomenon of digital culture and their mechanisms

In 2014, Limor Shifman published a book called "Memes in Digital Culture", in which he collects information about the meme phenomenon from all possible points of view. I will be referring to this book in the following chapter. [1]

Richard Dawkins pronounced the term "meme" in 1976, referring to „small units of culture that spread from person to person by copying or imitation" (Shifman, 2014, p. 2). Since then, this term can be found in various areas and fields of study, but it was not until the current century that memes were associated with today's most common interpretation. Although memes may appear to be unimportant items of internet culture, they really are very rich and complex in their cultural and social value. Internet memes are sometimes compared to "(post)modern folklore", in which cultural production like edited photos and urban legends are a tool to share cultural norms and ethics. (Shifman, 2014, p. 15)

Memes in the digital era influence the mentality, attitude, and actions of people via user-created context on various social sites and platforms that are typical for Web 2.0. The most common are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, Instagram etc. Therefore, the distance of influence can be massive and reach mass levels within a short period of time (Shifman, 2014, p. 18)

Not only fast spreading is typical for memes in digital culture, but it's also their creation by many ordinary people on the internet. The memes are the most frequently created using the two repackaging mechanisms "mimicry and remix". Mimicry can be described as a re-

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[1] SHIFMAN, Limor. Memes in digital culture.

creation of a text, picture, or video with the added value of humour or sarcasm. Remixing stays truthful to its original source, only edits and changes part of it. (Shifman, 2014, p. 20)

Figure 1 is a picture of a painting by Jan van Eyck named The Arnolfini Portrait from 1434.[2] Figure 2 is a recreation of the painting, representing the example of the mimicry mechanism of memes. The meme was created by and published on the profile named "covidclassics" on Instagram in March 2020. [3]

Figure 1 - original   Figure 2 – mimicry

Figure 3 is a meme that shows the mechanism of remixing. The picture was shared on the Facebook page "Fat Cat Art" on 25th November 2018.[4]

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[2] VAN EYCK, Jan. The Arnolfini Portrait.
[3] , covidclassics. 1) "Arnolfini Wedding Portrait"; 2) [Jan van Eyck]; 3) #behindthescenes @nationalgallery #covidclassics #arthistory #shesaidyes.
[4] Fat Cat Art. Jan van Eyck, The Arnolfini Portrait 😺 🎨.
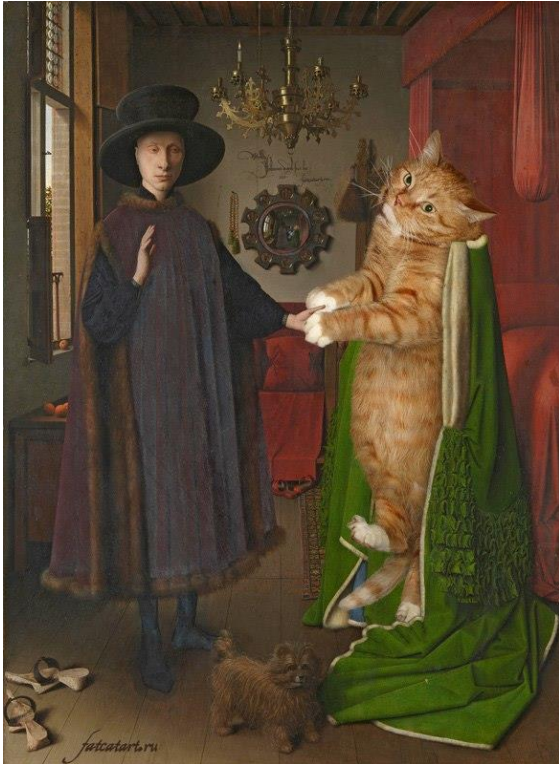
Figure 3 – remixing

Furthermore, Hallpike in his paper "Memetics : a Darwinian pseudo-science" works with an idea of imitation and replication. Stating that imitation and replication has an indispensable role in the contemporary memetic concept. Yet, Hallpike clarifies that from a psychological point of view, imitation is not a vital factor in the cultural knowledge of society. Therefore, the idea that imitation has an indispensable role in memetic reproduction as a scarce cultural item is not supported. (Hallpike, 2011, p. 12)

1.2 Hypermemetic logic

Thus, it may appear odd, contemporary digital society is often defined by hypermemetic nature, meaning that memes incorporate a multifaceted meaning and behaviour. "Memes are present in the public and private sphere not as sporadic entities but as monstrously sized groups of texts and images" (Shifman, 2014, p. 30). Not only the memes themselves but the creators of the memes as well are an essential segment of the meme as a medium that asserts the originality and connectedness of contemporary digital culture. The described hypermemetic logic determines a "network individualism", that connects the community sharing the same values of hypermemetic nature (Shifman, 2014, p. 30).

Shifman describes three key figures of hypermemetic logic as "economy-driven logic, social logic and cultural and aesthetic logic". To simplify the theory, economy-driven logic considers that it is not the information of the meme itself, but the attention that is given to that particular item that is the most economically valuable aspect. The figure of social logic can be described by the already mentioned term "network individualism" translating as using and creating the network as an individual, that is connected to the digital culture and makes a significant part of it. Coming to the figure of cultural and aesthetic logic, it emphasizes the spheres of memes that note the culture, history, norms, assumptions, habits, and current sociocultural and political context (Shifman, 2014, p. 32, 33, 34).

Years before Shifman coined the term hypermemetic logic and analyzed the meme sphere in the Internet era, Susan Blackmore in her "The Meme Machine" researched the concept of memes before the Internet era and in its early beginnings. She suggests that memes are responsible for the creation of digital technology such as televisions, computers, radios, faxes, telephones, videotapes, and others. She claims that "as soon as memes appeared they started evolving towards greater fidelity, fecundity and longevity" and that the technology was "created by the memes for their own replication" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 221).

Enriching the hypermemetic logic of Blackmore's idea, the figures introduced by Shifman show that the impact and history and concept of hypermemetic logic reach way beyond the digital era.

1.3   Defining a meme

When it comes to a definition, one can encounter various interpretations of the term. I already stated Richard Dawkins' definition in the chapter "Memes as a phenomenon of a digital culture and their mechanisms", which values imitation and spreadability as depicting characteristics of the meme.

Blackmore in her own words "keeps things as simple as possible" and concludes that meme is "any memetic information in any of its many forms; including ideas, the brain structures that instatiate those ideas, the behaviours these brain structures produce, and their versions in books, recipes, maps, and written music. As long as that information can be copied by a process, we may broadly call imitation, then it counts as a meme" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 66).

W. G. Runciman as a sociologist and a meme supporter struggles to produce a clear definition and indicates memes as "bundles of information or instructions affecting

behaviour that are transmitted from one person's mind to another's, whether through visual display, speech or the written word" (Runciman, 1998, p. 734).

Shifman however does not fully agree with the preceding definitions and advocates for another proposition. His proposition builds on the idea of looking at the "memetic dimensions" as units that can be imitated and embracing memes in their common and shared nature, not as individual units (Shifman, 2011, p. 39). He supports his ideas by retrieving three imitable dimensions "content, form and stance" and transcribes his definition as "(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users" (Shifman, 2011, p. 41). He illustrates his ideas on the various memes, one of them being the "Pepper-Spraying Cop" meme.

"Pepper Spray Cop" or "Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop" meme appeared in 2011 after the event of Occupy protest at the University of California Davis that occurred in November 2011 and is known as UC Davis Pepper Spray incident in the memetic sphere. One of the police officers sprayed the unmoving and sitting block of protestors in the face with pepper spray. Photographs of the event spread virally and a photoshopped meme that was based on the photos was created. (Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop, 2007 - 2023) [5]

Therefore, Shifman analyzes the "Pepper Spraying Cop" using the dimensions of content, form and stance concluding that at the first sight similar "Photoshop-based form" varies into miscellaneous content. Consequently, Shifman divides the memes into two groups based on the content of the meme. The first group of memes revolves around political topics, having in common the idea of the police officer violating modern society's values like freedom and justice that are portrayed by the protestors. Looking at the second group of memes, the topic tends to be "pop-culture oriented". This changing attitude in terms of memetic content using the same meme template results in clear differentiation and illustrates the memetic back talk and its playful character. The differences between the groups are obvious not only for the content itself, the perception of the mood differs significantly as well. Politically orientated-

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[5] Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop: Part of a series on Occupy Wall Street. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/casually-pepper-spray-everything-cop/photos/trending/page/3?gallery_cache_key=.

memes share a sarcastic message, yet pop-culture-oriented memes try to be entertaining and amusing (Shifman, 2011, p. 51, 53).

Figure 4 shows an example of the politically oriented "Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop" meme in which the cop sprays The Constitution of the USA.[6] Figure 5 is a meme that is pop-culture oriented, playing with a pun in the name of the movie "Eat, Pray, Love". [7]

Figure 4 – Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop meme

[6] Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop - Image #203,449. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/203449-casually-pepper-spray-everything-cop
[7] Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop - Image #206,821. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/206821-casually-pepper-spray-everything-cop
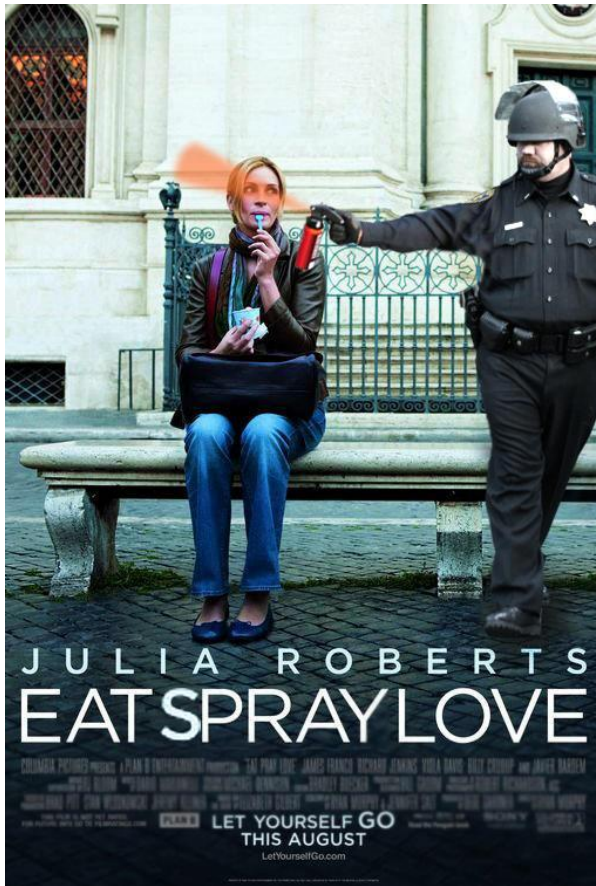
Figure 5 - Casually Pepper Spray Everything Cop meme featuring "Eat, Pray, Love" movie

The preceding examples display the idea of differentiation of the memetic dimensions that are according to the Shifman interconnected and concurrently distinct and rich in form and content (Shifman, 2011, p. 53, 54).

Additionally, Wiggins and Bowers stand by a different perspective defining memes as "messages transmitted by consumers-producers for discursive purposes" looking at the phenomenon from a pragmatically – linguistic point of view. They state that memes defined as "messages" follow the phrasal pattern and its syntactic rules that are set by the initial meme. As they expand their theory, Wiggins and Bowers contradict Shifman's idea. Shifman approaches memes as a medium that can be divided into various genres, as he divides them in his book "Memes in Digital Culture" (Shifman, 2011, p. 99–118), in contrast, Wiggins and Bowers argue that memes cannot be considered a medium, but a genre because the existence of memes would not be possible without media which provide the spreading of memes. Therefore, they further define them as a "genre of online communication and artifacts of participatory digital culture" (Wiggins and Bowers, 2014, p. 11).

Reflecting on various approaches to defining memes, it can appear difficult to successfully recognize a meme, since they vary in form of videos, Photoshopped pictures, texts, tweets, messages, sounds and all possible digital means of spreadable information on the Internet. In the next chapter, this question is resolved, and various meme genres are recognized.

1.4   Meme genres

Identifying the repetitive meme typology, Shifman divides the memes into nine subgenres. The "Reaction Photoshops" vastly react to the "memetic photos" that are created to raise interest and encourage the creative content response. Another genre is "Photo Fads" and the process of creation focuses on a bland imitation of a certain act, position and appearance such as "owling" or "Heads in Freezers" (Shifman, 2011, p. 102 – 103).

A very popular meme genre is "Lipsynch" in a form of a video that is based on a pretence of the original performance using the facial and body movements that are set to the sound and lyrics of the performed song or a sequence (Shifman, 2011, p. 105). The "Flash Mob" genre is demonstrated in a means of a dance video that is spontaneously recorded and uploaded by strangers that happen to perform a simultaneous dance in a public, such as "frivolous dancing and freezing in place, zombie walks, and sudden disrobing" (Shifman, 2011, p. 103). Another genre defined by Shifman "Misheard Lyrics" builds on a phonetic similarity of different languages, the words of a spoken speech are deliberately mistranslated to appear humorous (Shifman, 2011, p. 108). The remixes of film trailers that are changed to appear in an original and usually very paradoxical and contradictory manner to the original film trailer itself are called "Recut Trailers" (Shifman, 2011, p. 109). The "LOLCats" genre became popular in 2007 and is described as images of cats with texts that knowingly present spelling mistakes as an indicator of the scene and context of the picture (Shifman, 2011, p. 110). The genre of "Stock Character Macros" derives from "advice animal" memes, whereabouts animals that are giving advice are placed on the colourful background templates. Consecutively, human characters depicting stereotypes were added to the genre (Shifman, 2011, p. 112). Nonprofessional comic faces featuring allusive emotions such as rage, happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, sadness, and other emotions Shifman defines as "Rage

Comics". Famous examples of this genre are "Me Gusta", "Forever Alone", "Troll Face" and "Poker Face" memes (Shifman, 2011, p. 113, 115). The preceding genres are divided into three categories of memes which Shifman proposes as "documentation of "real-life" moments (photo fads, flash mobs)", "explicit manipulation of visual or audiovisual mass-mediated content (reaction Photoshops, lipdubs, misheard lyrics, recut trailers)" and "a new universe of digital and meme-oriented content (LOLCats, rage comics, and stock character macros)" (Shifman, 2011, p. 118).

Wiggins et. al categorizes memes into genres of "spreadable media" and "emergent meme" that proceed to evolve into an Internet meme. The "spreadable media" may appear inside and outside of the Internet such as trailers, broadcasting, uploads to social networks, films, adverts, and any kind of images and art. The process of change to the genre of "emergent meme" is accomplished by alteration, parody, and remixing of the "spreadable media" (Wiggins et al., 2015, p. 12). The further paralleling of the emergent meme results in the creation of a meme as a genre (Wiggins et al., 2015, p. 14).

An example of the process of meme creation is "The Most Interesting Man in the World" meme, which builds on the commercials from 2006 featuring actor Jonathan Goldsmith as "the most interesting man". The "catchphrase" "I don't always drink beer, but when I do, I prefer Dos Equis – Stay thirsty, my friends" was altered in the first Internet memes that appeared in 2007. Those first memes are understood as a responsive genre of the commercial and are presumed as emergent memes. Additional creation of memes that focus on the alteration of the emergent meme and re-examination of the ongoing communicational pattern is a process of how the "The Most Interesting Man in the World" meme developed (Wiggins et al., 2015, p. 15, 16).
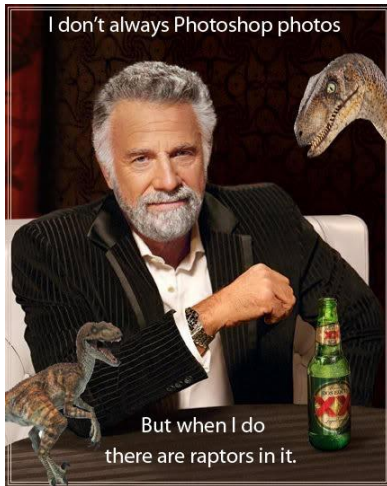
Figure 6 – an example of "The Most Interesting Man in the World" meme[8]

The recent research of Université de Lausanne conducted by Annaëlle Zollinger has shown a new approach to dividing memes into different genres. Zollinger partitions memes into genres of "(1) Object Labelling, (2) Blank Filling, (3) Text Changing and (4) Deconstructed memes" which were labeled based on their perceptible character (Zollinger, 2021, p. 30). The first genre may be described as "a meme genre based on the labelling of different "objects" (people, animals, objects, etc.) within a picture or GIF", exampling this genre by the "Distracted Boyfriend" meme, whose parts are labelled to appear in a humorous manner (Zollinger, 2021, p. 31, 32). The "Blank Filling Type" meme builds upon the text of the meme that is to be filled by the author of the meme and acts in accordance with the visual systems of the blank template (Zollinger, 2021, p. 32). "The Text Changing" genre modifies the authentically inherent text of the picture or a screenshot and delivers new meaning (Zollinger, 2021, p. 33). The last defined genre of "Deconstructed memes" depends on the allusive translation of its elements which are "direct quotations from texts, audio or video" and "metonymic elements" that are represented in the visual form. "Deconstructed memes are simply reduced to key elements which, through metonymy, refer to the whole of the original meme" (Zollinger, 2021, p. 34).

"Object Labelling" memes can be altered by text modification of the labelled objects, and only be applied to items that can be clearly and visibly labelled and differentiated in the picture (Zollinger, 2021, p. 41). Figure 7 displays a "Puss in Boots Scared of Death" meme, that clearly demonstrates the genre. [9] The visual template of the meme originates in the "Puss

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[8] The Most Interesting Man in the World - Image #152,059. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/152059-the-most-interesting-man-in-the-world
[9] Puss in Boots Scared of Death - meme. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/2576906-puss-in-boots-scared-of-death

in Boots: The Last Wish" movie from 2022, which shows the characters from the movie, and sketches the fear of something in a comic sense. In addition, Zollinger defines four sub-genres of "Object Labelling" memes with regards to the method of labelling the objects in the meme as "only with text, with a combination of text and image, only with images" (Zollinger, 2021, p. 37). Fourth sub-genre defined as "Redraw" repeatedly draws specific parts of the picture to support an intended idea of the meme (Zollinger, 2021, p. 47).

Progressing to the "Blank Filling" genre, the blank area is reserved for the text, image, or combination of them to be filled into the meme. To put in contrast with the previous genre, the author adds text and images to the reserved space, the objects are not labelled and the text in the blank space characterizes the whole meme. (Zollinger, 2021, p. 53). The Figure 8 is an example of a "Drakeposting" meme, that was uploaded in 2018 and recalls that the Shrek 1 premiere occurred on 22nd April, 2001, on the same day that the Earth Day is celebrated.[10]

Figure 7 – "Puss In Boots Scared of Death" meme

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[10] Drakeposting - fr tho. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1365198-drakeposting

Figure 8 – "Drakeposting" meme

The "Text Changing" genre modifies the text of the meme that is authentically inherent in the former image, therefore there must be text for the author of the meme to change, remix or modify. Various types of texts can be modified but frequently remixed types of text are subtitles in shots from films and shows, and the texts in comics. This genre is exampled by the Figure 9 that shows an example of a "Left Exit 12 Off Ramp" meme that points out the memetic nature in a self-explanatory manner. [11] The meme origins from "How to exit freeway like a boss." YouTube video from 2013 that was uploaded by YouTuber Fredrik Sørlie, and in 2017 was turned into a meme template. [12]

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[11] Left Exit 12 Off Ramp - Exit ramp for those depraved, nonsense memes. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1341772-left-exit-12-off-ramp
[12] Left Exit 12 Off Ramp - Exit ramp for those depraved, nonsense memes. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1341772-left-exit-12-off-ramp

Figure 9 – "Left Exit 12 Off Ramp - Exit ramp for those depraved, nonsense memes".

The genre of "Deconstructed memes" can be partially described by the term "hypermemetic logic" that was coined by Shifman (see chapter 1.2 Hypermemetic logic). The reference to other memes embodied in the concept of this genre obligates the familiarity with preceding viral meme concepts. Zollinger illustrates the genre with "She Was Poetry But He Couldn't Read", a "Tumblr copypasta" expression that required a reply by means of song lyrics. [13] The Figure 9 pictures a response of i-hold-the-snitch profile that quotes "What up, I'm Jared, I'm 19, and I never f*cking learned how to read" Vine video, therefore the observer of the situation must be familiar with both, the Vine and Tumblr copypasta concepts. That signifies the importance and assumption of virality of these concepts to become widely known to be deconstructed without requirement of any explanation (Zollinger, 2021, p. 64). Figure 10 is a meme that can be marked as a "Twitter Comparison" type of meme or a "Twitter meme" which "signifies someone not understanding the beauty in something else" while adopting the Tumblr phrase.[14] The meme employs the fact that the "Snowpiercer" film that was featured in 2013 did not get any Oscar prize which the author of the meme condemns.

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[13] She Was Poetry But He Couldn't Read. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/she-was-poetry-but-he-couldnt-read

[14] She Was Poetry But He Couldn't Read - Oscars. Available at:
https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1853163-she-was-poetry-but-he-couldnt-read

supremesaudi

She was poetry, but he couldn't read."

i-hold-the-snitch

His name was jarred hes nineteen

artsekey

When his parents built a very strange machine

dothepropaganda

watch that scene dig in the dancing queen

aftermath-meme

aaaay macarena

pearls-forehead

Horrible job everyone
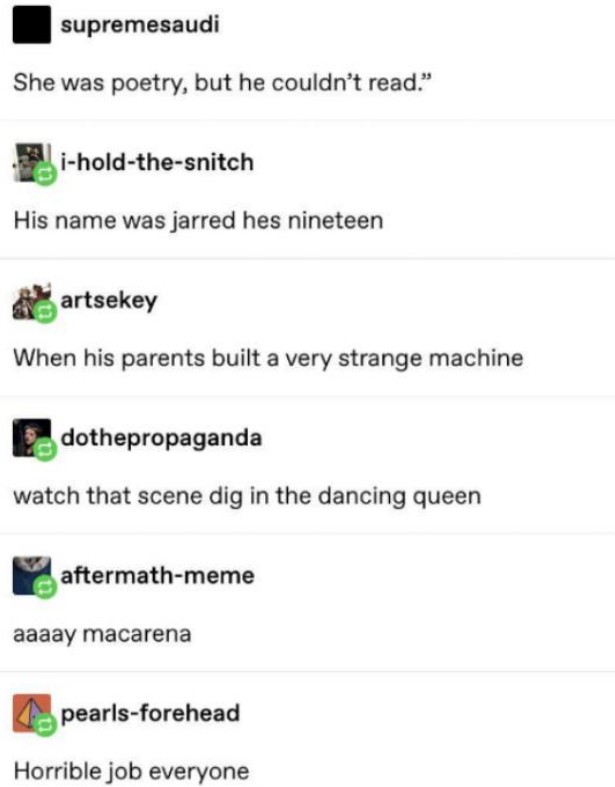
Figure 10 – "She Was Poetry But He Couldn't Read - Horrible Job"

mari barber | dj spoilers
@cevansdodger

he
was a
poem

but
they couldn't
read

11:54 AM · May 12, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 11 – "She Was Poetry But He Couldn't Read – Oscars" meme

Another sub-genre of "Deconstructed memes" Zollinger defines as "visual metonymic meme" (Zollinger, 2021, p. 65). In the case of Figure 11, the response or attitude of the Elon Musk towards the introducing text of the meme is not articulated by means of a text, it is

indicated by "It's Free Real Estate" meme.[15] The line "It's Free Real Estate" appeared in one of the episodes of "Tim & Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!" in 2009, in the context of parody adverts and became a popular gif, YouTube video response and meme.[16]

Elon Musk after reaching mars and realizing theres no one there.

Figure 12 – "It's Free Real Estate" meme

The problematics of meme genre differs regarding the item of focus that is preferred by the author of the typology. Shifman formulates the meme genres based on the historical perception of different memetic concepts in various forms, in contrast to that, Wiggins builds his theory on the stages of creation of memes. Zollinger categorizes the memes solely in relation to their visual perception. Another typology could be based on the thematic idea, the area of publishing, the items and objects featured in the meme and other aspects, that could be perceived as important to build a basis for a meme typology.

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[15] It's Free Real Estate - Its free real estate bois. | r/memes. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1555912-its-free-real-estate
[16] It's Free Real Estate. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/its-free-real-estate

1.5 Virality and Globalization of Memes

Shifman defines virality as "A diffusion process in which a certain message (such as a catchphrase, video, or image) spreads from one person to another via digital and social media platforms. The process is characterized by great speed (the number of people exposed to the "viral" message increases dramatically in a short time), and with broad reach (achieved by bridging multiple networks). The propagated message is often defined as "viral content" (e.g., "viral video"). When viral content lures user-created derivatives in the form of re-mix or imitation, it can be described as "memetic." " (Shifman, 2011, p. 177).

Additionally, Shifman et al. in their "Internet Jokes: The Secret Agents of Globalization?" from 2014 describe the term "user-generated globalization" as a process in which "ordinary Internet users translate, customize, and distribute content across the globe" (Shifman et al., 2014, p. 728).

A "Meme Templates as Expressive Repertoires in a Globalizing World: A Cross-Linguistic Study" from 2018 by Nissenbaum and Shifman revealed that a "bottom-up"[17] approach to meme spreading and becoming popular is typical, since the memes are created by single users and are explored by masses of users on the Internet. When the meme reaches a high level of reputation and is inherited by various "meme generators" as a meme template, a "top-down"[18] approach is applied. The top-down templates direct the unofficial meme guidelines such as, that irony shall be used to express emotions of enjoyment, bliss, and satisfaction. The study also revealed that globally dominant meme templates are truthfully conventional but richly disruptive and disturbing in a sense of emotion expressing. The meme analysis in four languages (German, Chinese, Spanish, English) also proven that male characters and prevailing ethnicities are put in the prominent position and marginalization of female characters and minorities is archetypal and justly deepens the stereotypical behaviour and stance. On the global scale, the rich emotional expressivity of memes is focused essentially on pessimistic feelings of annoyance and displeasure, while memes focusing on positive feelings are less frequent and usually degraded (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2018, p. 306).

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[17] starting at the lowest levels or from the smallest details of an organization, system, plan, etc.:
(Definition of bottom-up from the Cambridge Business English Dictionary © Cambridge University Press)
[18] starting from the highest levels or from the most general ideas of an organization, system, plan, etc.:
(Definition of top-down from the Cambridge Business English Dictionary © Cambridge University Press)

Defining the term "individualism-collectivism puzzle", the study shows the contradiction of those terms in a global memetic sphere. Individual tendencies are mostly attributed to Chinese and Spanish meme culture, and collectivistic values are apparent in German and English memes. Shifman and Nissembaum explain this data contradiction to preceding research as a tendency and stance that memes inherit in media society and fulfil the substitutional role for emotional expression in various circumstances (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2018, p. 307).

Accordingly, another study by Shifman, Levy and Thelwall "Internet Jokes: The Secret Agents of Globalization?"[19] confirms that contemporary Internet humour is successfully concluding the task of an instrument of globalization and is given importance in reflection of dealing with personal and public issues, problems, differences, and global consumeristic society (Shifman et al., 2014, p. 739).

Moreover, the study of "Meme language, its impact on digital culture and collective thinking" shows the tendency of the increasing popularity of memes that depict global topics (Petrova et al., 2021, p. 6). Thereupon the memes may be considered an important contribution to the intersection of different nationalities and tool for globalization in general. An expressively rich genre of Internet humour may converge and distance users of certain topics, on account of "user-generated globalization".

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[19] SHIFMAN, Limor, Hadar LEVY a Mike THELWALL. Internet Jokes: The Secret Agents of Globalization?.

1.6   Meme platforms and websites

Memes are shared and distributed primarily on social media platforms, which are the most suitable environment enabling the sharing of content. Users can create groups or follow specific profiles that are focused only on sharing memes. Internet memes are mostly spread on well-known social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In consideration of skyrocketed memes popularity, there has also been a rise of platforms and websites that gather memes from different sources. On these platforms, memes can be uploaded from various users, offering them an opportunity for easy meme creation by choosing from thousands of meme templates. This chapter introduces other most common meme platforms on the Internet.

1.6.1   9GAG

9GAG is a social platform that is based on the proposition of user-uploaded and generated videos and images. The platform's function is to share memes and videos with different users, and the attention is given mostly to the posts that gain massive popularity, not the profiles that upload the content. The structure of 9GAG is divided into three parts: 'Fresh', 'Trending', and 'Hot'. In the Fresh section can be found all the new posts, that can become more popular by user-coordinated voting. The big number of votes on the post transfers the post to a Trending section. The most popular posts are then shown in the Hot section. There have been some changes in the content organisation since 2013 and the content is also officially divided into "Cute", "Geeky" and "GIF", where animations are included. The platform itself was launched in 2008 and has been very popular and successful since.[20]

1.6.2   Reddit

The social platform Reddit authorizes users to establish profiles, share content and comment on other posts uploaded by different users. Reddit users make a very distinctive community that shares an interest in memes and Internet humour. Users evaluate content by voting "up" or "down" and they determine the popularity or unpopularity of the posts. Typically, the main page displays posts related to current topics or very successful jokes. Some of them are also Internet memes. Users share a common interest by participating in rooms, so-called

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[20] 9GAG. Wikipedie [online]. Available at: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/9gag

subreddits, that are attentive to types of memes based on similar topics or even a concrete meme template. [21]

1.6.3 4chan.org

4chan is a social platform that uses the "Imageboard" type of content. The responses to posts are usually in the form of images and the whole concept of the platform is similar to discussion forums. While adding content and commenting on other content, the users may choose to partake on the platform completely anonymously. 4chan describes itself as following: "4chan is a simple image-based bulletin board where anyone can post comments and share images. 4chan's collaborative-community format was inspired by one of the most popular forums in Japan, Futaba Channel. Different boards are dedicated to different topics, from Japanese anime, manga, and culture to videogames, music, and photography. Users do not need to register an account before participating in the community!"[22]

1.6.4 Tumblr

Tumblr is a social network that allows users to generate their content via "microblogging", meaning that the posts may consist of single images, sentences or just video links. Tumblr is often referred to as a page that allows the user to choose which type of posts or which users they want to follow. The user then sees these posts in a so-called dashboard (a feed of selected posts). Due to the ease of uploading files, the site is mainly used as a server where an Internet meme is saved and then forwarded to other sites via a link.[23] On Tumblr, the site is described as: "Tumblr is a website. Social network? No, it's a mycelial network. It's wholesome chaos. It's the gay people in your phone. It's your angel. It's your devil. Tumblr is whatever you want it to be. Oh, and influencers? Don't even go here. This is your space. Every video you find, every quote you reblog, every tag you curate, every waterfall GIF you secretly gaze at in wonder—that's all you. You're the explorer. We're just a map you all keep on making. Welcome home. Welcome to weird. Make it yours."[24]

1.6.5 Discord

The Discord platform was first created in 2015 to solve the problem of how to communicate with friends while playing online video games and has gained a lot of popularity in the gaming community. The platform became another social platform mainly for the gaming

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[21] Reddit / About [online]. Available at: https://www.redditinc.com/.

[22] 4chan - Frequently Asked Questions [online]. Available at: https://www.4chan.org/faq#what4chan.

[23] Tumblr. Available at: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumblr.

[24] About Tumblr. Available at: https://about.tumblr.com/.

community, divided by servers, which is basically a series of chat rooms where users can join if invited. Some rooms can be completely open, and a link is all that is needed to join. Discord is contemporarily used to text or even "voice chat" with friends while in-game, for posting gifs, memes and all kinds of content that the user wants to share. [25] "People use Discord daily to talk about many things, ranging from art projects and family trips to homework and mental health support. It's a home for communities of any size, but it's most widely used by small and active groups of people who talk regularly."[26]

1.6.6 Imgflip

Imgflip can be put into category of meme generating websites. The simplicity of the website makes it very useful and fast tool for meme and GIF creating and sharing. Users use quick and customizable generators that are very user-friendly and easy to navigate. Images generated on Imgflip may be set to "private" if the user just wants to download and save the image for their own use, otherwise the created images can be shared on imgflip.com and be visible to other users on the website. The added memes and GIFs gain popularity through users' votes and the most popular ones are featured on the homepage. [27]

1.6.7 Imgur

Another website that provides a meme generator function is Imgur. The site is open for anyone to join, share images and other items and determine the popularity of those items by voting. Users can create accounts to unlock all the content-creating tools. [28]

1.6.8 TikTok

In the first two decades of 21st century, the term meme was usually understood as a joke in a picture form, specifically the genre of image macros as the most widespread form of Internet memes.[29] Recently, there has been a great evolution of what is deliberated and understood under the term meme. Today, what can be virally seen on the Internet are video-based memes, that started with a Vine platform and became mainstream in the memetic culture altogether with the launch of TikTok social platform.

The TikTok meme videos may be exampled by "music-first memes", that meditate around somehow usually edited audio extract from the song, film, or well-known video, that is

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[25] Discord. Available at: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discord.

[26] WHAT IS DISCORD?. Available at: https://discord.com/safety/360044149331-what-is-discord.

[27] About. Available at: https://imgflip.com/about.

[28] Imgur. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imgur.

[29] Image Macros. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/image-macros.

introduced in reference to a particular memetic idea. The users lipsynch or perform in accordance with the audio part while recording themselves or adding their ideas to the video by "on-screen" text. "What's interesting about these memes is that it's the first mainstream example of a type of memes which are defined by their music. Image memes are defined by the image formats that are used to create them, video memes are defined by the actions and sounds that take place in a video, and musical memes are defined by how the actions in a video sync up with a particular song." [30]

TikTok memes might be exampled by a video that displays audio sequence from two different scenes of the movie Shrek (2001), in which donkey says "Oh, this is gonna be fun! We can stay up late, swapping manly stories, and in the morning… I'm making waffles!" in the first part of the TikTok video. In the second part of the video, he sings "Of course I'm all alone, there's no one here, beside me." as to Shrek responds in yelling manner "Stop singing". The two short audio sequences from the film were merged into an audio template on TikTok. The sound template was uploaded by the user "nina.escalanteallen".[31] TikTok users create a visual side of the meme video while using the audio template in a metaphorical manner. One of the often-replicated ideas is the expectation of moving in with the partner that's being introduced while the "I'm making waffles" audio part is playing, and then introducing the reality of living with a partner that is less or worse than they expected while playing the audio of donkey singing the "Of course I'm all alone" part. [32]

While comparing the demonstrated example of the TikTok music-first meme with the macro-based memes generally, there are apparent similarities in the behaviour of both concepts. Video-based and picture-based memes build on the visual or audial fragments of various pop culture sources such as films, Internet videos, songs, TV shows, adverts, etc. and add the humorous idea over the text, visual aids, pictures, or videos. Both types of memes are then remixed, replicated, shared, and spread all over the Internet, often in a global demeanour. On the grounds of that, there is no doubt that the TikTok "music-first memes" are a part of the natural memetic evolution that has been happening ever since the term meme was coined.

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[30] TikTok, and the Evolution of Meme Culture. Mack grenfell [online]. [cit. 2023-05-09]. Available at: https://mackgrenfell.com/blog/tiktok-and-the-evolution-of-meme-culture
[31] NINA.ESCALANTEALLEN. Original sound.
[32] Can anyone else relate? 🙄 #fyp #coupleschallenge #couplegoals. Available at: https://www.tiktok.com/@elmandnia/video/6963508310554796934.

1.7 Studies focusing on usage of memes in ELT.

There are a few studies that explore the usage of memes in ELT and predominantly in teaching. This chapter will introduce and compare few of those studies, that show any significance and might be comparable and relevant to the research part of the thesis.

The study focusing on learners' speaking and writing competence while using memes has been conducted by M, Senguttuvan, Gandhimathi S N S, Vijayalakshmi R, Calaivanane R, Anu BAISEL, Subha S a Vijayakumar M., Vellore Institute of Technology in India. A long-term study of 177 students was to find out whether "significance of employing memes" will "bridge the gap the learners find on their way to manage all their courses in English language" (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2545). The memes were introduced to and by learners in a social network group, that was created by the teachers. As the memes were gradually added to the group, the learners explained and illustrated their meaning and message in a comment text form and in later oral presentations. Learners were given the opportunity to choose memes that they were interested in content-wise, and the overall learning process was independent of the extensive teacher involvement (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2545). The results show a rise in interest and positive attitudes toward English language learning while using memes as a trigger for speaking and writing in ESL classrooms (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2546). The type of memes that the learners found most enjoyable were memes from media and memes focusing on political topics. The improvement in speaking skills was considerable around vocabulary usage and enrichment, word linking, and the appropriate use of various tenses (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2547). Regarding writing competence, the high level of improvement was obvious focusing on the correct use of parts of speech, spelling, tenses, and vocabulary. Furthermore, it was observed that "the use of memes in the classroom makes the students more participatory and enthusiastic", learners voluntarily participate and complete the meme tasks, the memes remove the obstacle of the novelty of the learned language, and it rises the enthusiasm for learning (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2548).

Additionally, the research conducted by University Teknokrat in Indonesia in 2020 revealed that the incorporation of memes and humorous materials has a positive effect on learners' speaking abilities and rise interest and communication in EFL classrooms (Pranoto et al., 2020, p. 142). The results of the research reported by M, Senguttuvan et al., 2022 are in

accordance with those revealed by Pranoto et al., confirming that the usage of memes improves speaking and writing skills by creating a stress-free environment in a classroom, making it easier for learners to initiate a conversation and speak freely on the topic of memes (Senguttuvan et al., 2022, p. 2549).

In the study of "Humour Discourse in Internet Memes: An Aid in ESL Classrooms" by Vignesh Harshavardhan, David Wilson D and Mallika Vijaya Kumar, the authors have stated that memes might be an improved substitute to visual aid in a classroom, since they might convey visual content and the descriptive illustration of its dialogue (Harshavardhan et al., 2019, p. 48). Incorporating the texts that frequently occur in memes to teach ample number of sentence patterns may be a very useful suggestion and "the cultural support provided by memes in the mother tongue is valuable in making them a relevant teaching aid" (Harshavardhan et al., 2019, p. 51).

The topic of passive and active voice teaching implemented Andrea Pele and Ramona Bran in the short study "Testing Memes as a Teaching Tool", in which they examined the first, second and third-year students at the university. They were to fill in the text to given meme templates to depict the meme and translate the visual implicature of the meme template to grammatical features of passive and active voice. The ultimate results concluded that the implementation of memes in active and passive voice teaching might need consistency but leads to positive results and reinforcement from the students and might be assessed as a hopeful teaching tool (Pele and Bran, 2022, p. 163 – 164). Moreover, another study by Nurda Karadeniz Kayali and Aslı Altuntaş researching the usage of memes in the college language classroom reveals an affirmative influence on students' creativity, engagement in the lesson, vocabulary knowledge, interest, and makes the overall atmosphere of the lesson stress-free and task-focused (Kayali and Altuntaş, 2021, p. 158).

Like-minded, Kantorová states the idea of memes being an effective teaching aid while introducing new learning topic, affecting the learner's relaxation, interest, and motivation in an affirmative nature (Kantorová, 2021, p. 27). Thus far, Rozehnalová examines "The Use of Puns in ELT" and states that puns on the Internet are frequently found in the format of a meme (Rozehnalová, 2022, p. 50), therefore using four pun memes in the research of the thesis proved that learning content that is somehow linked to the Internet and social media sphere has an effect on learners' understanding, yet cannot be stated if affirmative or dissentient, since there was no control group in the research, that would offer comparability

of the results. Nevertheless, the overall results indicated the high value of puns as a motivating, vocabulary and pronunciation teaching device that can be used in an ELT classroom, inasmuch proven the value of the meme puns (Rozehnalová, 2022, p. 78, 81).

All the above listed studies have proven that the use of memes in ELT affirmatively influences and impacts diversified angles of ELT. It shall be used not only as a motivational aid in the lesson, but it also enhances language learning abilities and competences, familiarizes the learning process to the learner's language experiences and out-of-the-classroom interests.

2   Research section

Memes represent contemporary and extensive sphere of Internet humour and shall be encountered in differing contexts incorporating not only social media platforms or online game chats, but also articles and adverts, that exploit the popularity of memes. Since we already live in a digital era, Internet is a tool that not only current generations of primary and lower secondary school learners probably cannot imagine a life without. There is also no reason to not use a genre of Internet humour in ELT, that learners are presumably familiar with and might get in contact with while surfing the Internet. The aim of this thesis is to investigate whether using memes in ELT anyhow helps learners of Czech lower secondary school in their learning process, specifically while learning phrasal verbs. The secondary aim is to monitor the nature of relationship that learners might have towards the meme phenomenon.

The research is executed at FZŠ Olomouc Hálkova 4, categorically on lower secondary school that specializes in extended foreign language teaching. The main data collection methods are action research that includes analysis of the handouts and tests, observation and questionnaire for the learners participating in the research.

2.1   Motivation for the research topic

Motivation is a vital factor that contributes to the learners' activity and efficient duration of the lesson, moreover, when the learners are naturally motivated, their memory is improved as well.

The main motivation for researching the topic of the use of memes in ELT is to identify the possibility of using memes in vocabulary teaching, pointedly phrasal verb teaching, and advocate for memes being hopeful teaching aid, that might be interesting for learners. The teachers should aim to use aids and methods that the learners might find naturally engaging. Since learners might come across the memes outside of the school and find them humorous and familiar, it might be to the teacher's advantage to use them in the school environment. Therefore, the learners' possible motivation and curiosity about the memes motivate the research topic to investigate the effectiveness of the use of memes in action research real-life interaction in the classroom.

2.2 Setting

2.2.1 The target school

Faculty primary and lower-secondary school, contributory organization, Hálkova 4, is focused on extended foreign language teaching and work with exceptionally gifted children. English is taught to pupils from the 1st grade and French or German is added in the 6th grade onwards as a second foreign language with an increased hourly allocation. Exceptionally gifted children are taught separately and in an integrated way, special classes with extended teaching of selected subjects are in all grades of primary school.

Faculty primary and lower-secondary school, Hálkova 4 is a school with nine consecutive grades. The maximum capacity of the school is 570 pupils. The school's pupils come from the fallout area, but a large number commute from other parts of Olomouc or surrounding villages. The special needs pupils are supported by teaching assistants, but also remedial teachers or school psychologist. These pupils are provided with support measures according to recommendations of the educational and psychological counselling centre of the Olomouc Region or are taught according to individual education plans. Systematic attention is paid to the education of gifted and exceptionally gifted pupils.

The school has been chosen not only because of its connection to the Faculty of Education but chiefly for the familiarity of the school environment and positively established relationships with the teachers and pupils from the previous teaching practices, enabling the execution of the research without any further problems.

2.2.2 The target learners

The participants of the research are pupils of the lower secondary school, studying in the 8th and 9th grades. Thereupon, the age of the pupils is from 13 to 16 years old. By the time of the research execution, the students of the 9th grade have already gone through their admission exams for secondary education, resulting in a less stressed atmosphere in the school environment and high attendance of the pupils.

The research focuses on the last two grades of lower secondary school, since only then they learn and get in touch with wider range of phrasal verbs in their English lessons. The pupils are required to already have the certain level of grammar knowledge and be familiar with various tenses to understand the humour of the meme and recognize the phrasal verb. If the learners are familiar with the grammatical features of the text in each meme, they can successfully undergo the analysis of vocabulary and phrasal verbs.

2.3 The rationale for the choice of memes and visual learning materials

The memes are contemporary popular genre of Internet humour that is presumably shared amongst the pupils on the social platforms, therefore the knowledge of the memetic concepts is already expected to be inherited by the major number of participants in the research and it does not need any further explanation. The memes were chosen in accordance with the meaning of the phrasal verb and suitability of the meme template to the brainstormed joke. The importance is put on the process of the joke brainstorming and knowledge of the wide range of the meme templates, choosing the meme template that is easy to read and preferably popular, fitting the brainstormed joke and completing the concept of the meme. The brainstorming is truly a creative and individualized process, considering the unique sense of humour and level of creativity that the producer or creator of the meme acquires, the resulting memes reflect the creator's personality and preferences. The memes and inherently brainstormed jokes were chosen and constructed with maximal regard to the age and presumable knowledge, sense of humour and more importantly, plausible personal relation and recognition of the pupils towards the subjecting situation highlighted in the meme.

The visual aids for the control group were chosen regarding the phrasal verbs, choosing the pictures that would depict the meaning of the phrasal verbs altogether with an example sentence, featuring the phrasal verb in the context of the picture.

2.4 The rationale for the choice of phrasal verbs

The knowledge of phrasal verbs is expected to be limited and of highly differing levels amongst the pupils, therefore the choice of phrasal verbs was consulted with the teachers of the FZŠ Hálkova 4, pointedly those teachers that teach the classes in which the research was conducted. The teachers contributed with the advice of the phrasal verbs that the pupils are usually learning in the lessons by following the syllabus and the coursebook. For that reason, the phrasal verbs were chosen mainly in accordance with the school's syllabus and partially outside of the lessons syllabus yet choosing the phrasal verbs suitable to the language level of the learners. The established list of phrasal verbs used in the research is fundamental for the further development of memes, in which the phrasal verbs are presented to the learners.

2.5 Selected memes

Memes are categorized into different genres; this problematic is examined in the Chapter 1.4. The genre of memes used in the research may be described as "Stock Character Macros" defined by Shifman (Shifman, 2011, p. 112) or "Image Macros"[33] that represent the most widespread genre of image-based Internet memes. Appropriately chosen examples of memes are essential for the research. In the action research, the memes are introduced directly to the learners in the lesson, therefore the number and the difficulty level of memes must be moderated to enable the activities prepared for the lesson to be effective and contributory to the research. Therefore, 20 memes were selected to be used in the research. The memes used in the research were created using Imgflip platform (Chapter 1.6.6.). Initially, there were 30 memes created, out of which 20 memes were selected for the action research.

2.5.1 Meme number 1

Figure 13 – Meme number 1

The meme number 1 features "Drakeposting" or oftenly called "Drake approves/ disapproves" meme template that origins in the music video of Drake's track "Hotline Bling" being a hit in 2015. The meme that isolated screenshots from the music video was uploaded

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[33] Image Macros. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/image-macros.

on 4chan and it did not get long for this type of meme to become popular all over the Internet. [34] In upper part of the meme, the picture of disapproving Drake is completed by the sentence "The car stopped functioning". The lower part of the meme shows approving Drake pointing to the sentence "The car broke down.". The phrasal verb is presented in the lower part of the meme, enabling the learners to compare the meaning of the phrasal verb to the verb in the sentence in the upper part. The connotation of the sentences is identical, and the joke of the meme may be found in Drake approving the usage of phrasal verbs.

2.5.2 Meme number 2

Figure 14 – Meme number 2

The "Jenga Girl" meme was published in 2021 on "r/momentsbeforedisaster subreddit" and gained virality on other platforms. [35] The phrasal verb in this meme is found in the right upper corner in the sentence "Don't fall over". The humour of the meme appears by the girl, representing "The Rocking chair", pulling the block from the Jenga tower and being unaware of it falling. The Jenga being labelled as "Me", the meme may be translated as me, falling over unexpectedly by my mistake, even though my parents warned me to be careful by

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[34] Drakeposting. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/drakeposting.
[35] Jenga Girl. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/jenga-girl.

emphasizing "Don't fall over". The meaning of the phrasal verb are learners to recognize by the symbolism of Jenga tower falling over.

2.5.3 Meme number 3
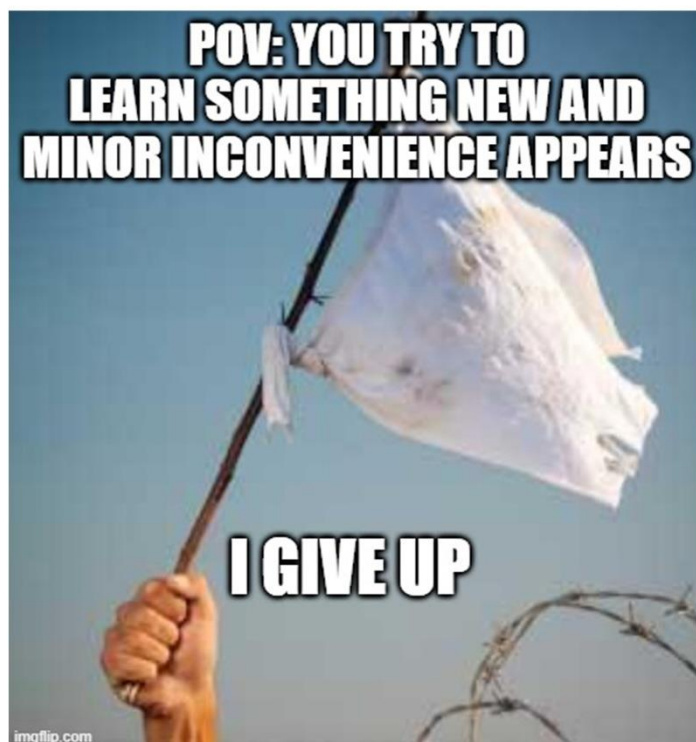
Figure 15 – Meme number 3

The "Give Up Template" available on Imgflip was uploaded in 2015 by an unknown user[36] and cannot be considered a viral or very popular meme template, since the Tineye.com[37], the image searcher, found only 26 similar results. The phrasal verb is presented in the sentence "I give up", interpreting the hand waving a white flag after "You try to learn something new and minor inconvenience appears". The learners are to understand the phrasal verb in the significance of the picture and introducing text.

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[36] Give Up Template. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/40508278/Give-Up.
[37] TinEye [online]. Available at: https://tineye.com/.

2.5.4 Meme number 4

Figure 16 – Meme number 4

The "Hen Look After Kittens" meme template is found on Imgflip, uploaded in 2022 by an unknown user, the meme used in the research might be the first featuring of the meme template. [38] The POV, signifying the point of view, is frequently featured in memes to put the observer of the meme in the certain context and situation, or to just illustrate the situation. In this meme, the learner observing the meme is put when "they tell you that it is not your responsibility to look after everybody", yet you do so. Meme appears to be humorous in a sense that despite being aware of not having responsibility to look after everybody, the saviour complex is stronger, illustrated by hen looking after kittens and cock standing on the bird of prey. Therefore, phrasal verb presented in the meme is "to look after".

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[38] Hen Look After Kittens. Available at: https://imgflip.com/meme/371312296/Hen-Look-After-Kittens.
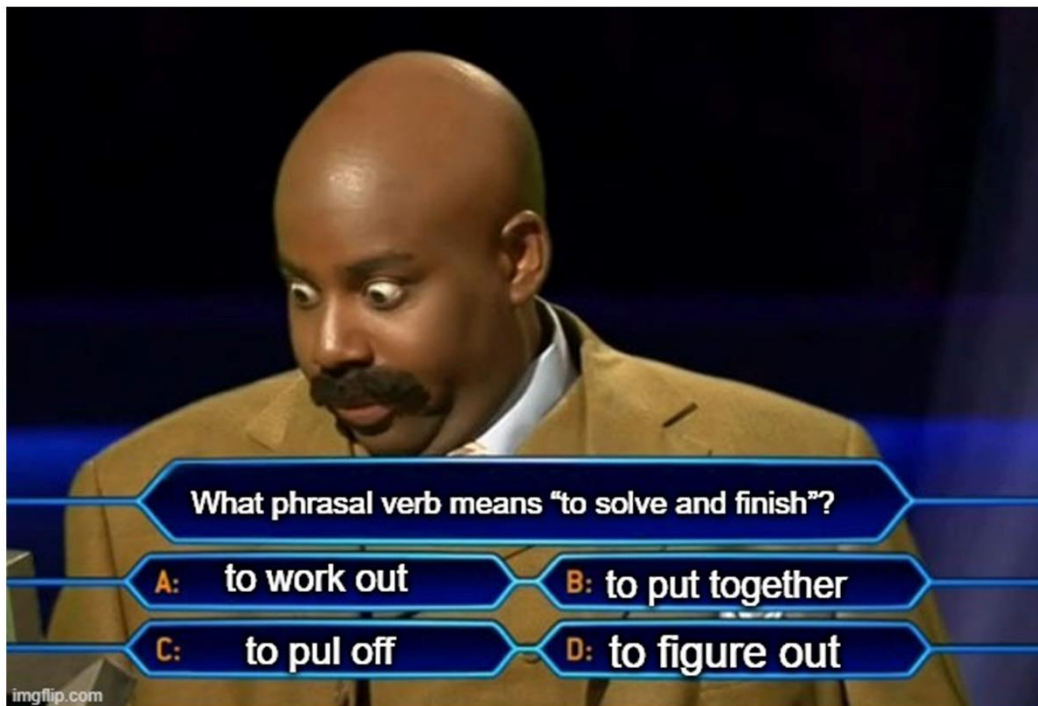
2.5.5 Meme number 5

Figure 17 – Meme number 5

The "Who wants to be a millionaire?" meme arises out of identically called international TV quiz show that was made known in 160 countries. Numerous memes have been created by retrieving funny images from the airing of the show, including the exampled meme number 5. The first memes were published in 2007 and remain popular till today.[39] The equally surprised and scared man is trying to decide the answer to the question. The given question is "What phrasal verb means "to solve and finish"? offering the answers of phrasal verbs with very similar or identical meaning. The humorous aspect of the meme appears in the man's distress while trying to choose the correct answer, that is nearly impossible to choose. The learners will recognize the meaning of the phrasal verb based on the question in the chart.

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[39] Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/subcultures/who-wants-to-be-a-millionaire.
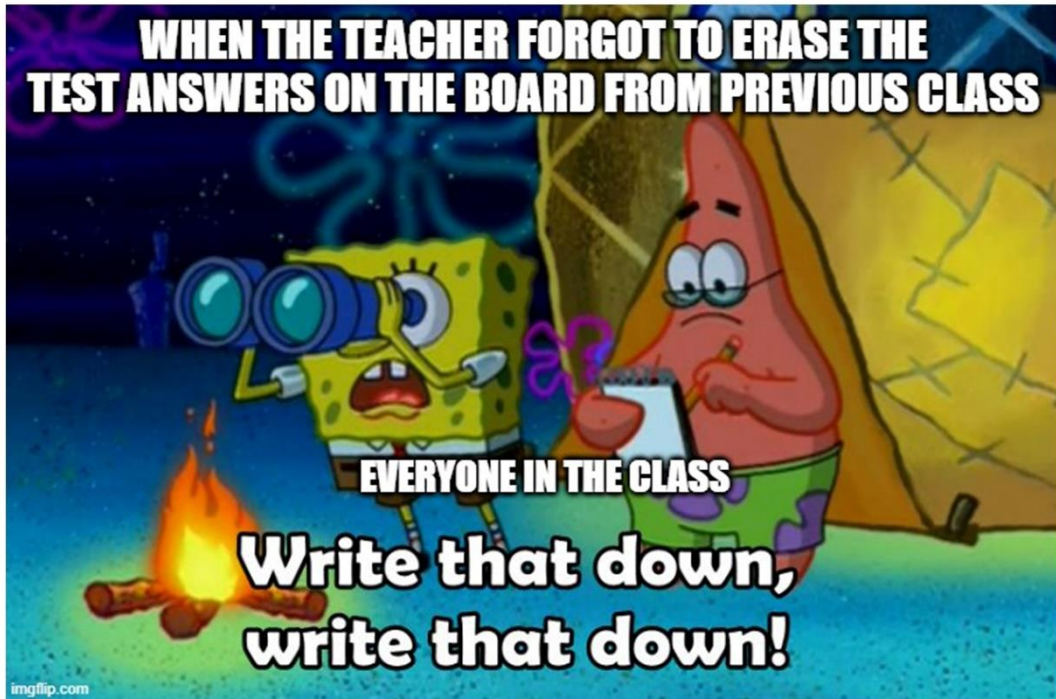
2.5.6 Meme number 6

Figure 18 – Meme number 6

Meme number six presents "Write That Down, Write That Down" meme that showcases the "Spongebob SquarePants" series, pointedly the episode "The Camping Episode" from 2004. The meme emerged in 2015 on Twitter, passed on to Reddit and have been virally replicated since. [40] The Spongebob and Patrick, characters of the series, are labelled as "Everyone in the class", representing the learners, that are in a hurry to write down the test answers that the teacher forgot to erase, thus the phrasal verb to be found in this meme is "to write down". Patrick illustrates the meaning of the phrasal verb by writing down into a notepad in a focused manner.

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[40] Write That Down, Write That Down. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/write-that-down-write-that-down.
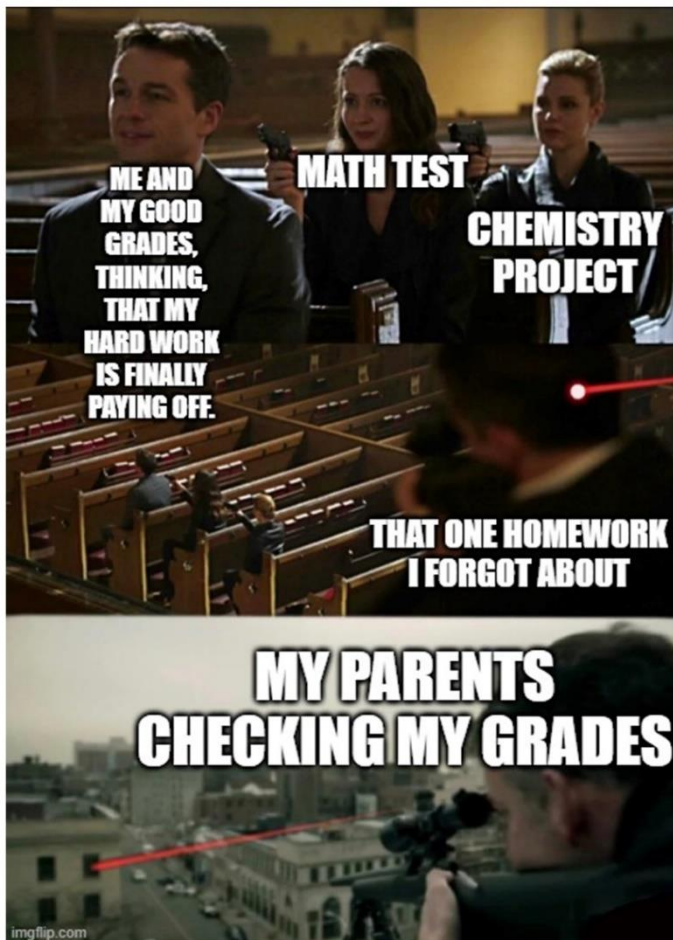
2.5.7 Meme number 7

Figure 19 – Meme number 7

Moving onto "Assassination Chain" meme, it features the scene from the "Person of Interest" TV show in which the characters are aiming guns to each other's backs, resulting in a very precarious situation. The meme itself dates back to the 2018 and the "/r/PersonOfInterest" subreddit, in which the first meme was uploaded, later, with remixing of the meme, more aiming shooters were added to the picture, such as the sniper that aims from outside of the church.[41] The sense of comedy is developed by labelling of the characters in the picture. The first character represents someone enthusiastic and hopeful, being unwittingly brought down by school duties and subsequential checking of grades by their parents. The phrasal verb "to pay off" responds to its great humour in the context of the meme, that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation.

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[41] Assassination Chain. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/assassination-chain.

2.5.8 Meme number 8

8

Figure 20 – Meme number 8

Meme number 8 presents "Distracted Boyfriend" meme that might be one of the most popular memes in the Internet meme history. The image itself was uploaded on the iStock photo database by photographer Antonio Guillem and was first turned into meme in 2017, being submitted to a Turkish group on Facebook, it was shared to different groups and remixed and soon appeared on Instagram and Twitter. [42] The meme uses the system of object labelling of the mad girlfriend, distracted boyfriend and girl walking by. The distracted boyfriend illustrates the learners, as they choose to say "to wear something really nice" being illustrated by the girl walking by, instead of using "the phrasal verb – to dress up" that is portrayed by the girl, that is mad at the distracted boyfriend. The silliness of the meme may be understood as the willingness to use the longer and more difficult sentence, instead of just using the phrasal verb, that is presumably in our vocabulary.

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[42] Distracted Boyfriend. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/distracted-boyfriend.
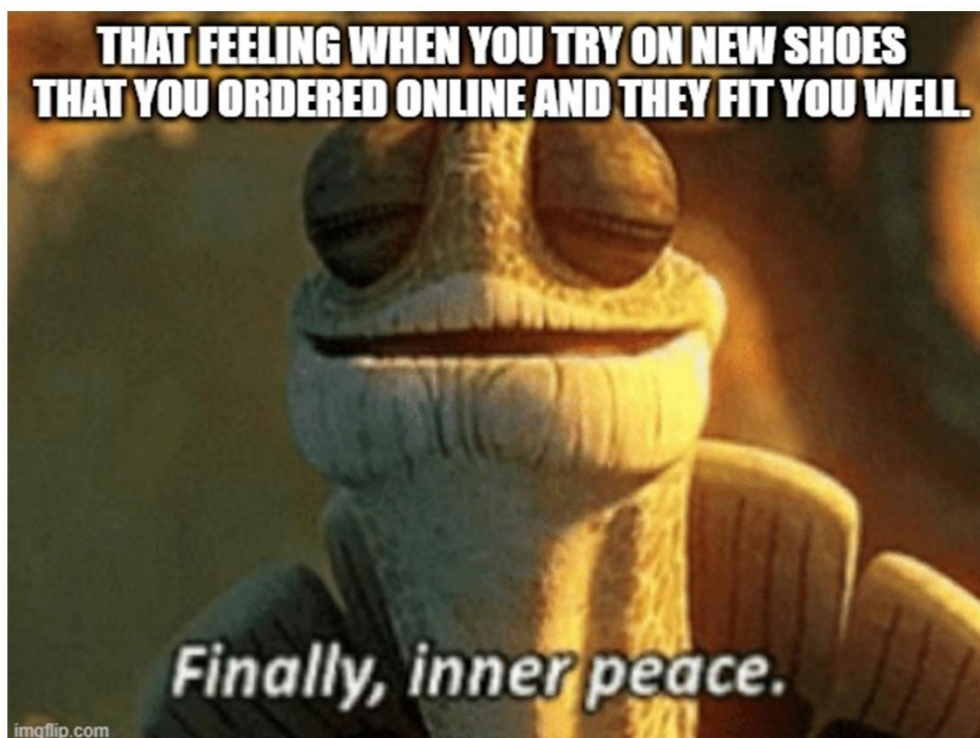
2.5.9 Meme number 9

Figure 21 – Meme number 9

The "Finally, inner peace." meme was uploaded in 2020 on Imgflip, picturing the character of Master Oogway from the Kung Fu Panda movie. [43] The concept of a meme is to describe a situation, or a point of view, due to which the person finally calms down and can say as Mr. Oogway, "Finally, inner peace.". The given situation in the meme is "that feeling when you try on new shoes that you ordered online and they fit you well", resulting in the "inner peace" of the person that ordered themselves new shoes online. The phrasal verb that the learners are supposed to find in this meme is "to try on", figuring the meaning out of the context of the meme.

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[43] Finally, inner peace. Template. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/220984891/Finally-inner-peace.

2.5.10 Meme number 10

Figure 22 – Meme number 10

The "So you;'ve come back to fight again, coward?" meme was uploaded on Imgflip in 2020[44]. It displays an animatronic character named Funtime Foxy from the horror game Five Nights at Freddy's: Sister Location. The Funtime Foxy is labelled as a "spider in my room that I was too scared of to kill or remove from my room." The meme sets the situation of "me, coming back to my room" while probably forgetting about a spider and spotting it again and imagining spider's response as "So you've come back to fight again, coward?". This meme might be exceptionally funny to people that might suffer of arachnophobia, by moderating the fear in a humorous background. The phrasal verb found in the meme is "to come back" being mentioned twice in the meme.

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[44] So you;'ve come back to fight again, coward? Template. Available at:
https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/217560926/So-youve-come-back-to-fight-again-coward.

2.5.11 Meme number 11

11

Figure 23 – Meme number 11

The meme number 11 is classified as "Wait, It's All Ohio? Always Has Been" meme, originally posted on 4chan in 2018, presenting an astronaut looking on the Earth saying "Wait, It's All X?" to which the armed astronaut responds as "Always Has Been".[45] The meme used in the research was altered to object labelling system and each of the astronauts represent a verb. The astronaut looking on the Earth is labelled as "to die" and the other astronaut, that is aiming a gun towards the "to die" astronaut" is labelled as a "to pass away" phrasal verb. The dark humour of the meme may be understood as the phrasal verb "to pass away" is killing the verb "to die", therefore it would replace the first verb in a vocabulary of the speakers on the planet Earth.

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[45] Wait, It's All Ohio? Always Has Been. Know Your Meme [online]. [cit. 2023-05-18]. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/wait-its-all-ohio-always-has-been

2.5.12 Meme number 12

Figure 24 – Meme number 12

Already mentioned "Puss in Boots Scared of Death" meme presents the characters of Puss in Boots and Death featuring in the "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish" movie that was released in 2022. The meme first appeared on Imgflip in January of 2023 and the template was quickly to be seen on other platforms as Imgur and Reddit.[46] The objects in the meme that are labelled are the characters. Puss in Boots is pictured as the protagonist of the meme, being put in the situation of secretly throwing thrash away from 2 months ago at 3 a.m. and being catched by the mom, that is represented by the character of Death. The quip of the meme is fearing something, the protagonist could have simply avoid being scared of, emphasizing the ordinary life struggles that the people go through. The mentioned phrasal verb is "to throw away", making it easier for the learner to understand the meaning of the verb by supporting visual context of the thrash can and the thrash.

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[46] Puss in Boots Scared of Death - meme. In: Know Your Meme [online]. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/2576906-puss-in-boots-scared-of-death

2.5.13 Meme number 13

13

The Figure 25 – Meme number 13

The "Pick up Truck" meme can be found on Imgflip, having been uploaded in 2019.[47] The meme introduces the context of the meme in the phrase that appears as a direct speech of the protagonist of the meme that can be recognized as "me". The given context of the meme is picking up the apples in the store, since wanting to eat healthy, resulting in picking up everything else, but apples. The truck is labelled as "me on my way home from the store" and the loaded wood in the back of the truck showcases the junk food that was picked up instead. The symbolism of unfulfilled promise or resolution that the people give to themselves tends to be comical in this meme. The phrasal verb "to pick up" is twice to be found in the meme and is displayed in suggestive context of vocabulary and items, such as "store", "apples", the junk food in the back of the car and the pick-up truck.

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[47] Pick up Truck. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/168242723/Pick-up-Truck.

2.5.14 Meme number 14

14

ME: I'M TIRED, I'LL GO TO SLEEP.

MY BRAIN: WHO OPENS THE DOOR FOR THE BUS DRIVER TO GET ON??

well well well then lets find out

The Figure 26 – Meme number 14

The Imgflip meme "well well well then lets find out" or the "internet dog" was uploaded on the site in 2021. [48] The displaying of the dog with glasses sitting in front of the computer and saying "well well well then lets find out" encourages the creators of the meme to add rather illogical but curious ideas to complete the context of the meme. Particularly, the context of the meme is being interrupted by the brain while thinking about going to sleep by a silly question "Who opens the door for the bus driver to get on??", resulting in finding out on the Internet, despite the absurdity of the question and the probable lateness in the night. In fact, there are two phrasal verbs to be found in the meme that both may be interpreted based on the context of the vocabulary in a sentence and the visual representation of the dog in front of the computer. The phrasal verbs are "to get on" and "to find out".

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[48] Well well well then lets find out. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/283079685/well-well-well-then-lets-find-out.

2.5.15 Meme number 15

15
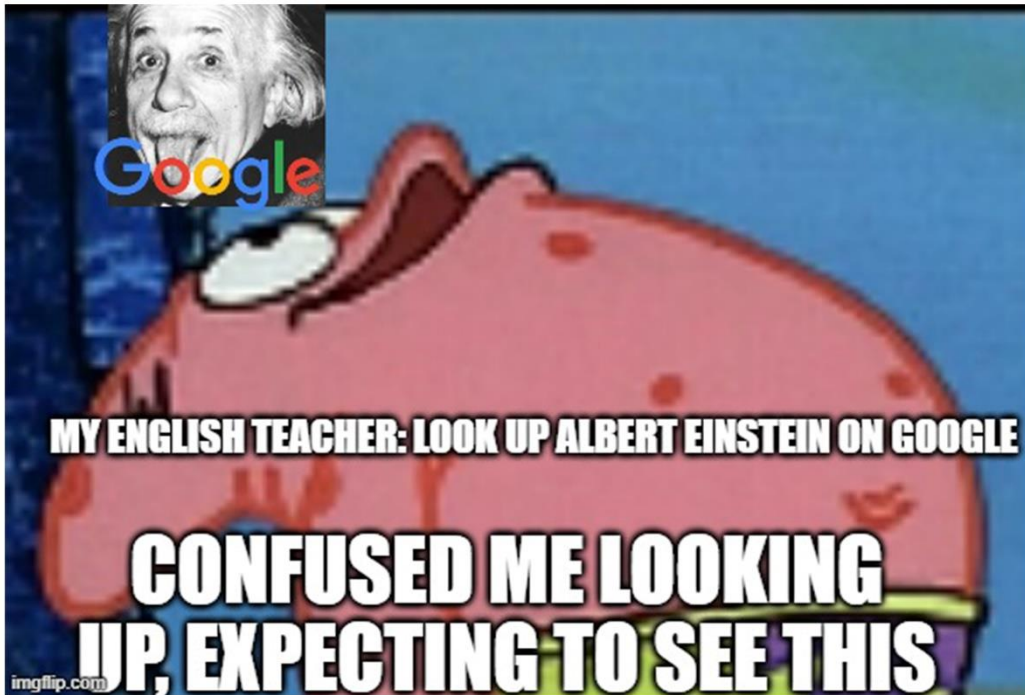
The Figure 27 – Meme number 15

The "Patrick looking up" meme features the character of Patrick of the popular animated series called Spongebob Squarepants. It was uploaded on Imgflip in 2020 and is averagely popular meme on the platform.[49] The joke of the meme plays with the concept of the language pun, presenting the phrasal verb "to look up" in the sentence "Look up Albert Einstein on Google", that is being pronounced by the English teacher in the lesson of English. The learner represented by Patrick interprets the phrasal verb "to look up" in literal translation, resulting in "confused me looking up, expecting to see this", facing the ceiling and hoping to see the picture of Albert Einstein on Google. The meaning of the phrasal verb is indicated by the context of the sentence, pointedly the "Google" part that signifies the clarity of phrasal verb in a given context.

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[49] Patrick looking up. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/232175363/Patrick-looking-up.

2.5.16 Meme number 16

Figure 28 – Meme number 16

The "Oh no cat" meme, originating on Imgflip in 2019 pictures a black cat with very large and distinctive eyes, that appear to be staring. [50] The photo of the cat is zoomed in the lower part of the meme to accentuate the humorous effect. Introducing the meme by the situation of me, having the pizza and being alarmed by "my friend" to not eat the pizza, since it has been there for 3 days. The cat displays a reaction of "me, who already ate 3 pieces" by unbelievable staring and saying, "OH NO". The phrasal verb found in the meme is "to hold on", as the friend rushes to warn about not eating the pizza.

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[50] Oh no cat. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/209658132/Oh-no-cat.

2.5.17 Meme number 17

17

Figure 29 – Meme number 17

The "Stick can't go through" or "Doggo + Stick Vs Bridge" meme, having been uploaded on Imgflip in 2021, pictures a dog attempting to walk across the bridge but being stopped by the stick that the dog is carrying in its mouth for being too wide and not fitting on the bridge.[51] The dog is labelled as the player that wants to play the online game of the World of Warcraft, who is "trying to go through the login to the server". The player is disconnected, because of the error of the login, being displayed as a gate of the bridge, not letting the player login to the server. The stick symbolizes that no matter how hard one tries and what are the intentions, a failure occurs and happens to everyone. The failure in this meme is not the player's fault since they tried the best they could, yet failed, because of the reasons they could not anyhow influence. The phrasal verb found in the meme is "to go through" being illustrated by the dog, that is trying to go through or over the bridge with a stick.

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[51] Stick can't go through. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/317087503/Stick-cant-go-through.

2.5.18 Meme number 18

Figure 30 – Meme number 18

The quite popular meme on the Imgflip platform is "running chicken" being uploaded on the site in 2016.[52] The meme presents two chickens running on a field and in the garden on the grass and pavement. Both pictures in the meme are a bit blurred and symbolize well the motion of the running done by the chicken. As follows, the context of the meme is "What I think about when mom says, "We ran out of ice cream" ", labelling the chickens as "the ice cream". Once again, the joke in this meme is a language pun, highlighting the possible literal interpretation of the phrasal verb "to run out (of)".

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[52] Running chicken. Available at: https://imgflip.com/memetemplate/68616514/running-chicken.
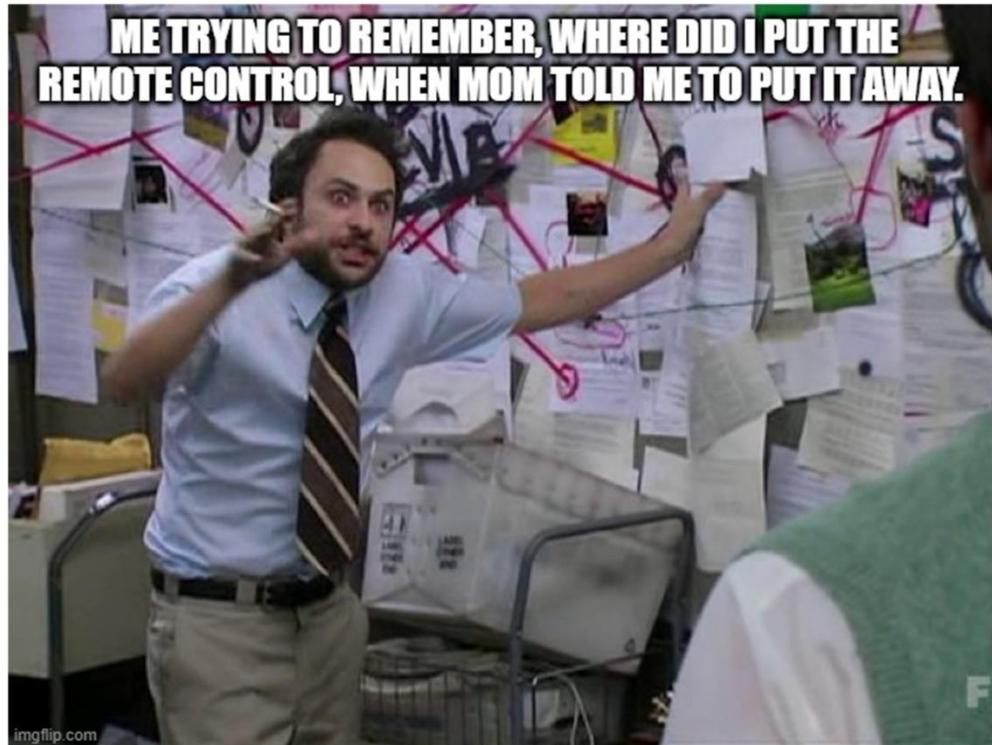
2.5.19 Meme number 19

Figure 31 – Meme number 19

The meme "Pepe Silvia" references the sitcom "It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia" and the character of "Charlie Kelly" that has been working on a conspiracy theory about the person "Pepe Silvia" not existing. Not only that the show was a hit, but the scene was also so popular that after airing of the episode, it was turned into a reaction meme on Twitter in 2008. [53] In this meme, the seemingly furious Charlie represents subject of the meme as "me trying to remember where did I put the remote control, when mom told me to put it away", exaggerating the process of finding the remote control, before the mom finds out that we did not put it away on its usual place. The phrasal verb displayed in this meme is "to put (something) away".

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[53] Pepe Silvia. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/pepe-silvia.

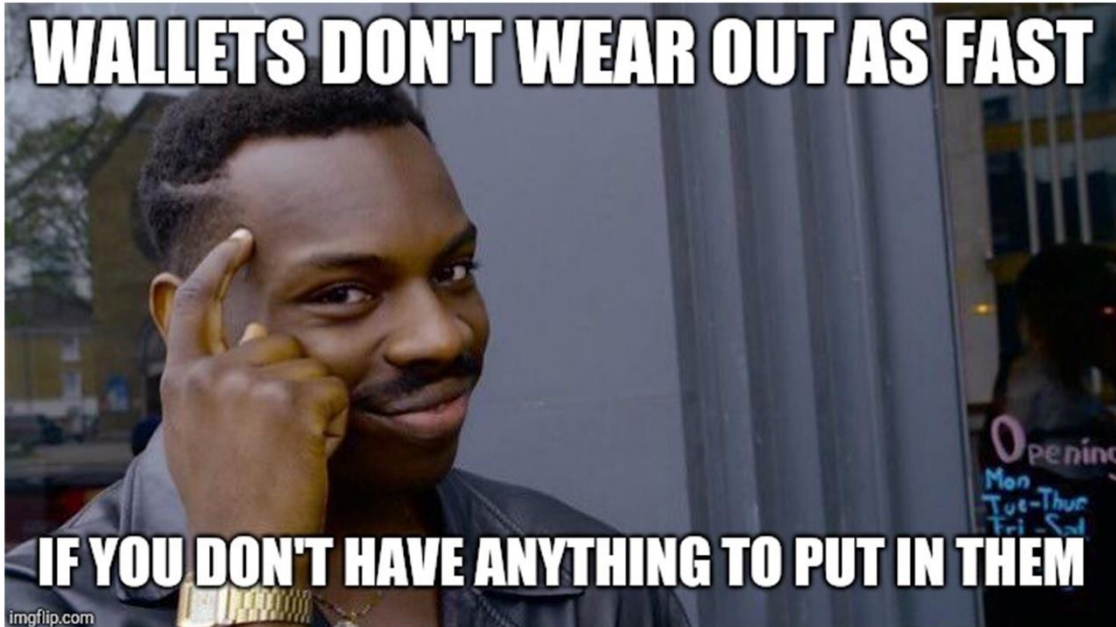### 2.5.20 Meme number 20

20

Figure 32 – Meme number 20

This meme was created by the user "Basimpo" and uploaded on Imgflip in 2019. [54] It remixes the meme template known as "Roll Safe", that pictures a moment from the "Hood Documentary" BBC series, screening an actor "Kayode Ewumi". One of the most replicated memes till today originates from Twitter in 2016, gaining thousands of retweets and upvotes in only the first 48 hours on the site. [55] In the meme, the actor puts his finger onto the side of his head as a gesture for being smart, looking directly at the observer of the meme. The picture itself is completed by the context of a seemingly smart idea that is "Wallets don't wear out as fast, if you don't have anything to put in them." What is humorous in the concept of this meme is the idea that presents itself as smart yet ends up being ironic, unsmart or just non-sense. The phrasal verb to be found in this meme is "to wear out" and "to put in". This is the only meme, that was not created for the purposes of the research but was found on the site Imgflip and used for the purposes of the research.

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[54] Roll Safe Think About It. Available at: https://imgflip.com/i/2rr04h.
[55] Roll Safe. Available at: https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/roll-safe.

2.6 Selected visual materials

The learning materials for the control group of the research were selected based on the phrasal verbs that are presented in the context of the memes. Both memes and visual learning aids were created and found for the purposes of the research.

Each visual learning aid presents an example sentence, in which the phrasal verb is introduced. The sentence with the phrasal verb depicts the picture and is placed under the picture. Therefore, the phrasal verb is learned in the context of a sentence, which is supported by the visuality of the learning aid that depicts that meaning of the phrasal verb and the whole sentence as well. The order of the phrasal verbs that are introduced in the memes coincides with the order of the phrasal verbs that are introduced by the visual aids in the control group, therefore the results of both groups are easier to navigate and compare.

The images for the visual learning aids were found and selected from the Internet. The process of collecting and selecting images was subsequential to the process of creating the memes and aimed to find images visually appealing and easy to read.

He was on the way to work when his car broke down.

Figure 33 – Visual aid number 1

The visual aid was inspired by https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/the-two-main-reasons-your-car-will-break-down-and-what-you-can-do-about-it-aUkk40L0yTMG

The Figure 33 presents the Visual aid number 1, that examples the principle of the construction of the visual aids used in the control group, that are described in this chapter. All the visual aids will be presented in the Appendix of the thesis.

2.7 The research aim, objectives, and questions

The execution of the research was preceded by the definition of the research questions that the thesis aims to answer. Primarily, the aim of the research is to investigate whether using memes in ELT helps and motivates learners in their learning process and improves the learning results, specifically while learning phrasal verbs.

The research objectives are:

1. To examine the influence of memes on the learning process.
2. To determine the relationship between memes and the learners.
3. To measure the learning efficiency of phrasal verbs being introduced by memes and compare with the more standard visual learning method.
4. To examine the influence of memes on learners' speaking activity.

The research questions are stated as follows:

1. Do Czech learners know and understand memes, and if so, how often and where do they encounter memes?

The popularity of memes may be on the peak of the Internet history, since we already live in a very digitally driven world. The generations of contemporary learners in lower secondary schools are generally well skilled in the use of the Internet and modern digital technologies, since they were born into and are maturing in the world that uses the Internet and other digital technologies as a versatile tool in every sphere of our lives. Therefore, it may be presumed that most of the learners encounter the memes, the question seeks to answer in what frequency and what occasion.

2. What topics or genres do learners find interesting in memes?

The question seeks to find the topics or genres of memes that are the most popular amongst the learners of the lower-secondary school that would be used as a suggestion for the future use of memes in ELT to raise motivation in the lesson.

3. Do Czech learners welcome the use of memes in ELT, and does it raise their motivation for the lesson?

It has been proven that humour and memes may be an important factor that increases the motivation in the lesson, therefore it can possibly answer the question, yet the thesis seeks to find the answer concerning the learners from the Czech school environment and compare the results with previous studies to find the consensus or the inconsonance.

4. Do the learners create memes, or would they aspire to create memes in the future?

The answer to the question may be important for the contribution to the idea of meme creating being a motivational and effective learning activity in an English lesson environment.

5. Is it possible to teach phrasal verbs through memes and does it improve the learning efficiency?
6. Does the use of memes in ELT affect the learners' speaking activity in any way?

2.8 The data collection methods and action research

The research took place on FZŠ Hálkova 4 in Olomouc and the main data collection methods are action research that includes analysis of the handouts and tests, observation and questionnaire for the learners participating in the research.

2.8.1 The action research

The prepared lesson about using memes was taught in 2 groups in the 9th grade of the lower-secondary school engaging learners approximately from 14 to 16 years of age, who are taught by different English teachers, therefore the diversity of research participants was ensured. The lesson using the visual aids instead of memes was taught in 1 group in the 8th grade of the lower-secondary school, the approximate age of research participants was from 13 to 14 years old.

The main lesson was designed to focus on phrasal verbs, more specifically understanding the phrasal verbs throughout the context of the meme in which the phrasal verb is introduced and focusing on the memes as a possible teaching tool.

The lesson of the control group was also designed to focus on phrasal verbs, specifically learning the phrasal verbs throughout the context of the visual learning aids that have been described in the chapter 2.6.

The lesson plan was designed in accordance with the following outcomes stated in curricular documents of RVP ZV and CEFR.

Accordance to RVP ZV:

"CJ-9-3-01 vyhledá požadované informace v jednoduchých každodenních autentických materiálech

CJ-9-3-02 rozumí krátkým a jednoduchým textům, vyhledá v nich požadované informace"[56]

Accordance to CEFR:

"5.2.1.1 Lexical competence, knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language, consists of lexical elements and grammatical elements. Lexical elements include: a) Fixed expressions, consisting of several words, which are used

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[56] Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání [online]. Available at: https://www.edu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RVP-ZV-2021-zmeny.pdf., p. 27

and learnt as wholes. Fixed expressions include: other fixed phrases, such as: phrasal verbs, e.g. to put up with, to make do (with); compound prepositions, e.g. in front of." [57]

"VOCABULARY   RANGE

B1 Has a sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to his/her everyday life such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and   current   events.
Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions involving familiar situations   and   topics.
A2 Has a sufficient vocabulary for the expression of basic communicative needs. Has a sufficient vocabulary for coping with simple survival needs." [58]

2.8.1.1   Lesson plan for the action research

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[57] Council of Europe (CEFR). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment., p. 110 – 111
[58] Council of Europe (CEFR). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment., p. 112

The learners are going to learn about phrasal verbs, using the inductive approach. The learners will explore and understand the phrasal verbs based on the context of the meme. The whole lesson is based on memes and uses memes as a teaching tool.

Stage of the lesson and its aim	Steps and instructions	Interaction patterns, class arrangement	Materials and aids	Timing	Expected difficulties and solutions
Task 1, Discussion before the lesson	Before beginning the main body of the lesson, the teacher shows the learners an example of a meme with a phrasal verb. The learners are asked to find a verb in the text of a meme and will briefly discuss the meme. The teacher asks the learners if they know, what type of verb is illustrated in the meme and how do we recognize it. Then the teacher reminds learners about the phrasal verbs, altogether with the learners creates a definition and asks the learners if they know anymore examples of the phrasal verbs.	Frontal teaching T -> Ls Ls <-> T	PC, projector, PowerPoint presentation, whiteboard	5 min	D: Students do not find memes funny.

S: The teacher tells them that the memes do not need to be funny, since every person has a different sense of humour. The learners might find some memes funny during the lesson. |

| Task 2, Main body, Meme exercise | The twenty printed memes will be placed all over the classroom and learners will be given a handout in which they will fill in a phrasal verb they found in a meme, and an expected meaning in their native language. The learners will walk around the class from one meme to another, will think about the meme itself, identify the phrasal verb in the text of a meme, interpret its meaning, and discuss their ideas with a classmate. The learners will also mark the phrasal verbs they already knew before the lesson and are certain about their meaning and context of use. | Individual work and pair work

T-> Ls

Ls<-> Ls | Printed memes, phrasal verb handout for every student | 20 – 25 min | D: Learners do not understand the joke or are not able to identify the phrasal verb.

S: The teacher ensures learners that they are not expected to know everything and emphasizes, that this is the natural part of the lesson as well. Then teacher helps the students with finding the answer and monitors the students during completing of the exercise to be always available to help. |

| Task 3, Meme checking and discussion | The learners check the phrasal verbs altogether with a teacher. The teacher briefly goes through the memes in the PowerPoint presentation and stop by those that will be the most questioned and problematic according to the learners' comprehension and understanding during the lesson. The teacher will answer the questions if there will be any and discuss the memes with the learners.

The discussion questions (The questions can be altered according to the situation and the learners' interest in memes and the time capacity.):
Did you know any of the meme templates? Do you come across them often?
What meme did you like the most and why?
Which meme did you find the funniest and which was the least funny? | Group work, Whole-class discussion

T<-> Ls

Ls<-> Ls | PC, projector, PowerPoint presentation | 15 min | D: The learners might be shy to contribute to the discussion.

S: The teacher encourages the students by saying that there are no right and wrong answers and what is expected is just expressing their opinion. If that does not help, the teacher has a printed questions for the discussion and learners might discuss in smaller groups of 4 – 5 people. |

	Was there any meme that was hard for you to understand? Did the meme make it easier for you to understand the joke in English? Have you ever made a meme? Do you have any meme ideas? What can you tell me about memes, that you usually look at? What kind of memes are those?				

Table 1 – Lesson plan concerning memes

The lesson plan for the control group that is using visual aids instead of memes has identical procedure to the lesson plan using memes as an aid for teaching phrasal verbs. The only difference in the other lesson plan is excluding of the final discussion about memes. Learners identify the phrasal verbs out of visual aids, not memes and the last reflection part concerns the used visual aids. Summing up, the procedure of the lesson is altered only in the use of visual aids instead of memes and omitting the final discussion about memes.

2.8.1.2 Handouts

The completed handouts from the lessons will be analysed to increase the amount of data from different stages of the research.

2.8.1.3 Lesson observation

The lesson observation is conducted by the researcher, who happens to be teaching the research lesson. The learners know they are participating in the research and are being observed, therefore the lesson observation may be defined as open and passive observation.

The researcher participates on the duration of the lesson and the nature of the researcher's presence may be considered partly participatory, yet the researcher does not experience the lesson as subjects of the observation would and only facilitates the lesson, for this reason the role of the researcher is more passive.

The observation will aspire to answer the following questions:

1. How do learners respond to the topic of memes at the beginning of the lesson?
2. How do learners evaluate memes? Do they discuss memes together?
3. How long did it take learners to complete the activity and how much time on average did they spend on one meme?
4. Which memes did learners find difficult and were problematic for them?

The observation of the lesson using the visual aids will aspire to answer the following questions:

1. How do learners evaluate visual aids? Do they discuss them together?
2. How long did it take learners to complete the activity and how much time on average did they spend on one visual aid?
3. Which visual aids did learners find difficult and were problematic for them?

2.8.1.4 Testing

The learners will be tested the following lesson, after the lesson concerning phrasal verbs being introduced throughout the memes and visual aids. The test consists of twenty fill in the blanks multiple choice questions. Each question focuses on one of the phrasal verb, that were introduced the preceding lesson. Each question has only one correct answer. The sentences in the test example the phrasal verb only partially and the learners are to decide the full transcription of the phrasal verb, that is appropriate concerning the context of the sentence.

Testing allows to compare the results of the test with the results retrieved from the handouts from the initial lesson, identifying the influence of the short time gap between the lessons. The test is attached to the thesis in the appendix.

2.8.2 The questionnaire

The method of collecting data by questionnaires was chosen due to the reasons of a large number of participants and organized clear data. There were two questionnaires created for

the purposes of collecting data from the main group of participants and control group of the research.

The questionnaire investigates participants' gender, age, their opinion and relationship towards memes, level of interest in memes, the topic they find interesting in memes, opinion about the usage of memes in ELT, impact on their performance during the lesson and understanding the subject of learning. The questionnaire consists of 16 mandatory questions. The participants were given the questionnaire the following lesson after the main the research lesson, right after they completed the tests. They accessed the questionnaire through a QR code projected on the board or printed on the paper that was distributed around the classroom. The participants filled in the questionnaires on the school tablets that were reserved for the lessons in which the testing and questionnaires were given to the participants. The questionnaire is written in Czech to avoid the possible confusion or misunderstanding in translation and to ensure the fast completing of the questionnaire.

After a short introductory text, the participants answer a general question about their gender and age, followed by five questions focusing on the participants' opinion and relationship towards memes, out of which four questions are multiple choice questions and one of them is an open question. The following nine questions concern the learner's opinion about usage of memes in ELT and the personal impact the memes may have on their focus, level of activity and understanding in the lesson. Out of those, the three are Likert scale questions, four are multiple choice questions and two are open questions.

The questionnaire for the control group consists of 7 questions. Those 7 questions are corresponding to the opening seven questions of the questionnaire given to the main research group. The questionnaire has only seven questions, since those are the questions of age, gender and questions focusing on the participants' opinion and relationship towards memes. They were not given the questions concerning the usage of memes in ELT, since they did not participate in the research using the memes. The participants in the control group were given the questionnaire only to increase the number of respondents to investigate the learners' relationship towards memes.

2.9 Research data analysis

To secure the proper analysis of data, there is going to be presented some general information about the participating groups in the research. Thereupon, a necessary context will be introduced, while presenting data from different methods of research. Ultimately, the

research questions will be answered, and the final discussion will summarize the findings of the research.

2.9.1 General information

After the research execution and distribution of questionnaires, there were 32 questionnaire responses collected from the learners from two classes participating in the main research group. There were 34 learners present to the lessons in which the participants were tested and given questionnaires. Therefore, 34 tests were collected, yet only 32 questionnaires, meaning that two participants did not submit their questionnaires. There were 36 participants present in the first research lessons, thus 36 handouts were collected from those lessons. Virtually, two learners did not attend the following lesson, in which the assessment of the research by the participants was done, pointedly testing and questionnaire distributing.

The total questionnaire responses from the control group equalled to 8, thus 8 tests were collected on the same occasion. There were 8 learners participating in the first lesson of the research, therefore 8 handouts were collected. All the participants attended the following assessment lesson.

2.9.2 Observation results

There were three lessons to observe, in which learners were completing the prepared activities described in the lesson plan and contributing to creating data for the research. The Observation 1 and 2 describe the lessons in which the memes were used as a teaching aid. The Observation 3 describes the lesson of the research's control group in which the visual aids were used.

2.9.2.1 Observation 1

Sample: 17 learners of 9th grade

Date, time, and place: 24th April 2023, 8:00, FZŠ Hálkova 4

Descriptive Notes:

1. *How do learners respond to the topic of memes at the beginning of the lesson?*

Most of the learners welcomed the topic and seemed interested as they said they like memes and know them. A smaller number of learners, about 5, showed no reaction.

2. *How do learners evaluate memes? Do they discuss memes together?*

Learners moved around the class in pairs, one learner moved around the class individually. The pupils looked at the meme, read the text in the meme and tried to find the phrasal verb

together. If they personally found the meme funny, they briefly evaluated the humour of the meme with a classmate or different pair and shared their interest in the humour of the meme. If the meme was not personally funny to them, their activity focused only on understanding the text and locating the phrasal verb.

3. *How long did it take learners to complete the activity and how much time on average did they spend on one meme?*

Ten learners took between 20 and 25 minutes to complete the activity. They spent an average of 60 to 75 seconds per meme. Seven learners completed the activity in between 15 and 20 minutes, spending an average of 45 and 60 seconds per meme.

4. *Which memes did learners find difficult and were problematic for them?*

According to the learners, memes 5, 7, 9, 16 and 20 were the most problematic. After completing the activity, students asked for more explanation of these memes and the phrasal verbs in them.

Reflective Notes:

The lesson went smoothly, learners worked efficiently, walking around the classroom looking for memes. There were no problems to solve. It was the first lesson of the day on Monday, so the pupils were quite motivated to start the new school week. I checked on the learners throughout the activity and if they showed interest, I discussed the meme with them. There was a calm atmosphere in the classroom, the pupils were discussing but were not very vocal. They evaluated most of the memes positively, a few memes were difficult for them to understand, or they did not personally relate to the humour of the meme and their interest waned in the short term. At the end of the lesson, pupils evaluated the activity positively, 14 pupils liked the lesson and found it interesting, one pupil commented that the text in the memes was too simple. Two pupils did not enjoy the lesson and rated the activity as uninteresting and boring. One pupil rated the activity positively but said that it was too challenging for him.

2.9.2.2 Observation 2

Sample: 19 learners of 9th grade

Date, time, and place: 24th April 2023, 12:45, FZŠ Hálkova 4

Descriptive Notes:

1.   How do learners respond to the topic of memes at the beginning of the lesson?

Learners evaluated the topic of memes in the lesson positively, while a few learners were showing a clear enthusiasm for the topic. Otherwise, the class appeared quiet.

2.   How do learners evaluate memes? Do they discuss memes together?

The learners moved around the classroom in pairs or groups of three, sometimes walking together in a larger group to collaborate on one of the memes. Four learners moved around the classroom individually and discussed memes randomly with classmates or did not discuss at all. The classroom was quite busy, and some learners were very expressive about the memes.

3.   How long did it take learners to complete the activity and how much time on average did they spend on one meme?

Three learners completed the activity in 15 minutes, so they spent an average of 45 seconds per meme. Two learners completed the activity in 20 minutes, so they spent an average of 60 seconds per meme. The remaining 14 learners completed the activity in between 20 and 25 minutes, so they spent an average of 60 to 75 seconds per meme.

4.   Which memes did learners find difficult and were problematic for them?

According to the learners, the most problematic memes were numbers 5, 7, 10, 17, and 20.

Reflective Notes:

There were no major problems in the lesson, the learners worked very efficiently according to the given instructions, there were no unnecessary delays, even though it was the last lesson of the day, and the learners were already tired. Opinions on memes varied widely within the class, with some pupils perceiving most memes as humorous, but some openly communicating their lack of understanding of the humour of the meme and labelling some of the memes as unfunny. In the final reflection, only one pupil rated the activity as neutral, 15 pupils liked the activity and rated it as beneficial and interesting, 3 pupils rated the activity as beneficial but stated that the humour in the memes was not what they normally look for.

2.9.2.3 Observation 3

Sample: 8 learners of 8th grade – The control group

Date, time, and place: 26th April 2023, 12:45, FZŠ Hálkova 4

Descriptive Notes:

1. *How do learners evaluate visual aids? Do they discuss them together?*

Learners moved around the classroom in pairs and in one group of three. They were thinking about the picture and discussed the possible meaning of the phrasal verb together. Some read the sentences under the picture aloud, some solved the problems silently.

2. *How long did it take learners to complete the activity and how much time on average did they spend on one visual aid?*

Two learners completed the activity in 10 minutes, spending an average of 30 seconds per picture. Four learners completed the activity in 15 - 20 minutes, spending averagely of 45 - 60 seconds per picture. Two learners completed the activity in 22 minutes, spending an average of 66 seconds per picture.

3. *Which visual aids did learners find difficult and were problematic for them?*

The most problematic seemed to be pictures number 1, 13, 17, 19 a 20.

Reflective Notes:

This was the last lesson, so the learners were not very active, but they worked diligently and according to the instructions. The learners did not disturb the lesson and cooperated, finishing the activity in time.Then their activity in the lesson decreased and the pupils were not so communicative while questioning and discussing the activity, therefore I had to ask them several times. In the final reflection, however, pupils rated the activity positively welcoming the opportunity to work collectively at their own pace and capacity, while they could move around the classroom and reflect on phrasal verbs.

2.9.2.4   Interpretation and summary of the results

The results of the observations showed that majority of the learners welcomed the topic of memes in ELT at the beginning of the lesson. They evaluated and discussed memes mostly in pairs, learners only sporadically evaluated memes in groups of three or individually. The 60 – 75 seconds proved to be enough time for analysis of a meme in the lesson. The memes

that appeared to be the most problematic in the lessons were the memes number 5, 7, and 20. The preponderance of the learners evaluated the lesson affirmatively, finding it interesting and enriching.

Learners in the control group evaluated visual aids prevalently in pairs, spending on average about 60 seconds analysing the visual aid, being in accordance with the results of the main research group. Further comparing the results, the only meme that both groups of research found challenging was meme number 20.

2.9.3 Handout analysis results

The results from the handouts analysis are presented in the two tables. Table 2 presents results of the handouts collected from the learners that participated in the lessons using memes. Table 3 presents results collected in the control group of the research that participated in the lesson using visual aids instead of memes. In the first column of the Tables 2 and 3, the number of meme or a visual is indicated. The following columns mark the number of correct answers, particularly marking if the learner knew the phrasal verb before the lesson, or if the learner learned the phrasal verb in the lesson and was successful to answer correctly by observing the information presented in the meme or a visual aid. Partially correct answers indicate the answers in which the learner correctly identified the phrasal verb in the meme or a visual aid but incorrectly translated the phrasal verb or did not even attempt to translate the phrasal verb. Incorrect answers include incorrect identification of phrasal verb or no identification of phrasal verb at all.

Number of the meme	Correct answers (the learner knew the phrasal verb before the lesson)	Correct answers (the learner learned the phrasal verb in the lesson)	Partially correct answers (identified the phrasal verb but incorrectly translated)	Incorrect answers
1	20	4	3	9
2	23	3	2	8
3	26	1	1	8
4	23	5	3	5
5	16	2	12	6
6	10	1	0	25
7	17	6	4	9
8	24	2	4	6
9	24	2	2	8
10	20	1	4	11
11	10	3	7	16
12	18	1	6	11

13	7	0	19	10
14	17	1	4	14
15	12	4	13	7
16	17	2	3	14
17	12	4	4	16
18	21	6	3	6
19	14	2	3	17
20	13	3	4	16

Table 2 – Results of the handouts of the main research group (memes)

As presented in the Table 2, the learners recognized a great number of phrasal verbs that they knew before the lesson, specifically most often in memes number 3, 8 and 9. The highest number of correct answers concerning phrasal verbs the learners learned via memes in the lesson is linked to memes number 4, 7 and 18. The highest number of phrasal verbs that learners were able to identify in the context of the meme but not translate or depict its meaning is linked to memes number 5, 13 and 15. The memes to which the most wrong answers are linked are numbers 6, 11, 17, 19 and 20.

Number of the visual aid	Correct answers (the learner knew the phrasal verb before the lesson)	Correct answers (the learner learned the phrasal verb in the lesson)	Partially correct answers (Identified the phrasal verb but incorrectly translated)	Incorrect answers
1	3	4	1	0
2	4	4	0	0
3	7	1	0	0
4	5	1	2	0
5	4	2	2	0
6	4	4	0	0
7	3	4	1	0
8	5	3	0	0
9	7	1	0	0
10	7	1	0	0
11	5	2	1	0
12	4	0	0	4
13	2	0	6	0
14	5	2	1	0

15	4	3	1	0
16	5	1	2	0
17	4	1	1	2
18	5	1	2	0
19	5	1	2	0
20	2	0	6	0

Table 3 – Results of the handouts of the control group (visual aids)

Commenting on Table 3, the most correct answers of the phrasal verbs that the learners knew before the lesson are connected to visual aids number 3, 9 and 10. The highest number of phrasal verbs that learners learned in the lesson was via visual aids number 1, 2, 6 and 7. The partially correct answers are most frequently related to aids number 13 and 20. The overall number of incorrect answers is low, and is exclusively connected to aids number 12 and 17.

The results from both groups have agreed that memes and visual aids number 3 and 9 present the phrasal verbs that majority of learners have known before the lesson, such as "to give up" and "to try on" and were able to correctly recognize them in the context of the meme and visual aid. Further comparing the results, the correct answers of phrasal verbs that the learners learned in the lesson have varied and found accordance only in number 7, displaying the phrasal verb "to pay off". Mostly different results have revealed the comparing of partially correct answers, finding the conformity only in number 13, showcasing the phrasal verb "to pick up". The numbers of memes and visual aids to which the prevalent number of wrong answers is connected have found a great dissimilarity while comparing the results of both research groups. Results yet only agreed on number 17, presenting the phrasal verb "to go through".
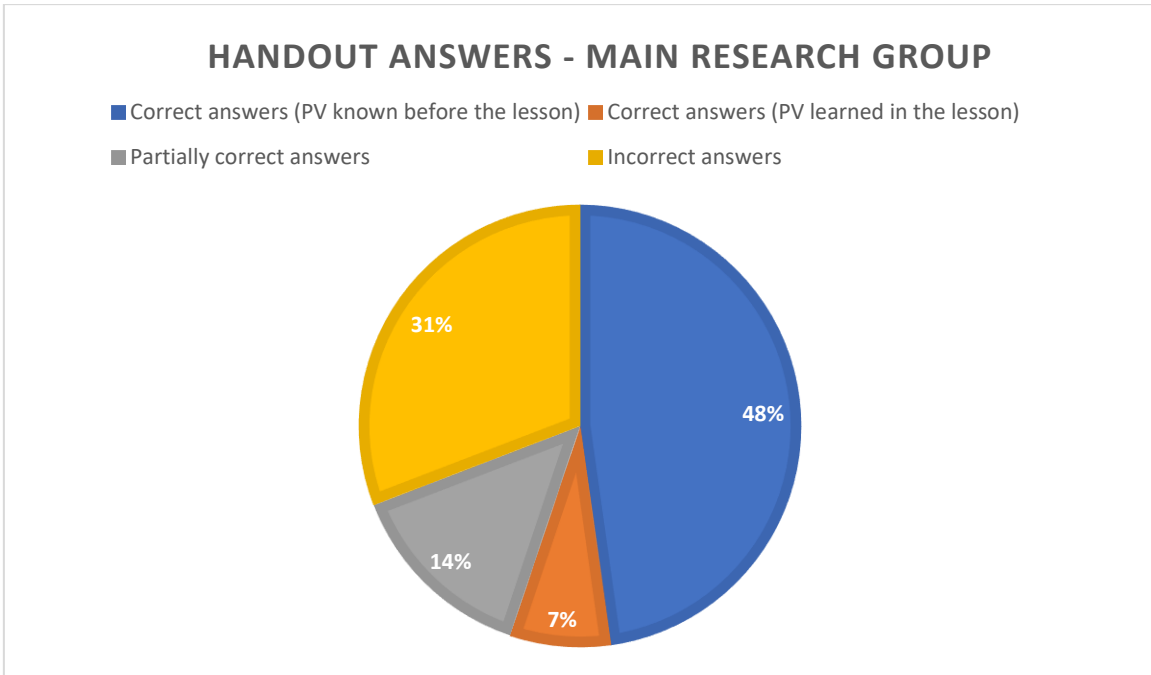
Figure 34 – Handouts answers of the main research group
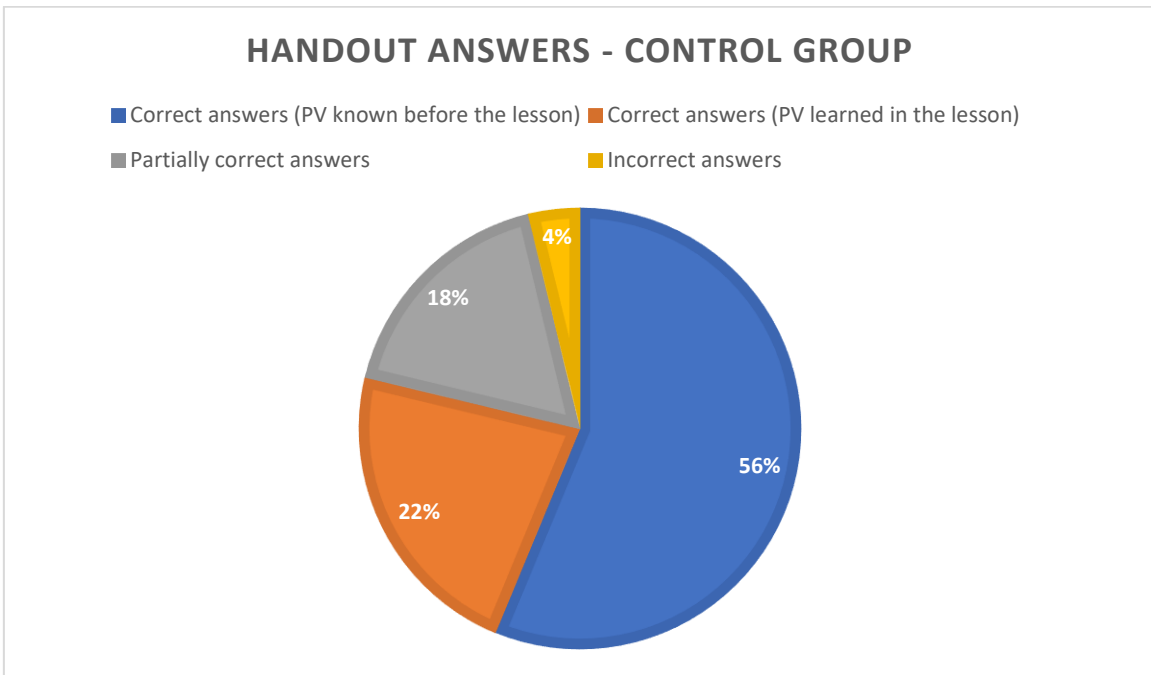
Figure 35 – Handout answers of the control group

The Figure 34 and Figure 35 present the overall number of collected answers in percentage, dividing them to previously recognized categories that were established while processing the data.

The contrast in the results is apparent. The 48% and 56 % of answers were correct, concerning the phrasal verbs the learners knew before the lesson, not making the difference in results of both groups very significant. On the other hand, correct answers concerning the

phrasal verbs that the learners learned in the lesson was only 7% in the main research group, and 22% in the control group. Complete percentage of correct answers was 55% in the main research group and 78% in the control group. The similar percentage of the results in both groups relates to partially correct answers, equalling to 14% in the main research group and 18% in the control group. The highest discrepancy is found in results of incorrect answers, resulting in 31% in the main research group and only 4% in the control group.

Supposedly, the number of correct answers was higher in the control group and the visual aids may be to some extent considered more efficient learning materials, since the learners in the control group recognised more phrasal verbs they did not know before the lesson via visual aids. Necessary to note that the difference in the results could have been possibly influenced by the age and grade of the participants of the research, since the learners in the main research, in which the memes were used, were in a higher grade, resulting in a slightly enhanced knowledge of phrasal verbs. The undeniable contrast is to be seen in the number of incorrect answers, being it much higher in the main research group. Perhaps, this could be interpreted under the assumption of the character of memes being quite complex and contextually rich. Visual aids appear to be simpler, very informationally straight forward, and easier to navigate, resulting in higher number of incorrect answers while using memes, rather than visual aids. Beyond any doubt, it may be suggested that visual aids are reportedly more efficient than memes.

2.9.4 Test analysis results

Learners were tested; therefore, the results could be compared with the results collected from the handouts and identify learners' understanding and remembrance of the phrasal verbs. The approximate half of the main research group was given the test the following lesson, after the key learning lesson, in which the phrasal verbs were taught via memes. The other approximate half was given the test 10 days after the initial lesson, to compare the results after a prolonged period time. The control group was given the tests the following lesson as well.
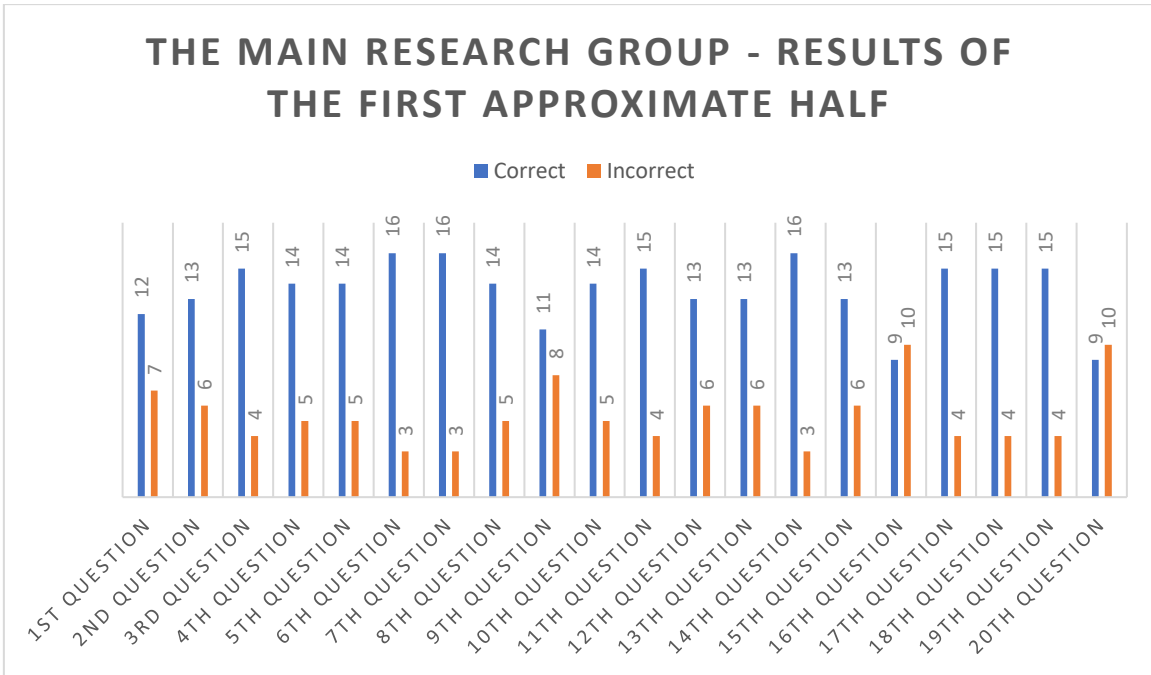
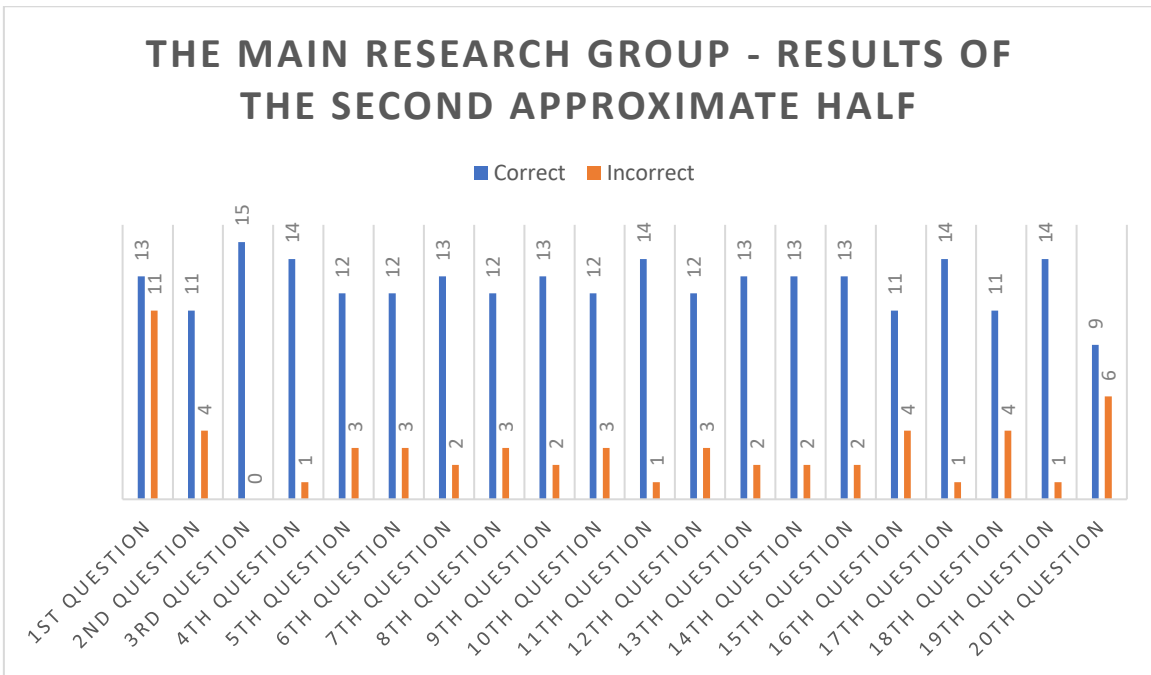Figure 36 – The test results of the first half of the main research group

Figure 37 – The test results of the second half of the main research group

The numbers of correct and incorrect answers to different questions varied in first and second half of the main research group, but there is a visible trend in answers to 19th question being highly correct in both halves. 1st and 20th question had high or prevalent number of incorrect answers.
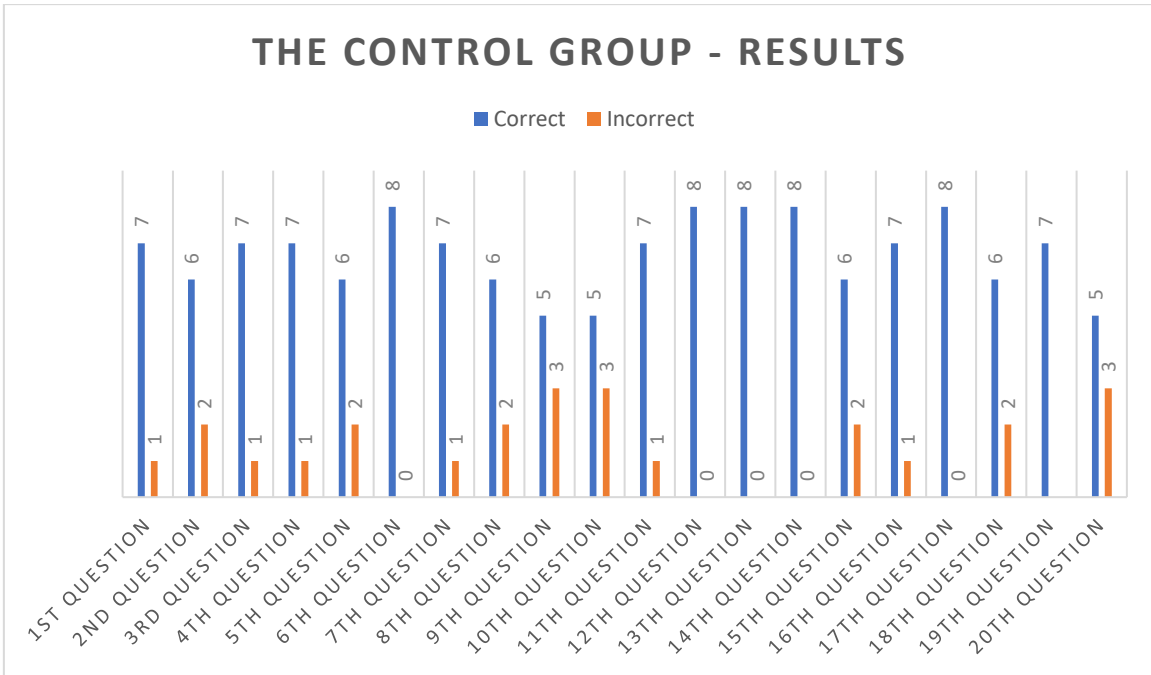
Figure 38 – The test result of the control group

Comparing the results from Figure 37 and 38, there is a shared tendency of the 20th question having high number of incorrect answers in comparison to other questions. Yet it cannot be stated which other questions were the most problematic, since the number of correct and incorrect answers differed in each group of the research.
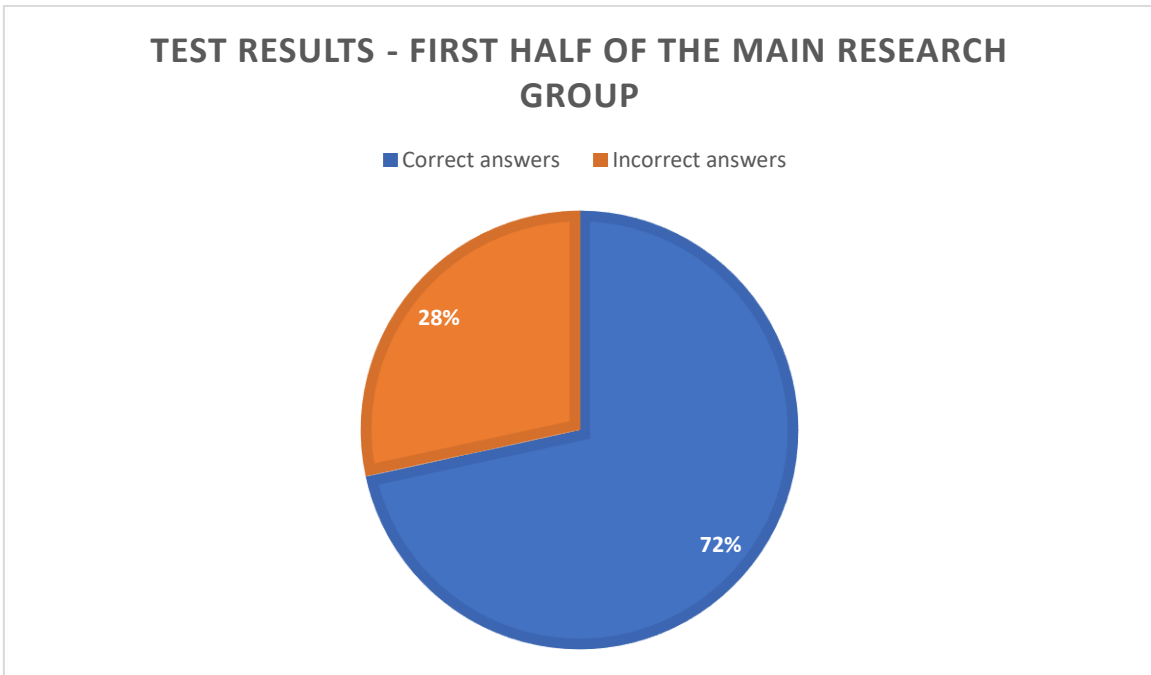
Figure 39 – Test results of the first half of the main research group in percentage
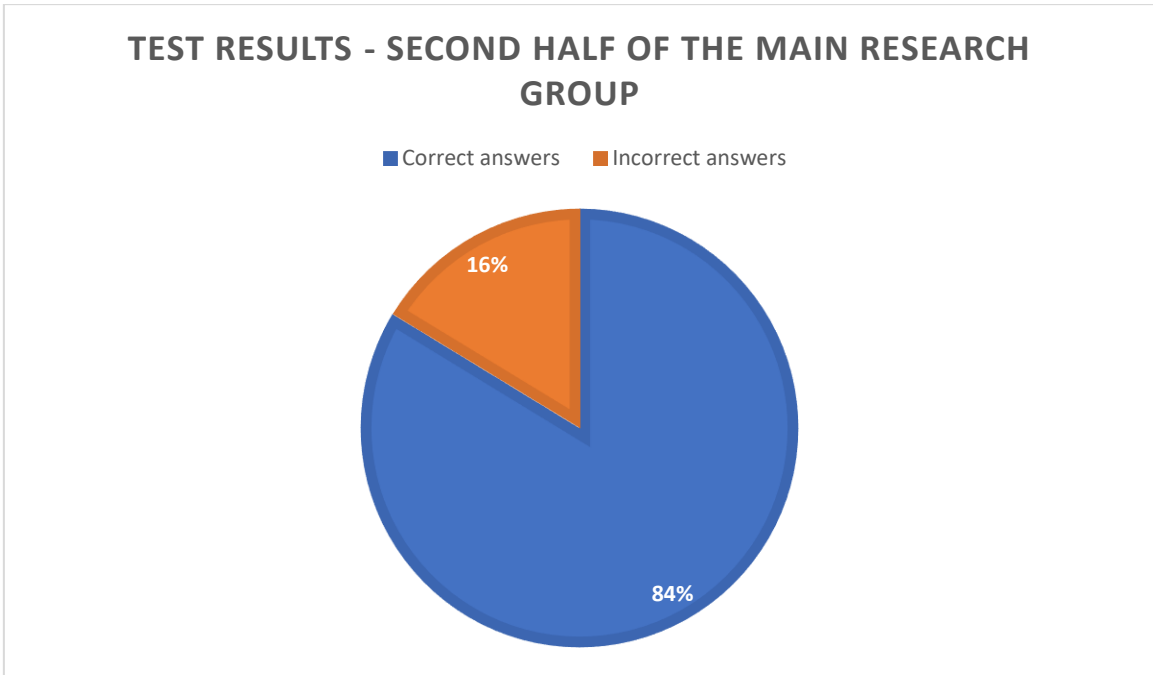
Figure 40 – Test results of the second half of the main research group in percentage

As the Figure 39 and 40 presents, the percentage of correct answers was higher in the second half of the main research group, that was tested after a prolonged period after the initial lesson, than the first half that was tested the following lesson, having a short period of 2 to 3 days between initial lesson and assessment lesson.
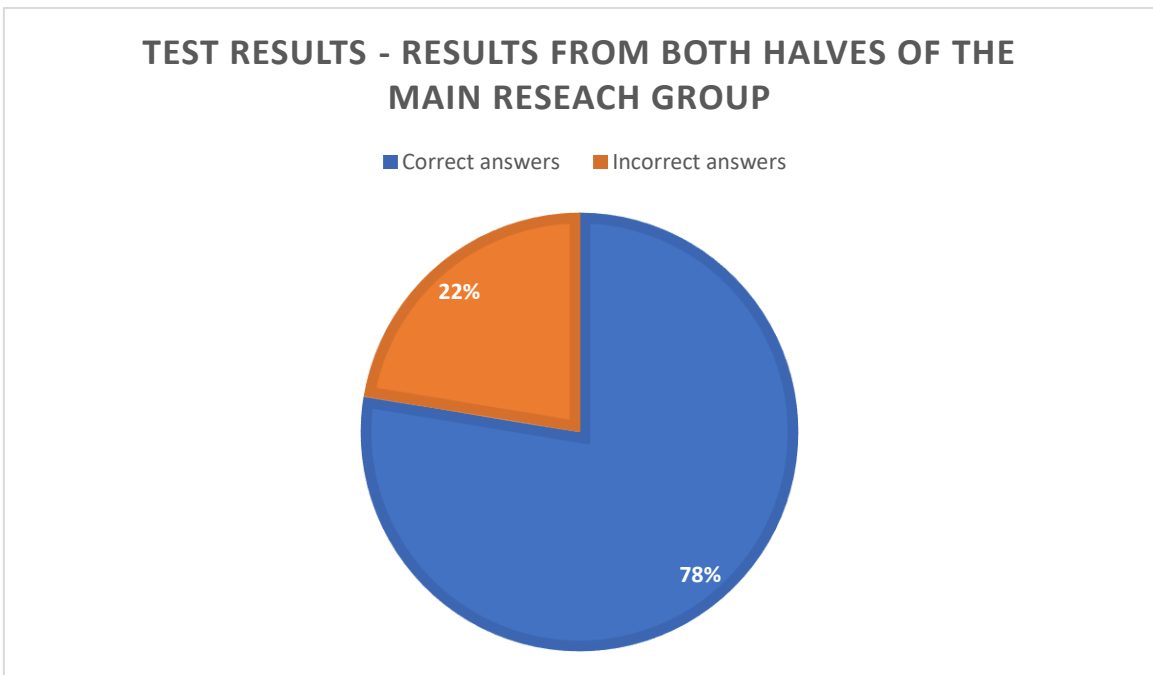
Figure 41 – Test results from both halves of the main research group in percentage

It might be assumed that the memes have proven to be effective teaching tool, since the Chart 8 shows the overall number of correct answers in the main research group was 78%. Yet it cannot be forgotten that 48% out of all answers in the handouts have learners marked as the phrasal verbs they knew before the lesson and there was only 7% of answers they correctly interpreted based on the memes and 14% of answers in which they at least identified the phrasal verb in the meme. Since the overall number of correct answers in the handouts was 55%, that would result in 23% increase of fully correct answers in the tests, in comparison to the handouts.
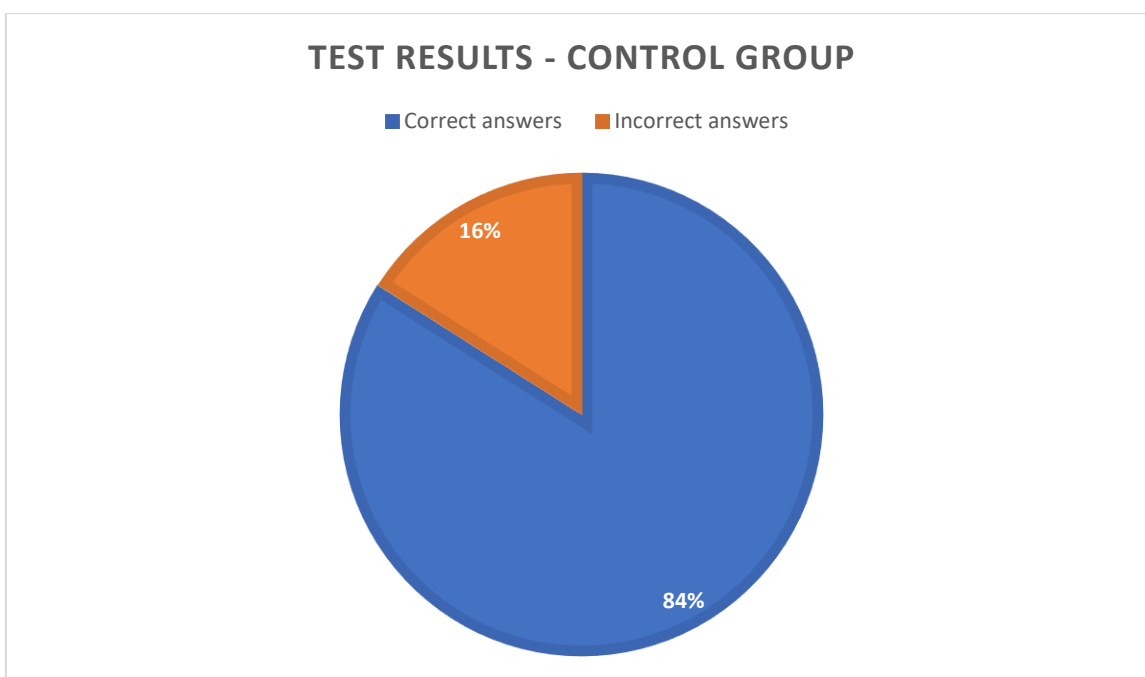
Figure 42 – Test results from the control group in percentage

Moreover, the percentage of correct answers in the handouts was 78% out of which 56% of answers were marked as the phrasal verbs that the learners knew before the lesson. Therefore, there is a 6% increase in correct answers in tests, compared to the correct answers from the lesson.

To put results from the main research group and control group in contrast, the percentage of correct answers in both groups is above 75%. The percentage of correct answers in control group was only 6% percent higher than in the main research group. The increase of correct answers in the tests in comparison to the handouts is significantly higher in the main research group, resulting in possible explanation of memes having a higher or better learning value than visual aids, despite of overall number of correct answers being lower in case of memes,

the increase of the correct results in the main research group tends to appear as vital information of the research.

2.9.5   The questionnaire results

The questionnaire results will be divided into two sections. First section will merge the results of the questionnaire given to the control group and to the main research group, as the initial seven questions of the questionnaire for the main research group are identical to the control group's questionnaire. Consequently, the number of respondents answering the questions about their opinion and relationship towards the memes will be raised, resulting in total of 40 respondents.

The second section will present the data collected from the 8th to 16th question of the main research group's questionnaire, responding about the usage of memes in ELT. The total number of respondents is 32.

2.9.5.1 1st section of the questionnaire results
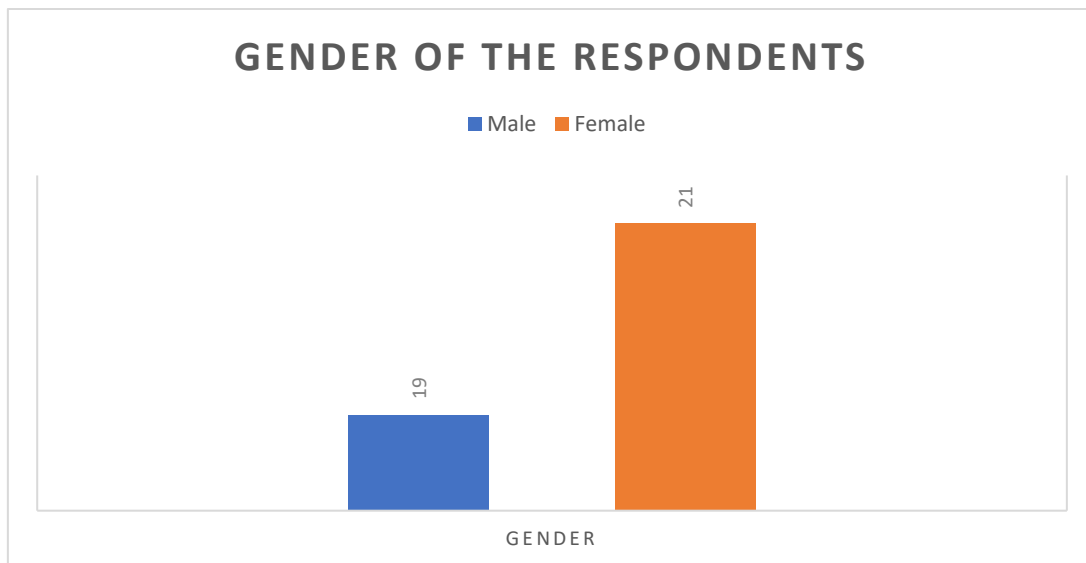
Figure 43 – Gender of the respondents
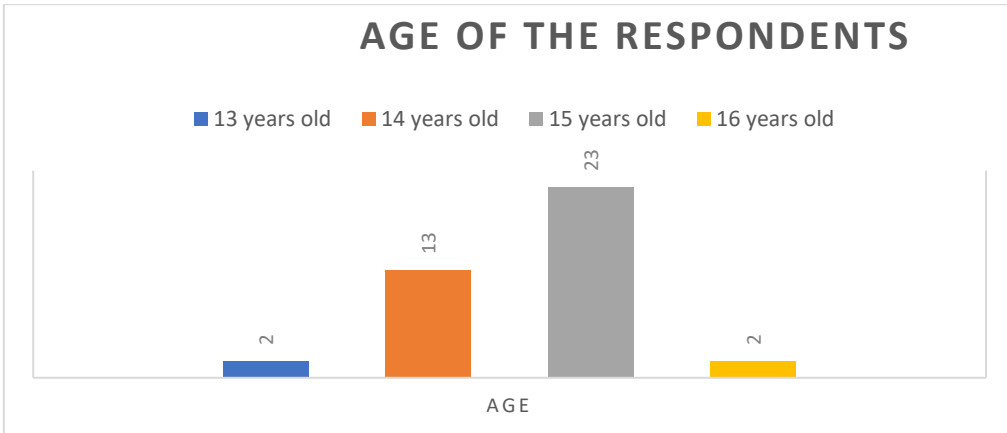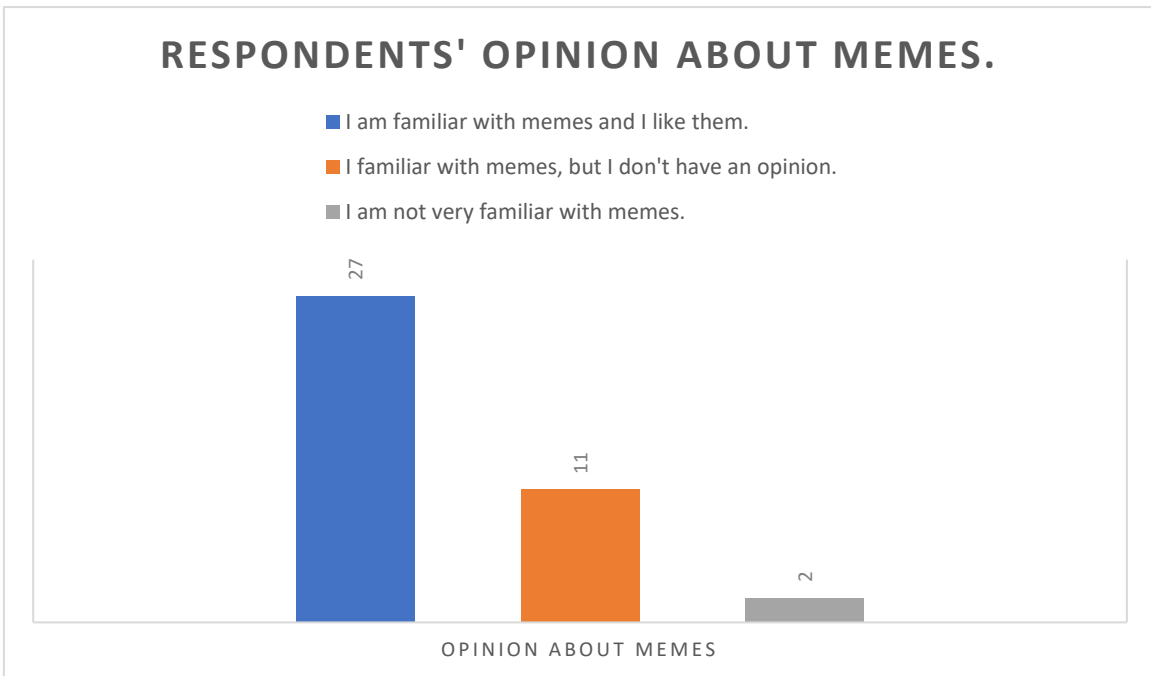
Figure 44 – Age of the respondents

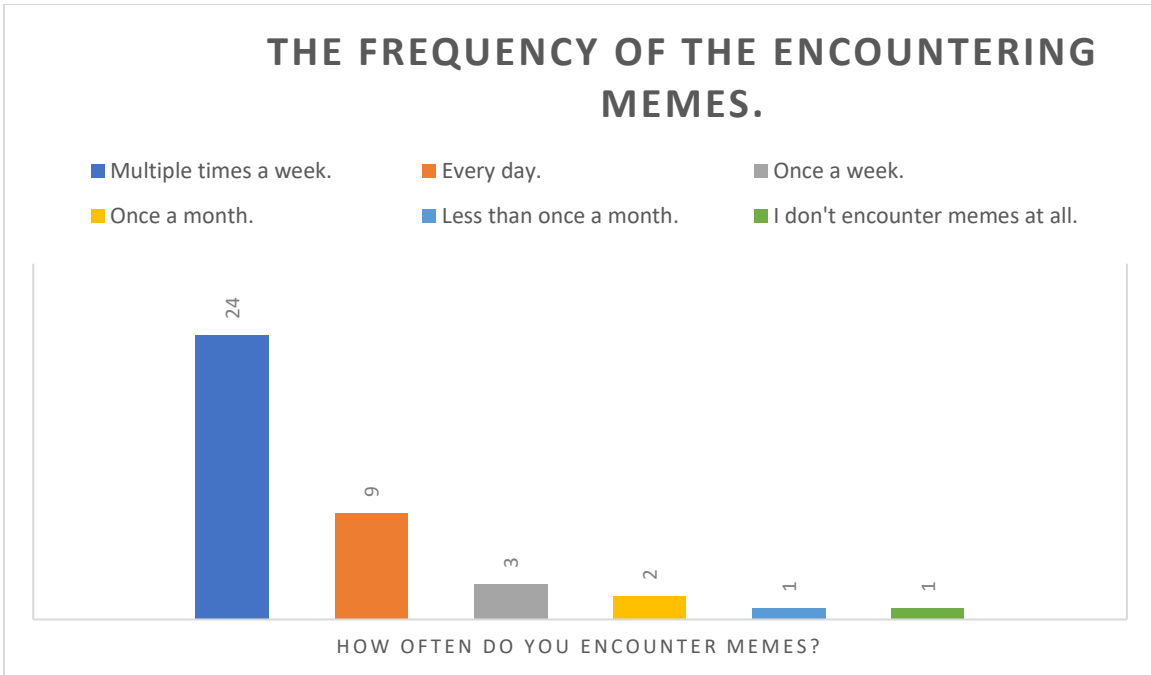Figure 45 – Respondents' opinion about memes

Figure 46 – The respondents' frequency of encountering memes

The results from Figure 45 indicate that respondents are familiar with memes and that they prevalently evaluate them positively. Analysing the responses in Figure 46, most respondents encounter memes multiple times a week or even daily, which might be considered noticeably often. The results of both figures might be to some extent interpreted as connected, since the high frequency of encountering memes might raise the positive attitude towards memes.
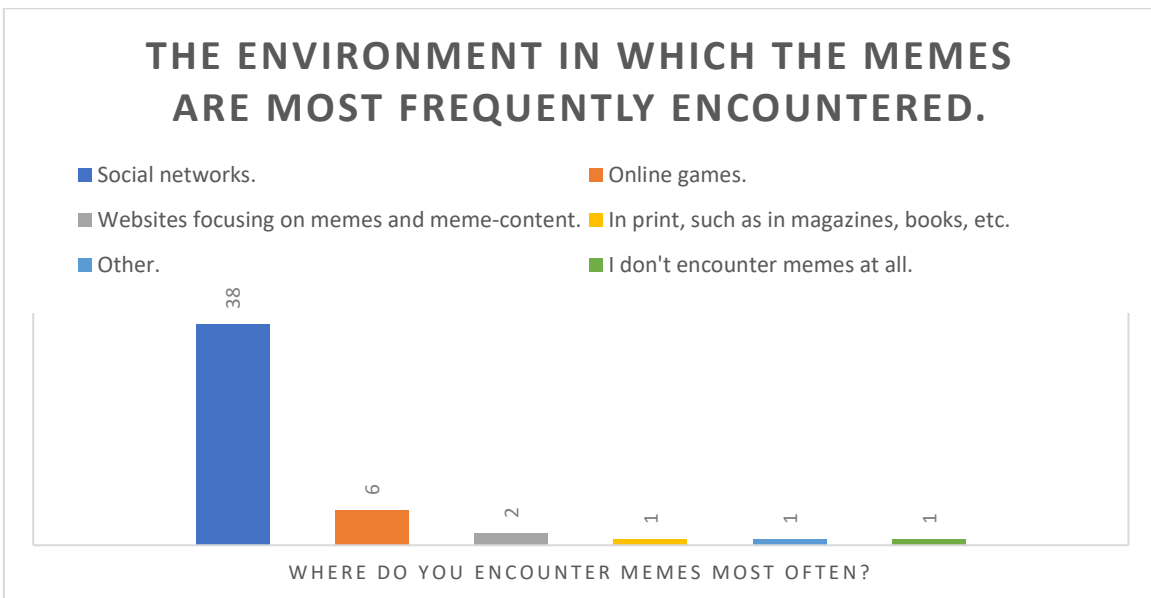
Figure 47 – The environment in which the respondents most frequently encounter memes

Respondents generally encounter memes on social media networks and to a great degree in the environment of online games. Memes are to be encountered on social networks notably often since these networks allow easy sharing and replication of memes. Therefore, these results are admittedly not surprising.
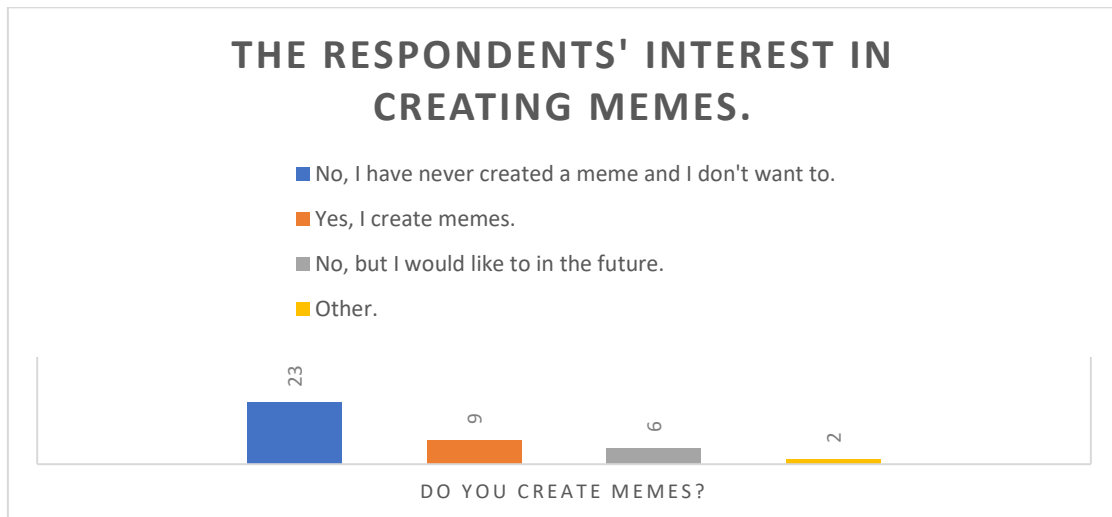

THE RESPONDENTS' INTEREST IN CREATING MEMES.

- No, I have never created a meme and I don't want to.
- Yes, I create memes.
- No, but I would like to in the future.
- Other.

23   9   6   2

DO YOU CREATE MEMES?

Figure 48 – The respondents' interest in creating memes

More than a half of respondents have never created and does not aspire to create memes. Slightly lower but still significant tendency in responses reveals that respondents create memes or would like to in the future.
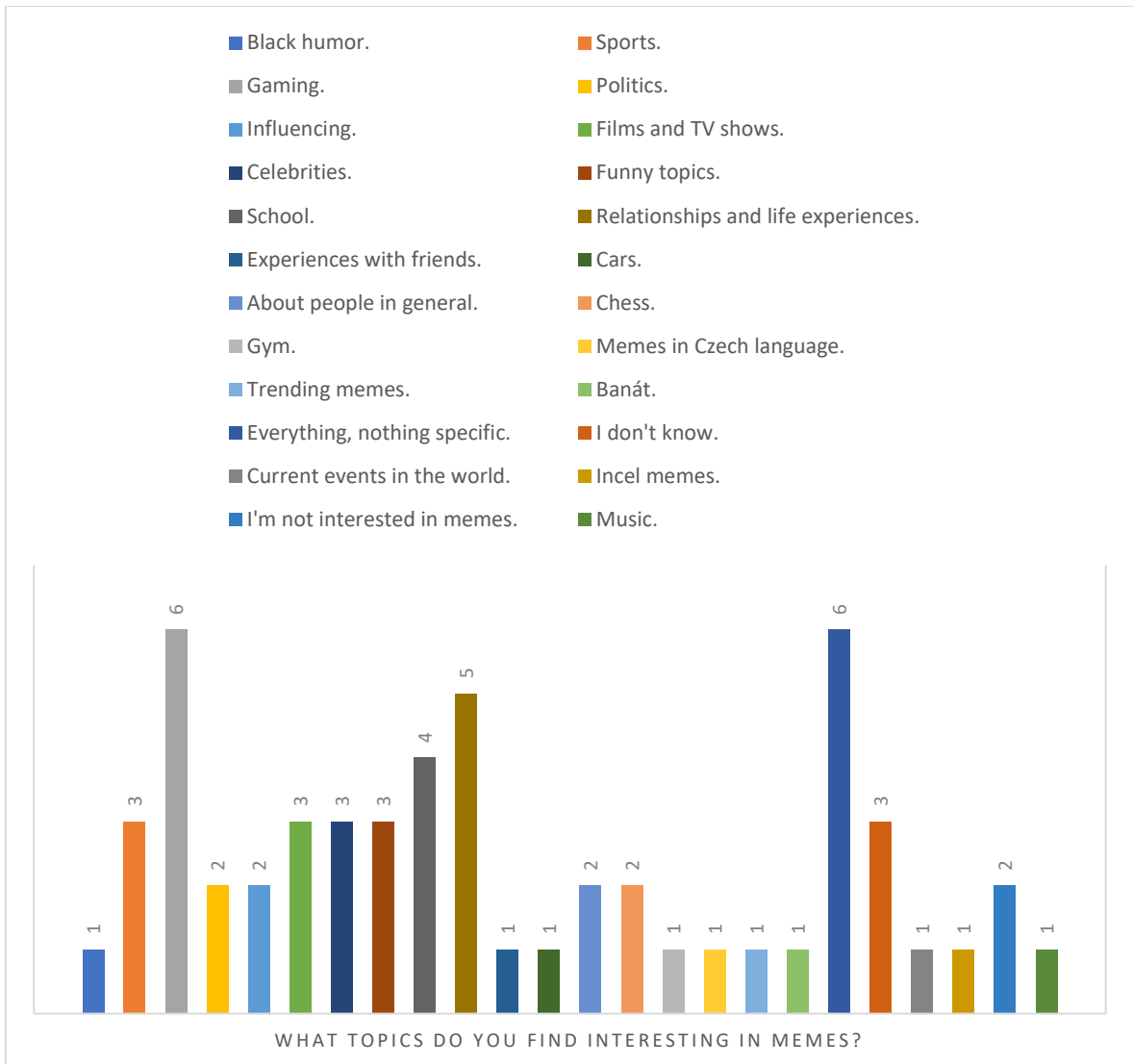
Figure 49 – The topics learners find interesting in memes

Some of the topics that respondents find most interesting in memes are memes about gaming, relationships and life experiences, school, sports, celebrities, films and TV shows and funny topics in general. Six respondents identified their response as there's not any specific topic they prefer, and 3 respondents did not identify any topic.

2.9.5.2   2nd section of the questionnaire results
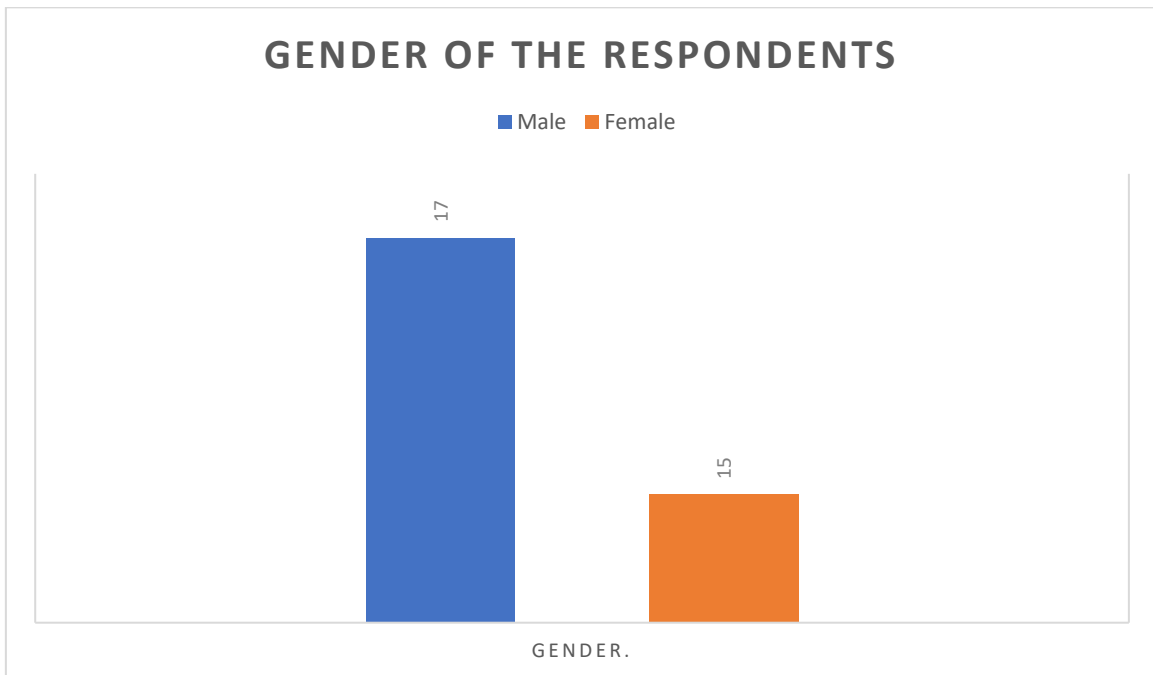

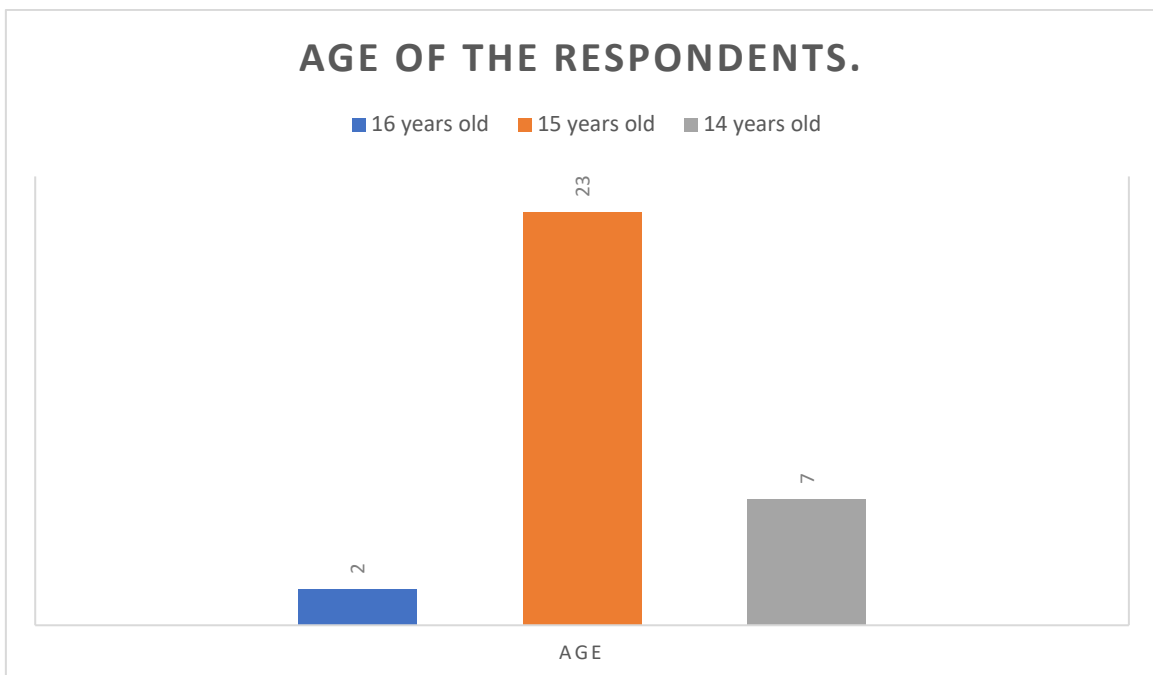Figure 50 – Gender of the respondents

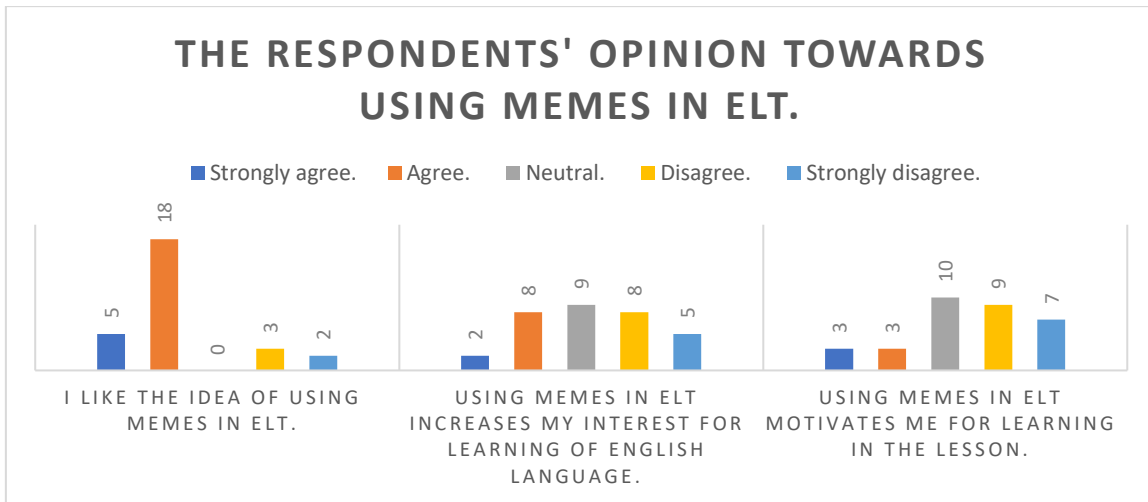Figure 51 – Age of the respondents

Figure 52 – The respondents' opinion towards using memes in ELT

The Figure 52 shows that 23 respondents like the idea of using memes in the lessons of English language, which is most of the respondents. Indeed, the interest for the lesson may not be increased by memes, since 13 respondents disagreed with the idea and 9 respondents chose to remain neutral, resulting in only 10 respondents agreeing with the idea that memes increase their interest in English language learning. Certainly, the responses have likely proven that memes do not motivate learners for learning in the lesson with only 6 responses agreeing with the statement that they do, 10 respondents answering neutrally and 16 respondents disagreeing.
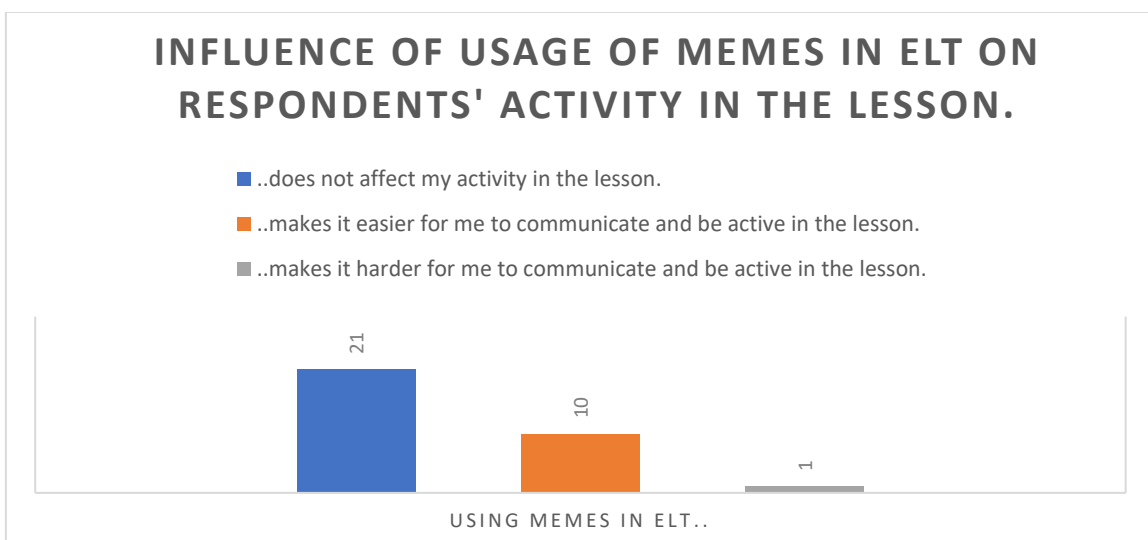

Figure 53 – The influence of usage of memes in ELT on respondents' activity in the lesson

The results in Figure 53 reveal that memes rather do not affect learners' activity in the lesson, with 21 respondents being in favour with the statement. Ten respondents claimed that memes

make it easier for them to communicate and be active in the lesson and one respondent chose the answer of memes making it harder to communicate.
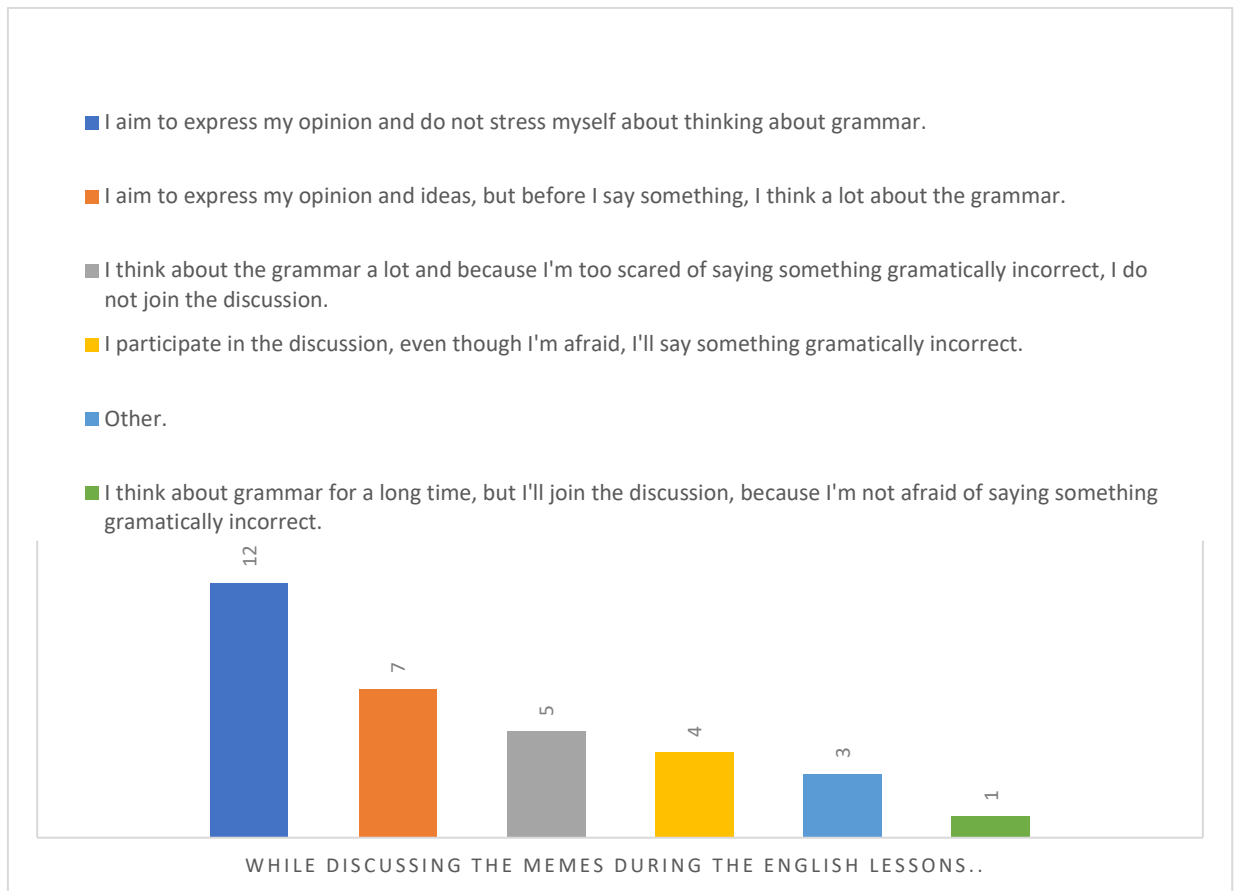

Figure 54 – The influence of usage of memes in respondents' participation in the lesson discussion

On the other hand, results in Figure 54 present that respondents rather participate in the discussion about memes aiming to express their opinion and not putting that much stress and emphasis upon possible grammatical mistakes. Despite being or not being afraid of saying something grammatically incorrect, 24 respondents would join the discussion about memes in the lesson. Only 4 respondents expressed that they rather not join the discussion to prevent saying something grammatically incorrect.
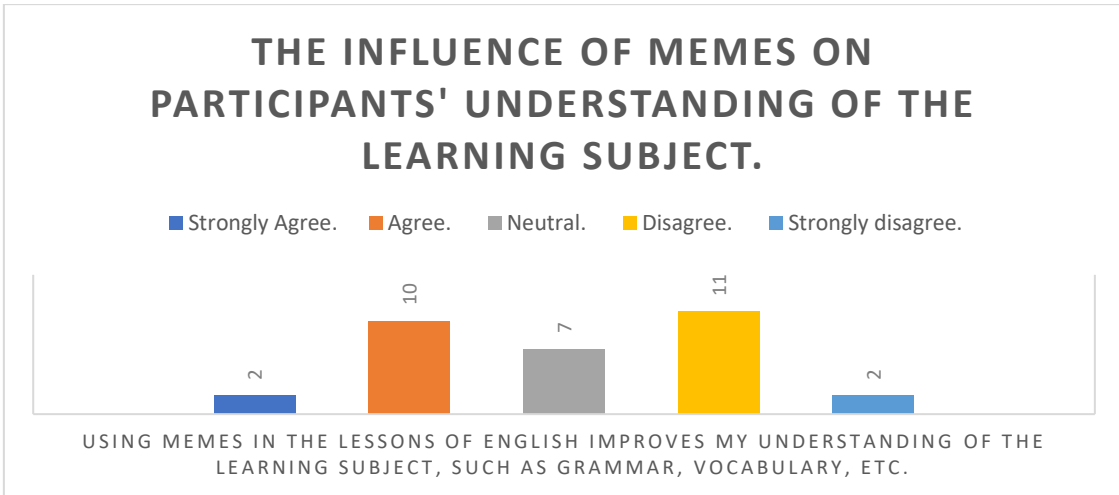
Figure 55 – The influence of memes on participants' understanding of the learning subject

While interpreting the results from Figure 55, it could be argued that memes do not influence learners' understanding of the learning subject in neither, affirmative nor negative manner. That could be for the reason of 7 respondents remaining neutral towards the statement, 12 respondents agreeing with the statement and 13 respondents disagreeing with the statement, making the overall result in a sense neutral towards the initial statement.
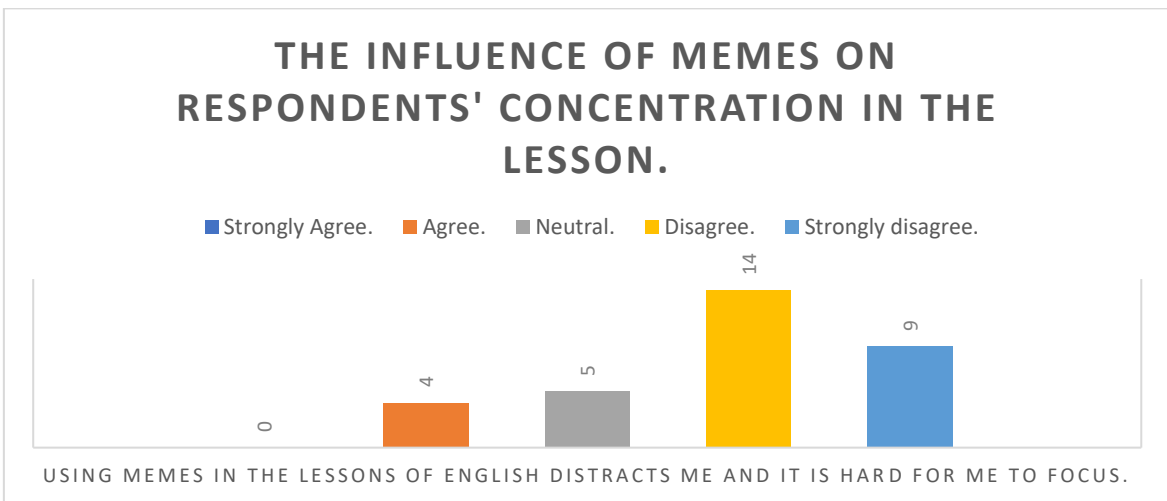

Figure 56 – The influence of memes on respondents' concentration in the lesson

Conceivably, the memes do not distract learners' concentration in the lesson, it might be argued that memes possibly affect learners' concentration in an affirmative manner, since 23 respondents disagreed with the initial statement.

Figure 57 - Respondents' subjective opinion towards usage of memes in ELT

There are 33 opinions interpreted from the results in the questionnaire, out of which 20 opinions evaluate the use of memes in ELT rather positively, 7 opinions that evaluate memes rather negatively and 7 opinions that are either unusable or tend to appear neutral. Consequently, it might be assumed that learners' attitude towards the usage of memes in ELT is positive, but before using memes in the lesson, the teacher should take note of learners' suggestions of how to work with the memes in the lesson to make the learners interested.

THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF MEMES IN FUTURE ENGLISH LESSONS.

■ Yes. ■ No.

20

12

WOULD YOU WELCOME THE USE OF MEMES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LESSONS IN THE FUTURE?

Figure 58 - The attitude towards the use of memes in future English lessons

Despite the 12 respondents who do not wish to encounter memes in future English language lessons, clear results in Figure 58 present that most of the respondents would welcome the use of memes in future lessons of English language.
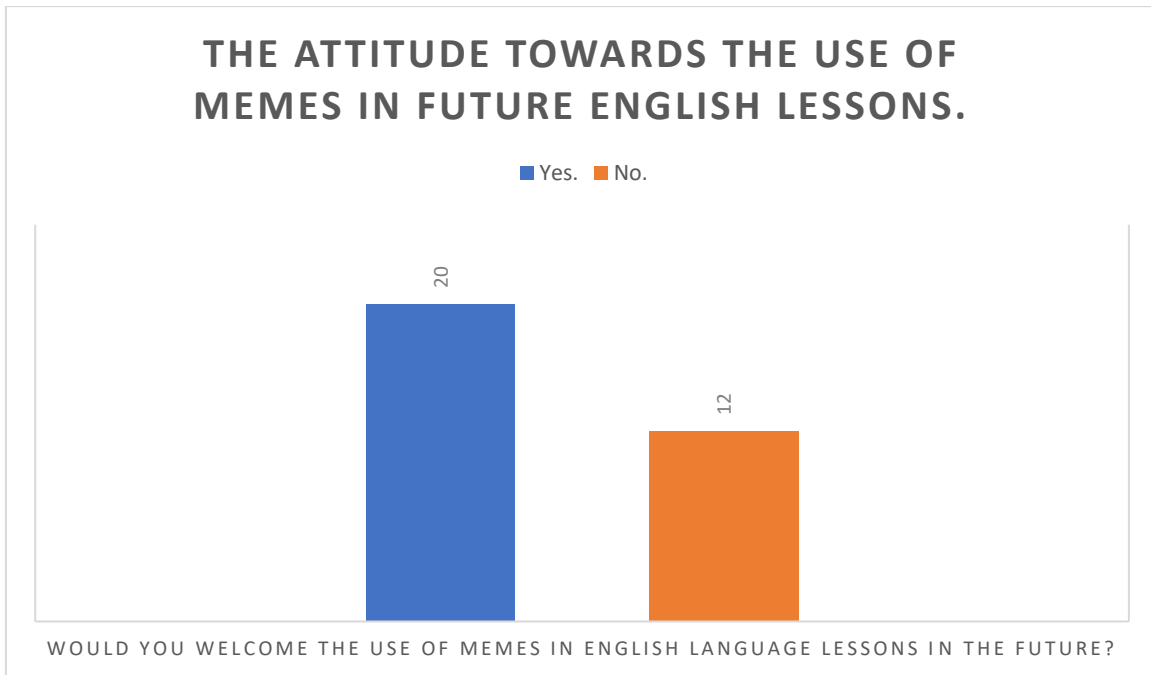
THE REASONS OF WHY THE RESPONDENTS WOULD OR WOULD NOT LIKE TO USE MEMES IN THE FUTURE ENGLISH LESSONS.

- I don't know.
- I don't have any particular reason.
- I don't think I learned much using the meme method in the lesson.
- Unusable answers.
- I like it, it's fun and interesting.
- It's useless and I'd rather learn from the textbook.
- I think that memes have a great potential to be used in the lessons of English.
- I like it more, compared to the usual lessons of English.
- The lesson would be at least a little bit interesting.
- I would like the discussions about memes in the lessons.
- It would enrich the learning and improve the mood in the classroom.
- I simply don't like it.

WHY? THE QUESTION REFERS TO THE ANSWER FROM PREVIOUS QUESTION.
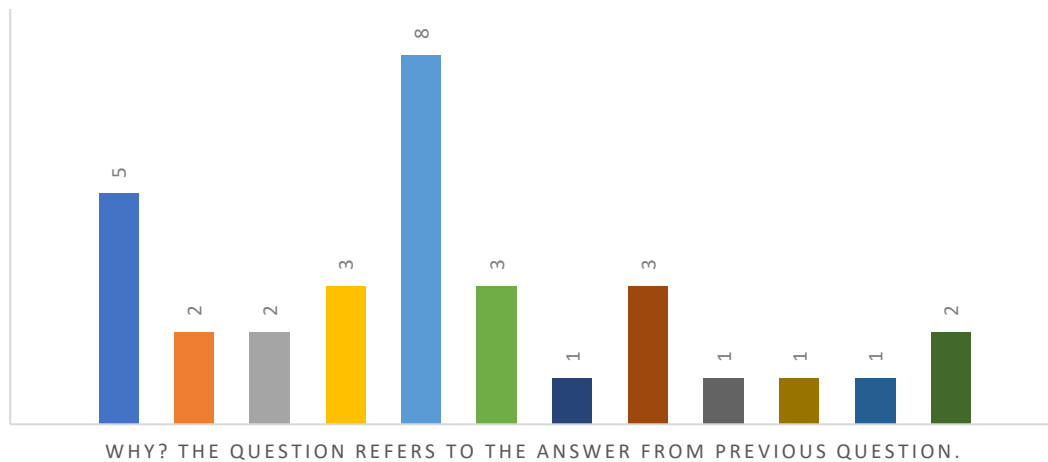
Figure 59 - The reasons of why the respondents would or would not like to use memes in future English lessons

In relation to previous question of the questionnaire, respondents were to justify their response and define the reason of preferring or not preferring the use of memes in future English lessons. There were 15 responses identified as responses of learners that would welcome the use of memes in future English lessons. Preponderance of those respondents justified their previous response by illustrating the use of memes in ELT as fun and interesting and being in some sense better than usual lessons of English. Furthermore, some respondents expressed their idea of memes having a great potential to be used in the lesson, that memes improve the mood in the classroom and that it is interesting to discuss memes in the lesson. On the other hand, there were seven opinions of respondents who would not

95

welcome the use of memes in future English lessons. They justified their opinion by saying that they would rather learn from a textbook, feeling like they did not learn much through the memes in the lesson and that they simply don't like the idea. Another seven respondents did not justify their opinion and said that they don't know and that there is no reason, and other 3 responses were unusable for the purposes of the research.
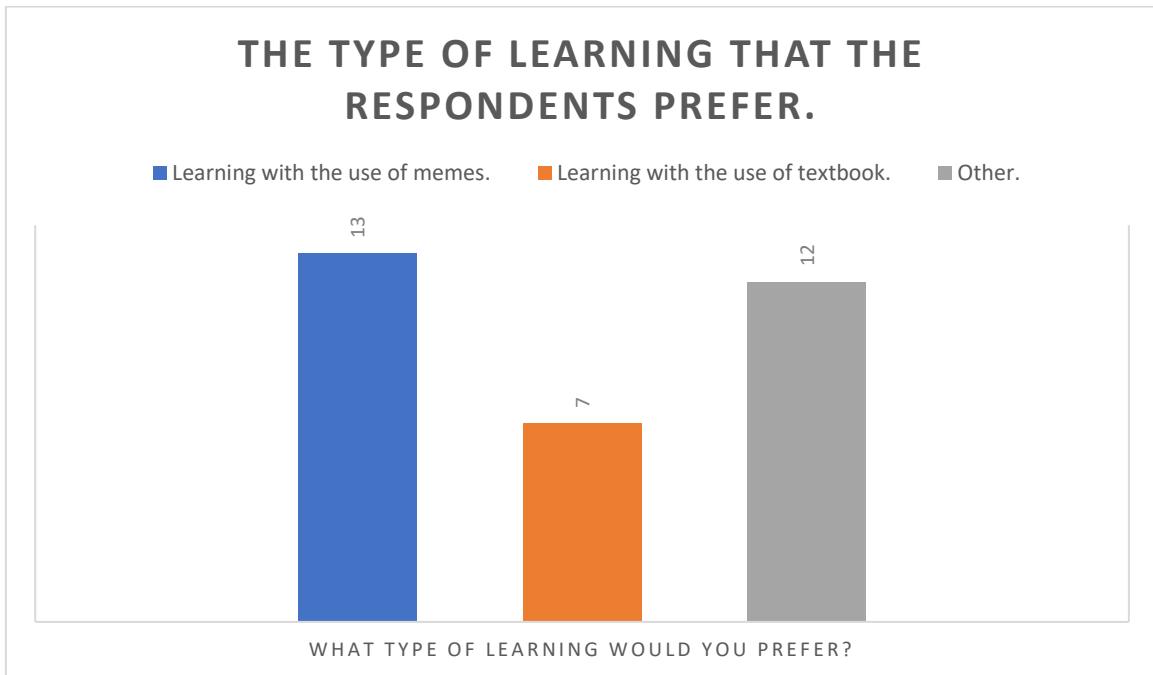

Figure 60 – The type of learning that the respondents prefer

The results in Figure 60 present that 13 respondents would prefer learning with the use of memes, 7 respondents would prefer learning with the use of a textbook and 12 respondents would prefer different type of learning that is not closely specified.

2.10 Limitations of the research

The research was limited by a number of factors that are addressed below. An explanation is provided of how the limitations may have affected the results as well as the conclusions drawn from the research.

The sample size of the main research group is adequately proportional to the nature of the research problem. The sample size of the control group is smaller than the sample size of the main research group, which may result in statistical results not being as accurate as they would have been in the case of bigger sample size of the control group. The sample size was limited by the number of classes that were available for the purposes of the research at the time of the research. Since the research was conducted in a very busy school environment, the number of teachers who were willing to provide the time of their lessons with different classes for the benefit of the research was limited as well, hence the planning and execution of the research had to be conducted in accordance with their time capacities.

A further limiting factor to consider might be, to a certain extent, the unique sense of humour of not only each individual participating in the research, but of the researcher principally. The memes for the research were developed with regard to the age of the participants by a researcher who is distant from the age of the participants and possibly has different interest caused by the age difference, and this could have been projected into the humour that is reflected in the chosen memes. The memes were created with the utmost effort to empathise with the assumed sense of humour of the research participants' generation. Despite the effort, it might not have been sufficient, for the reason that the production of memes is an authentically creative process that tends to be heavily subjective. On that account, some participants might not have found entertaining, humorous, or interesting and the results of the research could have been affected.

2.11 Discussion

The research aim of this thesis was dedicated to memes and their implementation in EFL classes. The main goal of the thesis was to investigate how memes affect the learning process, focusing on motivation, accuracy, efficiency, and learning results in general, primarily in the context of learning phrasal verbs. The research took place at FZŠ Hálkova 4 in Olomouc, a lower-secondary school specializing in extended learning of foreign languages. The methods used were action research and questionnaires. The action research was executed in 5 classes of learners from 13 to 16 years old in the classes of two English teachers. The main research was executed in the classes of the 9th grade and the the control group belonged to the class of the 8th grade. The half of the 9th grade learners and 8th grade were tested and given a questionnaire a following lesson after the action research, the other half of the 9th grade learners participating in the research was tested and given the questionnaire after 10 days prior to action research.

Memes used in the action research were created for the research and the templates were chosen from the Internet, primarily from the site Imgflip. The phrasal verbs selected in accordance with the learning syllabus and learners' level of English were presented in the context of a meme. There were 44 learners participating in the action research, 42 and 42 learners being tested and given questionnaire. Two learners did not submit the questionnaire, therefore the number of collected responses was 40.

The research objectives were stated as following:

1. To examine the influence of memes on the learning process.

2. To determine the relationship between memes and the learners.

3. To measure the learning efficiency of phrasal verbs being introduced by memes and compare with the more standard visual learning method.

4. To examine the influence of memes on learners' speaking activity.

The research was successful in fulfilling the objectives and finding the answers to the research questions, in which the research objectives are reflected. There were 6 research questions posed before the survey and they are addressed below.

1. Do Czech learners know and understand memes, and if so, how often and where do they encounter memes?

The research has confirmed that Czech learners understand memes. The action research showed that learners understood 55% of the phrasal verbs in memes and other 14% of learners were at least capable to identify the presence of a phrasal verb in the meme. The memes were subsequently discussed, and the learners communicated their ideas and interpretations concerning the memes used in the action research while having prevalently correct ideas, therefore it may be concluded that Czech learners understand memes. Not only they know memes, but majority of respondents also expressed their positive relationship and opinion towards memes. Referring to questionnaire results, learners encounter memes often or even daily. The memes are to be encountered by learners most frequently on social media networks and in online games.

2. What topics or genres do learners find interesting in memes?

The questionnaire survey revealed that topics respondents might find most interesting in memes are gaming, relationships and common life experiences, school life, sports, celebrities, films and TV shows and funny topics in general. Furthermore, number of respondents stated that there is not any topic they find particularly interesting.

3. Do Czech learners welcome the use of memes in ELT, and does it raise their motivation for the lesson?

As the observation have indicated that learners prevalently welcome the use of memes in ELT, the questionnaire results were in accordance with those results, concluding that 23 respondents are in favour of the idea of using memes in ELT and more than a half of the respondents would welcome the use of memes in future lessons of English language. Moreover, the questionnaire results have likely proven that the motivation and interest in the lesson is not increased while using memes. This result contrasts with previously published studies.

4. Do learners create memes, or would they aspire to create memes in the future?

Slightly over the half of respondents have never created memes and do not aspire to create memes in the future, yet 9 respondents do create memes and 6 respondents aspire to create memes in the future. This might be considered a significant and to some extent important tendency and a potential object for future research to support the idea of learners creating memes in English classes having a beneficial education outcome. Additionally, this suggestion was explicitly proposed by one respondent while expressing the opinion towards the use of memes in ELT.

5. Is it possible to teach phrasal verbs through memes and does it improve the learning efficiency?

Comparing the results from handouts and tests, the percentage of correct answers in the control group was only 6% percent higher than in the main research group, while there was a higher increase of correct answers in the tests compared to the handouts in the main research group, therefore it might be assumed that memes have better learning value than more standard visual aids concerning the learning efficiency. Moreover, the percentage of correct answers in both research groups was above 75%, hence it might be concluded that it is possible to teach phrasal verbs through memes and that memes seem to improve learning efficiency. This conclusion can possibly be supported by the arguably affirmative influence that memes have on learners' focus in the lesson.

6. Does the use of memes in ELT affect the learners' speaking activity in any way?

Based on the questionnaire results, it can be assumed that memes do not significantly affect learners' speaking activity, yet learners tend to readily participate in the discussion about memes while not stressing about possible grammatical mistakes, which might be considered an affirmative influence towards speaking activity.

Conclusion

The present thesis focuses on the use of memes in ELT in the Czech educational environment. The research for the present thesis took form of an action research that also consisted of observation, handout, and test analysis, being finally concluded by a questionnaire.

Memes are genre of Internet humour that is undoubtedly highly popular amongst the various age groups, including the learners between 13 to 16 years old. Memes often feature famous pop-cultural moments and items, such as movies, video-clips, TV shows, art, or even random pictures from the Internet. Meme can be made by anyone and about anything, by developing a humorous idea that corresponds with the character of the meme template. There are thousands of meme templates on the Internet and new are being added to the Internet every day offering endless possibilities for Internet users to create memes. The term meme has a rich history that dates before the Internet era, but contemporary most common interpretation is linked to the idea of this Internet humour phenomenon, that consist not only of image macros or in other words photo-based memes, but the genre of memes has also been enriched by the short videos that share the similar conceptuality.

Reviewed studies confirmed that the use of memes in educational environment increases motivation and participation of the learners in the lesson yet improves the comprehensive understanding of the language that is understood in a sociocultural context that is enriching for learners' efficiency, interest, and relaxed mood in the classroom.

To convey the lesson contents utilizing memes successfully, the teacher should aim to plan the lesson in detail while setting clear aims and objectives of the lesson. Maintaining regular interaction with the learners and getting to know them from different perspectives might be beneficial for the use of memes in class, since the teacher can customize the character and topic of the memes to better suit the learners' interest and make the class more naturally engaging. However, this might be a long-term process that could require a high level of patience and creativity on part of the teacher.

Memes can possibly be used in the lessons in a reverse fashion to what is shown in the present study, with the teacher providing some instructions with grammatical items or vocabulary that the learners are supposed to create a meme with, allowing the learners to enhance and engage their creativity and sense of humour while learning English, creating their own meme, and fulfilling the highest degree of Bloom's taxonomy. It is often

considered difficult to interest a group of adolescent learners in a lesson, but once the interest and trust is gained through frequent contact with the teacher, the results from the lessons and the attention that the learners give to the topic could be highly rewarding.

The findings show that the learners are abound with knowledge necessary to understand memes and have a positive attitude towards memes. Even though that learners welcome the use of memes in ELT and would like the memes to be used in the future lessons of English, the results indicated that it cannot be said that memes make the learners more motivated and interested in the lesson. Nevertheless, teaching phrasal verbs through memes is shown not only as a viable implementation of visual aids in ELT, but the results indicate that memes seem to improve learning efficiency and possibly have an affirmative influence towards learners' speaking activity in class.

Future research should focus on the long-term use of memes in the English classroom and on the benefits and drawbacks of learners making their own memes in ELT.

The understanding of memes amongst learners is high because of the digital era and the connection to the Internet that permeates lives of almost all the people around the world, especially lives of young people, who might not remember a life without the Internet. These young people often search for and consume content in English; therefore, the acquisition of language is natural and unintentional.

To conclude, memes are an aspect of today's digital world that is worthy of appearing in the English classes of the present day, but despite them proving to be an efficient tool and showing great potential in ELT, they must be appropriately chosen or created to serve the desired affirmative effects in the learning process.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for the main research group

Použití memes ve výuce anglického jazyka

Dobrý den, vyplňte prosím krátký dotazník, který se zabývá memy ve výuce anglického jazyka.

1 Jaké je tvé pohlaví?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ muž   ○ žena

2 Jaký je tvůj věk?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ 12 let   ○ 13 let   ○ 14 let   ○ 15 let   ○ 16 let

3 Můj názor na memes je takový, že

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ memes znám a mám je rád/a.   ○ memes znám, ale nemám je rád/a.   ○ memes neznám.   ○ memes znám, ale nemám na ně žádný názor.

4 Jak často se setkáváš s memy?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ každý den.   ○ několikrát týdně.   ○ jednou týdně.   ○ několikrát měsíčně.   ○ jednou měsíčně.

○ méně často než jednou měsíčně.   ○ s memy se vůbec nesetkávám.

5 Kde se s memy nejčastěji setkáváš?

☐ na sociálních sítích na internetu (např. v příspěvcích uživatelů či v chatu).

☐ na webových stránkách mimo sociální sítě, které nejsou určeny ke sdílení, vytváření a shromažďování memů.

☐ v rozhraní internetových her (např. v chatu se spoluhráči).

☐ na webových stránkách určených ke sdílení, vytváření a shromažďování memů (např. KnowYourMeme.com, Memedroid.com, Memes.com, Imgflip.com, Kapwing.com a jiné..)

☐ v tištěné podobě (např. v novinách, časopisech, knihách apod.)

☐ s memy se nesetkávám.

☐ Jiná…

6 Vytváříš vlastní memy?

○ Ano, vytvářím vlastní memy.

○ Ne, nikdy jsem nevytvářel/a vlastní memy a nechci je vytvářet.

○ Ne, ale v budoucna bych chtěl/a.

○ Jiná…

7 Jaká tématika memů tě zajímá?

8 Využití memes ve výuce anglického jazyka…

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
se mi vůbec nelíbí.	○	○	○	○	○	se mi naprosto líbí.
vůbec nezvyšuje můj zájem o výuku AJ.	○	○	○	○	○	naprosto zvyšuje můj zájem o výuku AJ.
mě vůbec nemotivuje k učení.	○	○	○	○	○	mě naprosto motivuje k učení.

9 Při použití memes v hodině AJ je pro mě

○ jednodušší komunikovat a být aktivní.　　○ těžší komunikovat a být aktivní.　　○ nemá to na mou aktivitu v hodině žádný vliv.

10 Když v hodině anglického jazyka diskutujeme o memech...

○ snažím se především vyjádřit svůj názor a myšlenky, nepřemýšlím tolik nad gramatikou.

○ snažím se vyjádřit svůj názor a myšlenky, ale než něco řeknu, hodně přemýšlím nad gramatikou.

○ dlouho přemýšlím nad gramatikou, ale nakonec se zapojím do diskuze, nemám strach z toho, že něco řeknu špatně.

○ dlouho přemýšlím nad gramatikou a nakonec se vůbec nezapojím do diskuze, protože mám strach, že něco řeknu špatně.

○ zapojím se do diskuze, přestože mám strach, že něco řeknu špatně.

○ Jiná...

11 Použití memů ve výuce AJ mi pomáhá k lepšímu pochopení probírané látky.

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
zcela nesouhlasím	○	○	○	○	○	zcela souhlasím

12 Použití memů ve výuce mě rozrušuje a hůře se soustředím.

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
zcela nesouhlasím	○	○	○	○	○	zcela souhlasím

13 Jaký je tvůj názor na použití memů ve výuce AJ? Napiš prosím vlastními slovy.

14 Uvítal/a bys použití memů v hodinách AJ i v budoucnu?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

◯ Ano.　◯ Ne.

15 Proč?

Nápověda k otázce: *Otázka se vztahuje k předchozí otázce, zda bys uvítal/a použití memů ve výuce AJ i v budoucnu. Krátce odpověz v jedné až dvou větách.*

16 Jakou preferuješ výuku anglického jazyka?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

◯ Výuku s použitím memů.　◯ Výuku s použitím učebnice.

◯ Jiná…

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire for the control group of the research

Můj vztah k memům

Dobrý den,

věnujte prosím několik minut svého času vyplnění následujícího dotazníku, který zkoumá Váš vztah k memům.

1 Mé pohlaví je

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ muž ○ žena

2 Jaký je tvůj věk?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ 11 let ○ 12 let ○ 13 let ○ 14 let ○ 15 let ○ 16 let

3 Můj názor na memes je takový, že

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ memes znám a mám je rád/a. ○ memes znám, ale nemám je rád/a. ○ memes neznám. ○ memes znám, ale nemám na ně žádný názor.

4 Jak často se setkáváš s memy?

Nápověda k otázce: *Vyberte jednu odpověď*

○ každý den. ○ několikrát týdně. ○ jednou týdně. ○ několikrát měsíčně. ○ jednou měsíčně.

○ méně často než jednou měsíčně. ○ s memy se vůbec nesetkávám.

5 Kde se s memy nejčastěji setkáváš?

Nápověda k otázce: Vyberte jednu odpověď

○ na sociálních sítích na internetu (např. v příspěvcích uživatelů či v chatu).

○ na webových stránkách mimo sociální sítě, které nejsou určeny ke sdílení, vytváření a shromažďování memů.

○ v rozhraní internetových her (např. v chatu se spoluhráči).

○ na webových stránkách určených ke sdílení, vytváření a shromažďování memů (např. KnowYourMeme.com, Memedroid.com, Memes.com, Imgflip.com, Kapwing.com a jiné..)

○ v tištěné podobě (např. v novinách, časopisech, knihách apod.)

○ s memy se nesetkávám.

○ Jiná...

6 Vytváříš vlastní memy?

Nápověda k otázce: Vyberte jednu odpověď

○ Ano, vytvářím vlastní memy.

○ Ne, nikdy jsem nevytvářel/a vlastní memy a nechci je vytvářet.

○ Ne, ale v budoucna bych chtěl/a.

○ Jiná...

7 Jaká tématika memů tě zajímá?

Nápověda k otázce: Například memy o hrách, vztazích, každodenním životě, škole, a jiné. Stačí odpovědět v několika slovech.

Appendix 3 - Test

1. The computer suddenly broke _____.

a off   b down   c through   d in.

2. I fell _____ and twisted my ankle.

a into   b out   c under   d over

3. I _____ up! Tell me the answer.

a come   b give   c go   d get

4. Can you figure _____ how to open this?

a in   b through   c away   d out

5. Did you see the beautiful dress she wore today? She really dressed _____.

a up   b on   c out   d forward

6. I tried _____ my new shoes and they were too small.

a in   b on   c up   d along

7. Julie's dog recently passed _____, that's why she is so sad.

a on   b through   c off   d away

8. We just arrived at the airport when we found _____, that our flight was cancelled.

a about   b out   c down   d off

9. If you don't know what the word means, look it _____ in the dictionary.

a up   b in   c out   d forward

10. "Do you have any milk?" "Sorry, I've _____ out.

a put   b took   c been   d ran

11. Put your toys _____ now, the guests are coming.

a off   b away   c out   d under

12. "Will you please look _____ my dog today? I'm busy and she needs to take her medicine in the afternoon."

a on   b through   c up   d after

13. "Did you write _____ his phone number? " "No, I'll look it up on Google."

a out   **b** in   **c** under   **d** down

14. Pick _____ some cheese when you'll go to the supermarket.

a up   **b** in   **c** out   **d** for

15. "Don't throw those shoes _____, I'll give them to my sister, they'll fit her."

a out   **b** off   **c** under   **d** away

16. All that time that she spent building her business has finally paid _____, and she's very successful now.

a in   **b** out   **c** away   **d** off

17. "Are you free next Friday?" "_____ on, I'll check my diary. "

a Wait   **b** Stay   **c** Go   **d** Hold

18. "Will you please let me go _____ the door? "

a away   **b** over   **c** through   **d** off

19. When is your sister coming _____ from her vacation?

a back   **b** down   **c** in   **d** out

20. That T-shirt already wore _____, the material is quite cheap.

a off   b out   c in   d on

Appendix 4 – An example of a filled in handout from the action research

Number	Phrasal verb / frázové sloveso	Translation / překlad	✓
18	ran out ~~of~~	dojít	✓
17	to go through	projít	✓
3	give up	vzdát se	✓
4	look after	hlídat	✓
5	to figure out	přijít na to	✓
6	forgot to	zapomenout	✓
7	paying off	vyplatit se	✓
8	to dress up	oblect	✓
9	try on	vyzkoušet	✓
10	coming back	vrátit se	✓
11	to pass away	umřít	✓
12	throw away	vyhodit	✓
13	pick ~~up~~ up	vzít	✓
14	find out, get on	zjistit, nastoupit	✓
15	looking up	vyhledat	✓
16	has been there for	je tu	
17	broke down	rozbít se	✓
18	fall over	spadnout	✓
19	put it away	dát pryč	✓
20	wear out	obnosit	

Appendix 5 – Visual aids, selected materials for the control group

2   **The waiter stumbled and fell over.**

Inspired by: https://www.tekportal.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/fall-over-5882.jpg

Inspired by: https://www.cookiesandclogs.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/give_up.jpg

I looked after my friend's dog, while she went on vacation for a week.

He figured out all the answers to the test questions.

If you have an idea, always write it down before you forget it.

Inspired by: https://fullfocus.co/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/shutterstock_130119419-1200x800.jpg

I was watering my garden every day and once I saw the plants growing, I knew my hard work paid off.

Inspired by: https://www.shutterstock.com/cs/image-photo/hand-watering-young-plants-growing-1302315811?irclickid=2QexduV8sxyNWyfTgywcdUUyUkF0GI1dHS1C2M0&irgwc=1&utm_campaign=TinEye&utm_content=108110&utm_medium=Affiliate&utm_source=77643&utm_term=

They dressed up, even though the party was very informal.

Inspired by: https://static01.nyt.com/images/2018/12/13/smarter-living/how-to-dress-up-images-slide-IOJ1/how-to-dress-up-images-slide-IOJ1-superJumbo.jpg

They went shopping and tried on some summer dresses.

Inspired by: https://www.shutterstock.com/cs/image-photo/photo-two-young-women-fitting-room-667959745?irclickid=2QexduV8sxyNWyfTgywcdUUyUkF0GIT9HS1C2M0&irgwc=1&pl=77643-108110&utm_campaign=TinEye&utm_content=108110&utm_medium=Affiliate&utm_source=77643&utm_term=

10

The wife was happy that her husband came back home after a year.

She was sad because her husband recently passed away.

Don't throw the paper away to the garbage bin, put it in the recycling bin.

13   **I picked up some cheese in the store on my way home.**

The detective found out that the victim had many secrets.

Inspired by:

The teacher told us to look up who is the most famous person in the world.

Inspired   by:
https://www.google.com/webhp?hl=cs&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjeisyqu7H_AhXahf0HHa29
CGoQPAgJ

I called there four times, but they always told me to hold on for a few minutes.

16

Inspired by: https://www.shutterstock.com/cs/image-photo/bored-student-waiting-during-phone-call-
603215066?irclickid=2QexduV8sxyNWyfTgywcdUUyUkF0GbwpHS1C2M0&irgwc=1&
utm_campaign=TinEye&utm_content=108110&utm_medium=Affiliate&utm_source=776
43&utm_term=

17

The girl was little scared to go through the tunnel, but her brother helped her.

18

He was nervous because he ran out of battery on his phone.

19

The child always puts his toys away, before he goes to sleep.

20

I had these shoes for years, no wonder I wore them out.