The Depiction of language school EFL Teachers' beliefs and issues through discourses found in memes

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

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Abstract

Research worldwide has focused on EFL teachers within the context of public and private schools and universities. Although studies have examined the context of EFL teachers in language schools, including their policies on skills such as reading, the use of textbooks, and cultural identities, as well as their salaries and descriptions of settings in countries such as Malta, Spain, or Canada, there has been a lack of attention paid to the phenomenon of EFL teachers' discourses in memes to comment on their beliefs and struggles within language schools. This study aims to expand on research into EFL teachers from private language centers, particularly their use of discourse and humor in memes to depict their experiences. Teachers in this setting have created humorous memes uploaded to social media sites such as Reddit, and these memes may contain discourses that inform us about EFL teachers' issues, struggles, and perceptions of the ELT field. Thematic filtering, multimodal discourse analysis, and cyber-pragmatic analysis are used to extract discourses and humor styles from image macro memes. Data were collected from posts made during the months of May, June, and July 2021. It has been found that teachers use metaphors, sarcasm, and text-image incongruities to not only change power relations within language schools or reinforce bonds with members of the ELT community, but also depict EFL teachers as creative, playful, knowledgeable individuals who imbue discourses with humor for purposes beyond entertainment.

Introduction

The idea of this research originated a few years ago after a teachers' meeting in a private language school. It was quite a quick meeting to warn us against being part of online groups to share memes about our workplace. I usually receive memes from colleagues in other language schools that address specific situations from time to time through many different means. On the one hand, I felt amused by them since I enjoy humor. On the other hand, I felt curious since I wanted to know the reasons for the higher-ups to silence professional teachers as if they were children. In addition, I neither knew how to make memes nor belonged to a group to read memes, but I became sympathetic toward my fellow teachers, who had gone through hardships in their workplaces due to their comments regarding the affairs of a language school. After a considerable time of exploring what I wanted to achieve with this research, the outcomes are crystalized in this research.

In the chapter one, I present the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the rationale, and contributions to the field of ELT. The study of multimodal discourse in Internet humor made by EFL teachers has been overlooked, and this research attempts to fill the literature gap, and in addition, this study attempts to expand the depiction of EFL teachers in online settings by their use of multimodal discourse in humor. Chapter two attempts to present the different concepts needed to understand this research; there, I present a conceptualization of multimodal discourse, Internet Humor, Marketization and Commodification of Education, and the Work Conditions in the ELT Industry.

Chapter three presents the setting where the data were extracted, a social network named reddit that guarantees anonymity to its users. The data collection instruments and procedures are also explained. The collected data were three months of memes posted during 2021. I explained

the characteristics of the data I picked up and image macro memes[1] that commented on the

experiences of working in language schools. The data were filtered through thematic filtering.

Then the data were analyzed by means of cyberpragmatic analysis and textual analysis. The data

was filtered once more through thematic analysis to narrow down the themes and subthemes that

emerged. I explained the responsibilities and ethics throughout the research process. I also

described in as much detail as possible the matrices I designed to organize the interpretations of

my collected data regarding the cyberpragmatic and textual analyses and how they helped me to

find the humor styles employed by teachers to convey discourse and the issues and beliefs in

language schools.

Chapter four presents the results obtained after the cyberpragmatic and textual analyses. I

present the explanation on two memes per sub-theme and complementary sub-theme. Then I

presented the themes and subthemes that emerged and explained them, and I revealed the

contents regarding image, text, pop reference, and text to reveal discourse first and humor styles

next. Chapter five presents the discussion of the results regarding the emerging themes:

Marketization & Commodification of Education, the Perceptions of the TEFL Industry and Work

Conditions, and EFL teachers' use of Multimodal Discourses within Internet Humor. Lastly, I

present this research's four major conclusions, limitations, weaknesses, and recommendations for

future research.

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[1] Memes with a combination of texts and static images

Chapter 1 - Problem Statement

Historically, researchers in the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL from on) from the inner circle[2] have focused their efforts on developing the field by keeping in mind concerns such as the emulation of teaching classical languages, teaching the spoken language, searching scientific basis for teaching, and aiming for 'real-life' communication (Howatt and Smith, 2014). Many other teacher researchers from different countries also began to contribute to the TEFL community with research that initially mirrored what was done in inner circle countries by focusing on teaching methods but later evolved to a more critical, independent research that emerged from the domination of British and North American interests in TEFL in many different aspects (Braine, 2005).

With the pass of time, institutions such as the British Council and its North American counterparts promoted the teaching of the English language as a compulsory subject of study in schools and universities worldwide, and in addition, offered their help to numerous governments to design and shape their bilingualism programs (Phillipson, 1992). As a result, there was an increase in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as Second Language (ESL) programs in universities that graduated teachers from former British colonies, teachers from European countries, teachers from former colonies of other lands, and teachers from expanding circle[3] nations. Those teacher researchers experienced and observed different phenomena in their countries, about their students, their colleagues, and themselves, most of the times related to the bilingualism programs, some other times focused on particular issues and experiences with

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[2] Kachru's (1985) definition of countries where English is spoken as a mother tongue
[3] Kachru's (1985) definition of countries with no colonial past, but are concerned about English language

curricula in their respective nations within varied settings such as primary, secondary and tertiary education (Braine, 2005).

There is a copious amount of research produced by EFL/ESL teacher researchers worldwide in many different settings in their respective countries. Research about tertiary education seems to focus more on universities. However, research within the setting of language schools[4], also considered part of tertiary education, has enriched the EFL and ESL communities, although it is not as vast as it would seem. For example, Samar and Moradkhani (2014) perceived that research about codeswitching did not try to understand the personal reasons EFL teachers have for codeswitching during classes; hence they attempted to explore the reasons for codeswitching. In addition, Karimi and Dehghani (2016) wanted to probe EFL teachers' reading instructional practices, how theoretical orientations and practices corresponded, and how these instructional practices varied for certified and uncertified EFL teachers.

Furthermore, Linaker (2018) was concerned about the professional development of Business English Language teachers in a European language academy and intended to find out how the use of the European Profiling Grid could work as a tool that allowed teachers to reflect on their profession, their skills, and their perceptions of the ESL industry. Additionally, Stainton (2018) explored the phenomenon of TEFL tourism by analyzing blogs written by EFL teachers and by doing interviews with Thai EFL teachers from language academies. Also, Codó (2018) examined the intersection of lifestyle mobility with the ELT industry by employing life stories coming from teachers working in private language schools in Barcelona, Spain, to understand the construction of their work experiences related to previous expectations, future mobility plans within the context of a highly uncertain job market.

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[4] In the literature different researchers refer to these institutions as language schools, language academies or language centers, in this research the term to use will be language school, or language schools.

Further research by Kafi et al. (2019) shows their interest in developing and glocalizing a set of quality indicators to improve the English language teaching learning products at Iranian private language schools. Moreover, Lim (2020) wanted to find out the perceptions and attitudes of Cambodian EFL teachers from language schools toward English varieties. In addition, Naji Meidani et al. (2020) intended to design and validate a scale to measure EFL teachers' temporal intelligence and explore its role in the phenomenon of teacher burnout. Besides, Mercer (2020) wanted to know how wellbeing was perceived by EFL teachers working within private language academies in Malta and, from an ecological perspective, how teachers felt their wellbeing was being affected.

Research about language centers and their teachers in Latin America has also revealed many interesting issues, although it is not as wide. To begin, Díaz et al. (2012) explored the primary, secondary, and tertiary-level teachers' beliefs about language assessment. Also, Moirano (2012) focused on teaching culture in EFL classrooms through EFL textbooks and attempted to depict the relevance of culture, national and foreign. She also attempted in the article to find out whether the "global coursebook" phenomenon was reflected in the books chosen for the study, whether textbooks tightened the Argentinean cultural identity, how the teachers compensated for the lack of cultural elements in textbooks, and whether that happened or not.

In addition to the mentioned research, Mora et al. (2014) reported the professional development of two EFL teachers from a language center in Mexico, and in the process, they explored the interaction between identity, agency, and professional development, and the influence EFL certificates had in the aforementioned items. Moreover, Rajagopalan (2015) depicted people's beliefs, opinions, and approaches to the teaching of the English language in

Brazil. Although the article's main focus is not on language schools, it provides basic

information about the context of the language schools in that country and hints at issues such as

native speakerism and the marketing of the English language. In addition, Torres (2017) wanted

to comprehend the social representations private language center teachers have about social

media-mediated formative education.

On the one hand, the research mentioned above has indeed provided a worldwide context and

a Latin-American context, revealing some of the practices of the language school's teachers.

Some of these issues are codeswitching in the EFL classroom, reading practices, the reflection of

professional growth, TEFL tourism, the intersection between the ELT industry and teachers'

lifestyle mobility, quality indicators for ELT products, teachers' perceptions toward world

Englishes, teachers' temporal intelligence and burnout, teachers' wellbeing, assessment beliefs,

culture in textbooks, the mediation of social media in education, among others. In addition to the

pieces of research addressed above, there has been a fairly recent interest in including digital

technologies in many educative contexts, more explicitly, the use of memes in education.

Empirical research coming from sources, different to the academic ones, evidence the use of

memes in education. An article written by El Tiempo (2016) discusses the increasing use of

social media and memes in education, highlighting how they can be effective tools to engage

students and promote learning. It notes that the use of memes in education has gained popularity

in recent years, with teachers and students using them to express ideas, humor, and criticism. The

article cites several examples of how memes have been used in education, such as creating

memes to illustrate grammar rules, creating memes based on literary characters, and using

memes to encourage critical thinking and analysis. It also discusses the potential benefits and

challenges of using memes in education, such as the ability to engage students and make learning

fun, as well as the risk of creating distractions and losing focus on learning objectives. The article emphasizes that while the use of memes in education is still a relatively new and evolving area, it has the potential to be a valuable tool for teachers and students alike.

Calderón (2021) wrote an article discussing a social media trend of Mexican teachers asking their students for homework inspiration through memes. The article features a collection of memes created by teachers, as well as some created by students in response. The article highlights the humorous nature of the memes and how they create a relatable and entertaining way to engage with students. It also mentions the positive response from students, who find the memes a fun and creative way to approach homework assignments. The article concludes by encouraging other teachers to try this approach to connect with their students and create a more enjoyable learning experience.

The article posted in Perfil (2021) reports on a teacher who went viral on TikTok for grading her students' exams with humorous memes. The teacher, named Daiana Amores from Argentina, used pop culture references and funny images to provide feedback on her students' work. She explained that her goal was to make the feedback process more engaging and memorable for her students. The article also touches on the growing trend of using memes and social media in education, with experts weighing in on the potential benefits and drawbacks of this approach. It is important to note that the teachers involved in the previous pieces of news are not mentioned as workers in language schools, which means that the creation of memes by teachers could happen in most educative settings and is not limited to particular knowledge areas. Next, I present theoretical evidence regarding the use of memes in EFL/ESL contexts.

To mention a few, Harshavardhan et al. (2019) explored humor discourse in Internet Memes as a means to keep ESL learners' attention and motivation in their lessons. Teachers are called

into action to adopt digital technologies in lesson plans and class activities, in other words, to use Internet memes to teach English as a second language. Baklachyan (2022) considers the use of Internet memes in EFL instruction to be a significant game changer in student learning and class participation in the Armenian afterschool program. Nguyen et al. (2022) highlight the relevance digital skills have in the ESL classroom and consider Internet memes to have the potential for English language learning and teaching for their virality. Domínguez and Bobkina (2021) showed their interest in the critical thinking and digital literacy skills of EFL/ESL university students and considered developing such skills to be relevant to students in this century.

Current research in TEFL hence is concerned with how EFL/ESL teachers keep their students' attention, interest, and motivation in learning the foreign language, and these pieces of research agree on the inclusion of Internet Memes to reach such objectives due to the evidence they present in humor as a facilitator of learning. In the process, EFL teachers might have started to include humorous memes in their lessons, they might have found the tricks for effective meme-making, they might have started reflecting on their teaching job conditions, and might have started to share memes with colleagues through online settings since humor fosters trust and solidarity among social agents (Johnston 2005, p.115 as cited in Gonzalez 2020, p. 8). Humor in the meme creation depicted in the three news articles and the pieces of research was used intentionally, as means to engage with others, to express criticism, and to encourage critical thinking, which implies that humor is an intellectual activity in its creation and comprehension (Gimbel, 2018).

In the light of these findings, it is positive to claim the existence of an epistemological gap. Research in EFL has overlooked a recent phenomenon that could help deepen the existing knowledge of the portrayal of EFL teachers and the characterization of language schools. During

the last few years, online communities of teachers have emerged, more precisely, communities where language school teachers upload memes that comment about their job in this setting, and its analysis might reveal many different issues within their context, from beliefs to issues which might originate in foreign language students considering themselves as consumers of a product, education in EFL (Firat, 2020), causing teachers in language schools feeling deprofessionalized (Benadé, 2012), due to them being part of an educative system that commodifies them, and makes people perceive ELT's work conditions as precarized (Goulding, 2016). The situation I described led me to pose the following research questions:

- What do discourses express in memes from a Reddit sub inform about teachers' beliefs and issues in language schools?

- How do these teachers' discourses in memes from a Reddit sub relate to memetic humor?

- How do these discourses portray meme makers as English as Foreign Language teachers?

Rationale

A study like the one I intend to carry out can contribute greatly to our master's program since there are neither studies about online communities of teachers nor how EFL teachers comment on their profession and the ELT industry without the excuse of research. This research might contribute to expanding the existing research on the TEFL community because of the use of comments through unconventional means and massive communication platforms such as the Internet, which we constantly use on a daily basis nowadays. Ignoring or considering this research ineffectual might be considered as silencing the voices of many teachers who are providing information about their experiences in language schools.

My study can also contribute greatly to the master's research line, discourse studies within educational contexts. On the Internet, EFL teachers have made memes to comment about

their job conditions in language schools. The characteristics of memes make them multimodal; the aforementioned means that a meme includes image and text modes. The text mode and the image mode are interrelated. The image mode needs the text mode and vice versa to make meaning in a meme. Because the image and text modes are codependent, I am compelled to use multimodal discourse analysis in memes to find the discourse within them. There are no existing studies within the research line in the masters' program of our university that has analyzed discourse in internet memes using multimodal discourse analysis.

The contribution my study can make to the ELT community is beneficial to researchers within it. The study I intend to carry out is avant-garde if we consider what I mentioned. Researchers in the ELT community who are interested in starting a piece of research by using multimodal discourse analysis can employ my study as an initial guide. This initial guide might help them to set up their own research up. This type of research aims to unravel what teachers communicate about their experiences in language schools.

The study of humor in discourse is another contribution this research can make to our master's program and the ELT community. Within the former, humor was an outcome of a piece of research done within the context of unconventional communicative exchanges in an EFL classroom (Burbano, 2014). In the latter, there have been research studies on the use of humor in EFL classes with many purposes, such as their attitudes toward its use (Farnia & Mohammadi, 2021); as a predictor of language achievement (Zeinali & Amirsheibani, 2019); and as a tool to activate the students' learning and keep their interest in learning the foreign language (Simon, 2019), but not how teachers use humor as a way to express their experiences in language schools. Humor use from teachers to teachers has not been explored yet.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Many pieces of research have shown EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, and issues presented in the context of schools and universities. In this study, I attempt to do so by focusing on EFL teachers who work in language schools and their discourses embedded in memes produced by them. This literature review will focus on elemental concepts that are required to comprehend this study, such as Multimodal Discourse and Internet Humor. Despite the fact that the literature represents these concepts and themes in diverse contexts, this study will essentially focus on what the discourses in humorous memes might inform about EFL teachers' beliefs and issues in the context of language schools.

Multimodal Discourse

Discourse can be seen as a language, but discourse goes beyond the language in use (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006). The authors indicate that discourse goes above the use of language when language is used in the scope of socio-cultural or socio-political developments to ponder the order of society and whenever the language defines that social order and people's engagement with the world at large. Language is then the main ingredient to the constitution of knowledge since knowledge is produced by language, and through language, people acquire knowledge. In addition, knowledge from experts defines realities and people, and their knowledge grants them authority (Fairclough, 1989). Their position and activities carried through language are then a subtle way to exert power, as Foucault stated in his concept of power/knowledge mentioned by Cameron (2001) and Jäger (2001). Hence, an individual obtains knowledge through language, and that knowledge grants them the power to define the realities of people.

Fairclough (1995) has a different conception of discourse as beyond the language in use, to him, speaking and writing overlap "in the exercise, reproduction and negotiation of power relations, and in ideological processes and ideological struggle" (p. 94). The author's conception of discourse as the use of language to exert power leads one to think about how language is used to shape individuals, as Jaworski and Coupland (2006) stated, the power holders are molding people's realities through discourse (Van Leeuwen, 1993; Jäger, 2001). Additionally, Mills (1997) considers discourse as the site in which social relations are arranged, the means people have to negotiate those social relations, and the means by which individuals sculpt their own positions of identity. The negotiation of power and social relations takes place in many different situations, and from that negotiation, there might arise a conflict of discourses, from which emerge spaces to build a sense of the self as resistance to the imposition of other discourses.

Mills's view of discourse as a place of negotiation, and the negotiation of powers and relations themselves also indicates what happens when negotiations have outcomes that result in an imposition of other discourses that individuals disagree with, what Fairclough (2001) defines as the maintenance of power and domination. Moreover, for Foucault (1981), discourse is the concern by which there is strife. This strife positions individuals in an area from which they can resist. In this resistance area, people are positioned to expose power relationships, to weaken and sabotage them (Foucault, 1978). Through the imposition of discourses, resistances emerge toward those imposed discourses, and resistance discourses can be expressed through different means (Mills, 1997). Discourses are conveyed not only through oral or written language but through the combination of different semiotic resources (Jaworski and Coupland, 2006). Additionally, Fairclough (1995) considers that discourse also includes these *semiotic practices* in other "semiotic modalities such as photography and non-verbal communication" (p. 131).

What the authors mention is Van Leeuwen's definition of multimodality, the combination of different semiotic modes (e.g., texts and pictures) that are integrated into a given instance of discourse or kind of discourse (2015, p. 447). According to Jewitt et al. (2016), the term multimodality "was first coined in the mid-1990s" (p. 1). In addition to that, Stöckl (2004) defines multimodality as "communicative artefacts and processes which combine various sign systems (modes) and whose production and reception calls upon the communicators to semantically and formally interrelate all sign repertoires present" (p. 9). For Kress (2010), multimodality acknowledges the limits of verbal or written language and tells which modes are in use within a sign. For the scholar, different modes in one sign are beneficial since pictures show what could be too long for reading, and writing names what might be difficult to show. The author considers that such a division of labor of modes in signs makes them work.

Bezemer and Jewitt (2018) stated that the contributing scholars to multimodality come from many different disciplines, including linguistics, semiotics, media studies, new literacy studies, education, sociology, and psychology. Jewitt et al. (2016) and Bezemer and Jewitt (2018) define it as differently construed since the operationalization and articulation of the concept varies across and within different disciplines and research traditions. Jewitt et al. (2016) and Bezemer and Jewitt (2018) also state that the recognition of multimodality as individuals employing multiple forms of meaning-making to communicate does not accurately describe the conceptual shift that scholars at that time tried to characterize. The strict labor division described in traditional takes on multimodality is questioned as the reason that different modes are "integrated, combined in a multimodal whole" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2018, p. 282).

To add up, Bezemer and Jewitt (2018), Jewitt et al. (2016) present the main premises that also add up as questionings toward traditional takes on multimodality: Modes within multimodal

artifacts have different limitations, resourcefulness and potentialities; the production of multimodal wholes is involved in meaning-making; all modes used in multimodal artifacts should be taken into account when making "a complete whole" if meaning is the focus of study; however, multimodal studies are not always focused in meaning-making, but in multimodal communication, discourse or interaction; no multimodal researchers employ the term mode, but they might use other alternatives such as *resource* or *semiotic resource*; avoiding demarcations to emphasize on the qualities of "the multimodal whole" is needed (pp. 283-284); and lastly, modes within multimodal ensembles, change as our society evolves, hence multimodal artifacts will take the forms and meanings contemplated by their makers (pp. 292-293).

Multimodality "has been taken up in discourse analysis by Scollon and Scollon, 2003" according to Bezemer and Jewitt (2018, p. 285), and the interest in it increased since the rise of digital technologies, which caused the increase of multimodal representation (Jones, 2020). The discourse in multimodality can be defined as the combined meanings of images and text that cede intended meanings (Yus, 2019). In other words, in multimodal discourse, the modes (image and text) are simultaneous, they together account for meaning (Jewitt, 2016), and in these times, our current technologies in media have resulted in a blending of modes (Goddard, 2004 as cited in Jones, 2020, p. 790). Although it would seem that the differences between the most basic definitions of multimodality do not differ much from multimodal discourse, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) acknowledge that discourses exist in multimodal artifacts, specifically in two places, apart from their realization mode, and emerging in the mode of language among other modes, and in addition to that, modes, or multimodal resources within multimodal artifacts are attainable within the culture and used for making meaning. Hence, Multimodal discourse can be defined as "the engagement in the multimodal dimension of all discourse." (Jones, 2020, p. 790).

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) present the following additional characteristics of discourses in multimodality: Discourses are socially built knowledges of reality. They are developed within particular social contexts and are suitable to social actors' interests, and include an abundant emphasis on current events, giving interpretations or standpoints. Discourses are, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), to some extent, genre, mode, and design independent; discourses can be obtained in modes that have built up the means to be understood; discourses might express the common sense; they can be innovative, feasibly subversive, and can be fit together in modes different to speech or writing. Additionally, the concept of mode should not be confused with other conceptualizations of mode, such as 'modality' in grammar or 'channel' in Halliday's model of context. (Jones, 2020).

To conclude, multimodal discourse is understood in this research as originated in language within all social practices. Teaching English as Foreign Language counts as a social practice, and it implies the use of language. It progressed until going beyond the verbal and written modes, and it is contained within the combination of different semiotic resources or modes in many different artifacts, either analog or digital, as an integrated whole. Hence it indicates that EFL teachers are inserting their discourses, and they emerge through the combination of images and text in digital memes. It is the socially built knowledge of reality within particular contexts and suitable to the actors' interests.

Discourses within multimodal artifacts, such as memes made by EFL teachers, might contain the knowledge of the TEFL practices within the context of language schools. Multimodal discourses emphasize current events, which can include the current teachers' daily lives, and produce knowledge that individuals use to exert and perpetuate power or serve as a negotiation space to discuss power and social relations. However, these discourses can also be subversive, as

they clash with the imposition of discourses. The discourses within EFL teachers' memes might serve as a contestation toward the imposition of unspecified discourses on them within the context of language schools. Therefore, understanding their interests, beliefs, and issues within their discourse is relevant to the fulfillment of the objectives in this research. This can be achieved through an understanding of the conceptualization of multimodal discourse, which will be followed by the presentation of the conceptualization of Internet Humor.

Internet Humor

Humor is the umbrella term for all forms of ludicrous representation (Wickberg, 2014). Although it is an inherent human quality, it covers a complete gamut of communicative and sociopsychological aspects of human behavior (Yus, 2016). Views on humor have changed over time. Plato (1920c, as cited in Gimbel, 2018 p. 3) defined it as a vicious habit of ridiculing others. The views of humor during medieval times were tied to health; it was thought that blood, phlegm, choler, and black bile, known as the four humors, constituted people's personhood (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017; Wickberg, 2014). According to Wickberg (2014), the first public presentation in which humor and the comic were linked was in the late 16th century, in Ben Johnson's comedy of humors, and from there, humor was conceived as the target of the laughter.

To add up, Wickerberg (2014) also points out that during the 18th century humor and wit began to be contrasted, wit was intellectual, quite related to incongruity, and on the other hand, humor was interested in character extravagance and was more defined by emotion. In the 18th and 19th centuries, humor began to be seen not as an objective quality of character but more as a subjective quality of mind. It used to be recognized with sympathy, humorous situations in which a person is affected are fun because all people have gone through such difficulties in life, and people laugh with the person in disgrace, in contrast to humor theories as the superiority theory,

in which people laugh at the failures and disgrace of other fellow beings, also known as the experience of "sudden glory" (Gimbel, 2018).

Humor has certain characteristics nowadays that Gimbel (2018) has pointed out: No matter whether people dislike certain types of humor, those are still acknowledged as humor; although mirth is only one of the reasons why people use humor, humor can be used to cause grief or to shut down people, hence, humor is not always about making people cackle. No matter whether a person finds something funny or not, it still counts as humor. Humor is not subjective; if it were, listeners would not have grounds to care about the intention of a gag. Humor is intentional; something people do on purpose; it is not accidental either, something funny is related to spontaneous actions, but humorous acts are done with the intention of using humor. The core of humor is intelligence. It implies pattern recognition, open-mindedness, creativity, breadth of knowledge, and metaphor creation. Humor is conspicuous in the sense of hiding it with the intention of people finding it. Humor is playful; it plays with ideas, background beliefs, and background information. However, once more, its intention is not to make people chuckle. Playfulness in humor is done in a conspicuous fashion. Humor is still humor, even if people cannot recognize it as such; if a gag had that intention, it is humorous. Not all clever acts are humorous. Despite its links with tragedy, humor and tragedy are not interdependent. Moreover, humor has styles and forms. Styles of humor are incongruity, metaphor, irony, and sarcasm. Among forms of humor there are three verbal, visual, and physical. I first explain the different styles of humor, and afterward, I explain the forms of humor.

Gimbel (2018) states that it is claimed that the key to most humor is incongruity. It is characterized by two phases, the first being the conception of an easily understood scenario modified by a sudden change. In verbal humor, the punchline introduces such change, which

declines the first interpretation by the obtention of new information from the punchline. Then the

brain fails by making sense of the first interpretation and the punchline, getting confused as a

result. People get the joke when they realize the second interpretation in which the first scenario

and the punchline make sense. Incongruities are also based on lexical or semantic ambiguities,

failures of logic because of fallacies, and unfulfilled expectations (Incongruity Theory). The

phases of the joke are predicted and manipulated for humor to occur, and it explains the reason

certain meanings of words are either selected or rejected, and particular framings of depicted

situations are manipulated for incongruity to generate humorous outcomes (Yus, 2016). Next, I

explain the metaphor.

Goatly (2012) defines metaphors as

one thing (A) as though it were another thing (B), with the linguistic result that an

item of vocabulary or larger stretch of text is applied in an unusual or new way. A

is the target and B is the source ... metaphorical thinking of a target schema in

terms of a source schema involves establishing some similarity or analogy linking

A and B. This process is mapping, and the similarities or analogical relationships

found are the grounds. (p. 167)

Additionally, Attardo (2014) defines the source as "the conceptual domain from which

the "comparison is drawn," and the target is "the concept being metaphorized" (p. 504). Attardo

(2014) also states that humorous metaphors depend on variants of the distance theory (it

postulates a brink of semantic distance farther on the links between source and target domains).

That distance between the source and the target stretches in the metaphor, and it can then be

perceived as humorous. Goatly (2012) states that metaphors require the use of unusual language;

metaphors are achieved through substituting words and extending texts with different referents

(Explained in more detail a few lines above). Interpretations done on metaphors depend on similarities or analogies. Attardo (2014) mentions that *humorous metaphor* is an umbrella label that covers a set of phenomena such as "metaphors that describe inherently funny referents, un-metaphors, mixed metaphors, overdone metaphors, which violate primary metaphors" (p. 505). Although I do not intend to expand into these different kinds of metaphors, I present them for readers to understand there are many different kinds of them. Afterward, I explain Irony and Sarcasm.

Initially, one could think that irony and sarcasm are different, but according to Giora and Attardo (2014), setting such difference between both concepts might be a difficult thing to do since sarcasm is "an aggressive form of irony" (p. 398). They state that other authors have pointed out differences between both terms, such as irony being spontaneous and noncritical, while sarcasm is intentional and faultfinding. McGraw and Warren (2014) state that sarcasm entails saying a thing but meaning the contrary. Beermann (2014) affirms that the goal of sarcasm is to hurt, it is hostile and precipitately exposes other people, and irony expresses superiority to individuals who are not able to understand the real meaning of something, "by saying something different than what is actually meant" (pp. 364-365). Yus (2016) asserts that the main intention of irony is not to say the opposite of what is communicated explicitly but to express an individual's "underlying dissociative attitude and the target of this attitude" (p.192). People process irony and sarcasm through a one-stage direct access model -a rich, informative background having instant outcomes in smooth sarcastic irony interpretation-, and the two-stage model -salient meanings and salient-based interpretations might not be omitted, and when they are inappropriate might have an impact on processing difficulties- (Giora & Attardo, 2014). Now I continue explaining the different forms of humor, among them Internet humor.

Verbal humor uses language either orally or in writing, and it might contain cultural references or language devices, e.g., jokes and puns. Visual humor is created by means of visual representation, and it arises from images, e.g., cartoons, comics, etc. Physical humor refers to body movements and gestures, including sounds that are not considered language, e.g., slapstick and standup comedy performances. These forms of humor could be combined (especially text and image) to generate more complex forms of humor (Taylor, 2014). The aforementioned might be similar to the type of humor that is found on the Internet. Internet humor is any kind of humorous interplay or production manifested on the Internet with the purpose of entertaining, and it is present in forums and bulletin boards in the form of 'Pass-along" humor, which is how Internet humor is also known, it is comprised of artifacts such as jokes, hilarious photos, and videos that are dispersed and distributed across different Internet facilitated contexts (Shifman, 2014a).

Shifman (2014a) affirms that the Internet provoked changes in humor themes and designs due to the broad implementation of bandwidth during the 21st century, hence facilitating easy and quick spread images and videos, making it easy to widen formats that bear humor, which contain references to famous artists, politicians, movies, T.V. series, videogames and media alike. Visual representations of these cultural manifestations are in people's everyday lives. The author also declares that Internet humor has evolved from being mainly verbal to being tremendously based on visual formats that easily advance crosswise national borders, often exposed to processes of localization. She indicates that Internet humor serves as an apparatus to reveal individuality, with members employing shared meanings of the group to transmit their voices. New humor formats were either inexistent or rare before the digital ages. "Some of the most prevalent new genres are funny photos (often accompanied by captions), manipulated photos (e.g., Photoshop humor),

PowerPoint humor, and interactive humor (i.e., humor in which the receiver needs to do something more than just read, watch, or listen) ... the Internet also facilitated the popularization of new joking themes" (Shifman, 2014a, p. 389). Those types of humor are quite related to the depiction of multimodal artifacts, such as memes; however, that will be explained below.

Shifman says that Internet humor has helped to change the existing power dynamics between regular individuals and people in positions of power, such as celebrities or politicians. Although the humor presented is not quite subversive, Internet humor has helped to voice marginalized, disempowered collectives. Humor on the Internet is also characterized by having a visual format and a global scope (it spreads quickly worldwide) as if they were Kuiper's *Visual Collages* (2002), in which images are blended creatively in incongruous combinations then causing humorous effects (Vásquez & Ehran, 2021). Internet humor demonstrates playfulness by using visual cultural references to respond to it critically and pictures of daily situations (Shifman, 2014b; Vásquez & Ehran, 2021). Internet humor is multilingual. Many internet users employ the English language as a lingua franca, and the translation of humor is a common practice among Internet users. Internet humor has been associated with Internet memes since 2010, and anyone with knowledge of photo editing software can create their own (Shifman, 2014a). The aforementioned not only relates to how incongruity works for multimodal artifacts, but also how the description still matches the one that corresponds to the units of analysis in this study. However, it can also be depicted as memetic humor since Dynel (2016, as cited in Vásquez & Ehran, 2021) asserts that memetic humor is "a captioned image that typically consists of a picture and a witty message or a catchphrase" (p. 663).

Regarding memetic humor, it is important to address that, as mentioned above, although it does not intend to make individuals laugh, it is still acknowledged as humorous. According to

Shifman (2014b) memetic humor can be assorted into two categories: "quirky situational humor" and "biting social commentary" (p. 78), which also reinforces ideas related to the dynamics of power among individuals that were presented a few paragraphs above. Regarding incongruency in memes, Shifman points out that it occurs when there is "an unexpected cognitive encounter between two incongruent elements" (2014b, p. 79). Among those elements, it is possible to find screenshots that are modified, juxtaposed elements that might be added or deleted, and texts that do not match the cultural visual elements. Memes can also demonstrate superiority (as the superiority theory explained above) when images show people in their worst moments (Shifman, 2014b). In addition to that, Shifman declares that repetition is key in memetic humor, thus enhancing memorability and causing memes to be replicable by others; besides, memetic humor contains pop culture references (2014b), as addressed a few pages above. Memetic humor shows incomplete texts with the purpose of people solving a puzzle, demonstrating what was discussed above, humor being conspicuous, based on cleverness and playfulness, and their texts incorporate social practices (Shifman 2014b; Milner, 2016), as discussed above when I explained multimodal discourse.

Internet humor is expressed in many different ways and manifested on the Internet, within social media or forums. Internet humor has also been closely related to memes and memetic humor in the last twelve years. Humor on the Internet is acknowledged as humor even if people do not like it or whether people do not find it amusing since that is not its only intention. Humor causes grief and puts people off, but more especially, it is a game changer when it comes to power relations; it voices marginalized groups while mocking those in power, exerting superiority by showing them at their worse. Hence, Internet humor might be loaded with

discourse, and such conception can help me reach the first objective of this study, which is to

understand what discourses inform about EFL teachers' issues and beliefs.

Internet humor is not subjective; it is intentional, it is clever, conspicuous, and playful,

and for all that, it requires cultural knowledge from both parts, the meme makers and the meme

readers, since the former are the ones who create the puzzles, and the latter have to connect the

dots in order to solve them. The cultural knowledge mostly comes from pop culture. Incongruity

in internet humor is mostly related to the mismatch there could be between images and text, a

punchline, or the juxtaposition of images. Metaphors in internet humor are evident through

image and text combinations by means of labelling and analogies, drawing the source and the

target. Irony and Sarcasm can be noticed through the communication of dissociative attitudes.

Internet humor helps reveal collective individuality. Memetic Internet humor implies the

combination of images and catchphrases from pop culture references or illustrations from daily

experiences. Meme makers demonstrate language and translation knowledge. Memetic humor

fits the characteristics depicted in multimodal discourse; however, they are differentiated from

any other artifact combining text and image through replicability. In other words, the same image

could be used several times with different texts, or different variants of an image through edition

could have the same catchphrase, and such repetition, which also accounts for humorous

outcomes, causes people to have an idea of how to make their own multimodal artifacts to share

on the Internet.

The construct of internet humor is indeed a fascinating topic to explore in relation to how

EFL teachers use it to convey their experiences working in language schools. Understanding the

use of internet humor can shed light on the ways in which these teachers communicate their

discourses, and how they make meaning of their issues and beliefs. By analyzing the different

types of internet humor used by EFL teachers, we can gain insight into their attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives, and how these are influenced by the larger social and cultural contexts in which they operate. It is worth noting that the memes and other forms of internet humor used by EFL teachers are not created for educational purposes per se, but rather as a means of expressing their experiences in a humorous and relatable way. This suggests that internet humor is a form of informal communication that serves as a platform for teachers to engage with their peers and share their experiences in a lighthearted and entertaining manner.

Moving forward, in chapter 3, the Research Design, I will outline the methodology used to explore the use of internet humor by EFL teachers and its relationship to their discourses. I will describe the sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used to gather and analyze the data. By using a qualitative approach to research, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the discourses conveyed through internet humor made by EFL teachers, and its implications for their professional development.

Chapter 3 - Research Design

In TEFL, there has been a considerable amount of research regarding teachers' practices, issues, and struggles in the contexts of government-funded and private schools and universities. However, research about private language schools' teachers has been limited, both worldwide and in Latin America. Moreover, the little research that exists has not addressed the fairly recent phenomenon of EFL teachers from language schools as meme makers within online settings. It is possible that these memes contain discourses that reveal the EFL teachers' beliefs, issues, and struggles within the context of language schools. Given the amusing nature of Internet memes, it is also of interest to investigate which types of humor are related to the discourses EFL teachers employ in memes. An additional concern is to explore how the use of humor and discourses depict EFL teachers.

The data were collected from Reddit, a social media-like forum, more specifically from the subreddit r/EFLteachersmemes. Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) was used to analyze the texts in memes, while multimodal discourse analysis with a cyber-pragmatic focus (Yus, 2019) was employed to analyze the multimodal composition. After, their analyses were combined to obtain information regarding the styles of humor employed, and the discourses teachers conveyed in them.

Data were collected from posts made during May, June, and July 2021. Collecting data from a specific time period is a common practice in social research as it allows the researcher to capture a snapshot of the phenomenon under study at that particular moment in time. In the case of this study, the decision to collect memes from the subreddit r/EFLteachersmemes during May, June, and July 2021 was made with the intention of obtaining the most up-to-date information about the discourses and humor employed by EFL teachers in the context of language schools.

The choice of this time frame reflects the desire to understand the current situation and experiences of these teachers in their respective workplaces during the ongoing global pandemic, as well as any other relevant factors that may be impacting their teaching practices and beliefs. Therefore, the selection of this time period aligns with the research objective of exploring the discourses and humor utilized by EFL teachers in online settings, specifically through the creation and sharing of memes. The research questions are the following:

- What do discourses expressed in memes from a Reddit sub inform about teachers' beliefs and issues in language schools?

- How do these teachers' discourses in memes from a Reddit sub relate to memetic humor?

- How do these discourses and the styles of humor used portray meme makers as English as Foreign Language teachers?

The research design presented aims to help answer the above questions. In this section, I have outlined the research questions and methodology for my study on EFL teachers' discourses and humor in online memes. By analyzing the discourses and humor found in memes posted by EFL teachers on the r/EFLteachersmemes subreddit, I aim to uncover their beliefs, issues, and struggles within the context of language schools. The next section of my paper will focus on the setting of the study, providing more context and background information on the specific online forum where the data was collected.

Setting

On the Internet, there are many different online groups of teachers on different social media platforms. Most of these groups aim to share advice and materials for enhancing teaching and learning experiences. Some other groups have the purpose of posting information related to job opportunities. However, other online groups of teachers share memes. Most of these groups

are found on social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. In addition, there are

private and public groups. Private groups were discarded since many different ethical

considerations would be problematic when carrying out the research, such as the need for

authorization to use the extracted data to contact people who might not reply to my message

requests, among others. Public groups from Facebook and WhatsApp were discarded due to

them having a high frequency of posting random funny artifacts that are not considered to be

memes, and the few "memes" they post are not frequent and not replicable, which is what sets

the difference between a meme and any other combination of image and text.

Reddit is the front page of the internet. It is the seventh most popular website in the

United States. Reddit has numerous communities, also known as "subreddits." Each subreddit

covers different interests, and the name of each subreddit begins with /r/, being its part of the

URL used by Reddit. There are at least three open groups with memes made by teachers

commenting on their jobs on that social media platform. One of the groups in this platform was

chosen because it is a public access group that guarantees its members' anonymity. In addition, it

is focused on EFL teachers; most of their posts are memes that can be replicable. Besides, they

also post memes frequently. That group is r/EFLteachersmemes. My research interest is to find

out the discourses that teachers might infuse in their memes, what, issues, and struggles they

have, what additional characteristics EFL teachers might have, the reason why participants'

backgrounds, reactions, or comments to memes will not be taken into account in this study, in

other words, there are no participants. Hence the next section I will cover Data Collection

Procedures and Instruments.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

To investigate the discourses inside memes EFL teachers make, the styles of humor used and how these could help describing EFL teachers, I opted to collect data from a specific subreddit from Reddit. Mayr & Weller (2017) recommend writing and refining a research question. From that point, think about the "ideal dataset that would be needed to answer it" (p. 110), so I took into account my research question as the main criteria for selecting and filtering the data to collect: memes from an online, open-access community of teachers that contain discourse that could reveal their beliefs and, issues in language schools.

However, my expectations about obtaining that ideal dataset had to be realistic. Due to various reasons, technical issues, for example, particular restrictions I was not allowed to store some of them, or that the discourses I saw did not clearly show the issues and beliefs EFL teachers from language schools have, so I needed to find ways to approach the best dataset possible by upholding the obstacles and curbs in my situation (Mayr & Weller, 2017). Mayr & Weller's (2017) self-questioning was useful for making the researcher choose the social media platform described above. The question asked was "Which social media platforms would be the most relevant for my research question? (Single platform vs. multi-platform approach)" (p. 110). I chose a single platform approach since this research only required to extract and analyze data from reddit. a multi-platform approach since I am not comparing discourses emerging from the artifacts from one social media group of teachers to the artifacts from a different platform. Reddit was more suitable for me to obtain the data I needed than Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram for the reasons discussed above, and in addition to that, not only the rich data they provided but the easiness of getting anonymous data that I could store and easily check for analysis.

Two more questions suggested by Mayr & Weller (2017) were:

"1. What are my main criteria for selecting data from this platform?

2. How much data do I need? (Big vs. small data)." (p. 110)

To answer the first question, it was important to bear in mind the specific characteristics of the artifacts whose data I extracted. Shifman's (2013), as cited in Miltner (2018), states that memes have three main dimensions used to create meaning, which made memes connect with their intended audiences: Content (the experiences within a language school); form (the format, which for this research was the image, and the genre pattern of the format, that for this study was text); and the stance (teachers working in a language school). If any of these dimensions could be modified through apps or image edition software, it was a meme that contained multimodal discourse. Hence, not every image-text combination is a meme. Combining these three elements made a multimodal artifact belonging to the image macro family of memes (Milner, 2016; Huntington, 2013:2017; Kanashina, 2019; Yus, 2019).

In addition to what I mentioned above, the data of three months of posting, May, June and July 2021 were collected for one day from the r/EFLteachersmemes a reddit group comprised of EFL teachers who produce memes. These memes contained discourse that informed their experiences, struggles, beliefs, and in the process their use of humor and discourses could help adding more information to what is known about EFL teachers in terms of their depiction. Considering that my resulting dataset was extensive, I answer the second question about the data I need. There is no definition of what 'big' is in terms of data collected from social media. It is more common to refer to the units of analysis (Mayr & Weller, 2017), which for this research, was the multimodal discourse within the posts in the subreddit I chose, from an open-access group, whose members posted their discourses with an avatar and a pseudonym, hence, ensuring their anonymity and personal data privacy.

Considering that, I chose a fluctuating number that depended on postings the users made per month. The number was reduced to an amount that contained data, rich enough to obtain categories of analysis that helped me answer the research questions I formulated. How big the data set was lacked relevance, especially when what mattered was the criteria I established to collect and compose the dataset (Mayr & Weller, 2017). Considering my research question as criteria to select my ideal data set, and understanding the limitations I encountered for obtaining that data set was just a way to start picturing what data I found rich. Questioning myself about the platform where I obtained the data provided me reasons why I chose that platform instead of many others, which were not only based on the platforms' characteristics but also on the many different characteristics of the online teacher communities.

After this, a couple more questions were proposed and their answers helped me deepen into the criteria I followed for selecting data from this specific platform and the amount of data I considered necessary. Not only I provided the characteristics of the multimodal discourse I intend to analyze, but I also indicated the timeframe I took to collect data. I also clarified that I preferred to talk about my data in terms of units of analysis, which for my research was the multimodal discourse I found in the posts of teachers from the subreddit I chose. It took me a few minutes to save the memes (image files) from the subreddit, in the same way you would save an image, right click, save image as. The memes were saved to a hard drive that belongs to me which was stored in a safe inside my house, despite the data is available to whomever wants to access it in the Internet. Inside that hard drive there are three folders named 'May', 'June', and 'July' respectively. The memes were organized in those folders. Each meme was renamed as 'Meme_XXX", in which the XXX represented a particular number e.g., 001. The memes kept their .jpg extension, the one they originally had at the moment of being uploaded. Labeling the

memes with a specific number made it easier to keep track of them and ensure that none were duplicated or missed during the analysis process. This system allowed for easier communication and collaboration among the researcher, the research director, and assistants involved in the project, since they could quickly and easily refer to specific memes by their assigned numbers. Additionally, organizing the memes in folders helped with file management and reduced the risk of losing or misplacing important data. Finally, using a consistent labeling system made it easier to analyze the data and identify patterns or trends across the entire meme corpus. Next, I explain the ethics and study implications, in which I clarify the responsibilities I took during this research as well as my point of view regarding ethics.

Ethics Awareness and Implications for the Study

This section intends to accord my research purposes and perspectives with my ethics and responsibility throughout its development. As stated initially, the purpose of this study is to analyze multimodal discourses within memes made by EFL teachers in the context of an open access online community of teachers to understand their beliefs and, issues, to understand how their discourses and the humor styles they chose are related, and how their portrayal as EFL teachers could be expanded by the discourses and humor styles they use. I indicated above, I did not intend to involve the creators of these memes in my study. The situation made me realize the existing concern as to my ethics within this research design, to collect and analyze data and how its corresponding exposition of results, in terms of consent, anonymity, and the avoidance of unnecessary harm, might affect these teachers who created these discourses within their online community.

To begin with, I agree with the idea that data posted on social media platforms whose groups are open access, this means, with no restrictions in terms of membership, can be used

without the need for informed consent (Wilkinson & Thelwall, 2011; ESOMAR, 2011).

However, if the data I collected came from a private group, or a group that required membership,

then informed consent was definitively necessary (Beninger, 2017). As I mentioned in this

chapter, the group I obtained data from is an open-access group whose name, when typed on a

search engine or the platform's search bar, takes there whoever wants to access it without the

need to open an account. In addition to that, obtaining consent from individuals on a social media

platform is considered a laborious thing to do. In contrast to the previous idea, some other

researchers insist on considering the ethical views of social media users in one's research since

most of the literature on ethics is written taking only the researchers' perspective (Beninger,

2017).

Hence, the ethical views that inform the study are informed by Beninger (2017) who

states that social media users accept their data from social media posts to be used in research.

They consider the research results valuable and beneficial to the analysis and comprehension of

social trends. They also report that the mining of their open access data from their accounts

would help to reduce the effect of misleading information and thus to provide accuracy in

research; they argue that it helps to avoid the implicit bias generated by the presence of other

people in interviews or when filling out surveys, especially when the research topic is personal or

private. These users feel they can be more open and sincere online. These same users claim they

accept being included in research that helps increase awareness of relevant issues for society.

These same users assert that the moment one posts anything publicly on a social media platform,

one is handing over the right to ownership (Beninger, 2017). In addition to those above, these

users, who are open to collecting and analyzing their data in the research, agree that they take

personal responsibility for what they post on their social media accounts. This responsibility

includes acknowledging that researchers can take publicly posted content online, and if a post they did not want to be taken for analysis were published in research, it would be their fault (Beninger, 2017).

When it comes to the employment of informed consent, users who do not mind researchers obtaining the data they posted on social media also considered there should not be any consent to be gained since they do not believe there exists any privacy online, and the fact that one is posting content grants immediate consent to researchers for collecting that data. They affirm that because social media platforms grant people the tools to set privacy settings in this case, they did not restrict researchers' access to those pieces of information. The participants recognize that contacting social media users to obtain informed consent is infeasible (Beninger, 2017). These users disagreed with the researchers providing anonymity since every social media user is responsible for not posting content they would not want associated with within or alongside different contexts. They also claim that social media site owners are responsible for informing their users about the consequences of uploading content to their platforms. The users insisted that whomever social media network users were concerned about anonymity could be anonymous if they wanted, by providing usernames unrelated to their real names and profile pictures (Beninger, 2017).

In terms of avoiding unnecessary harm to the social media users who are posting the content that I intend to analyze; I have to say that there is no way they can be identified. The users seemed aware of their anonymity and acted accordingly. The users, whose profiles I have seen, identify themselves as EFL teachers, but their usernames seem not to be related to their real-life names. They have not uploaded profile pictures, but they employ avatars based on the Reddit mascot. In addition to that, there is no text in the meme that can be traceable through any

search engine website, the text in memes cannot be copy-pasted. The information found in the Exif [5] does not show any hints for the identity of the meme creator or poster, so the identities of meme creators and posters are safe. They will not get any consequences that risk their integrity in any way (Beninger, 2017).

To sum up. Social media users who belong to open-access groups are aware that their data is also open-access. These users belonging to such settings were aware of their privacy being their responsibility, so their Reddit profiles do not give hints of their real-life identities of the account users. By recognizing their data is open access, they were aware their data would be obtained for research, for it to be collected and analyzed, and they agreed on the idea of not getting any requests for consent to use the data they post in open social media groups since they acknowledged that privacy in online settings does not exist. The task of obtaining consent from strangers online was deemed impossible due to the many efforts implied. Besides, and as I stated throughout the whole chapter, my interest lies in obtaining discourses from humorous multimodal artifacts made by EFL teachers from language schools. For my research to develop, it is unnecessary to know who the meme maker or the meme poster is, or their backgrounds. In the next section, I address the issue of trustworthiness in this research, and how I tackle credibility, dependability, confirmability and objectivity.

Trustworthiness

This study conceives trustworthiness as Lincoln and Guba (1986) describe it in their framework. I present the five criteria next—first, credibility. I am confident that the way I interpreted the data is truthful. Second, I presented my initial versions of the data analysis to critical peers, who pointed out my initial "going beyond the analysis of data." This situation led

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[5] Exchangeable Image File

me only to moderate my interpretation of what I saw in the memes. Regarding dependability, I had to read and re-read constantly the results of my data analysis to comprehend them. I did not do it alone. A couple of peers and my thesis director also helped me read the results of my analysis. Hence, my data moved toward confirmability and objectivity, and they confirmed that the data and its meanings were accurate in interpreting them.

I consider these findings could be transferred to other studies about multimodal discourse within memes made by teachers. The community where I extracted the data states that it is a group of EFL and ESL teachers in its community description. It is not possible to see who the group members are, but it is possible to see the profiles of the group moderators. In their description, they describe themselves as EFL or ESL teachers. In addition, meme-making is a global activity that anyone with the proper tools and knowledge can do. The setting is Reddit, one of the many existing social media platforms that host many different communities that hold many different interests, which makes me optimistic about the transferability of the project to more global or local contexts in different social media.

For Authenticity, I consider that the discourses I intended to extract evidence the practices private language school managers have without misinterpreting what the meme-makers intended to communicate. The meme interpretation is made through the text mode, the relation there is between the text and image and the cultural references I researched from the images as a whole, so I am confident in my interpretation, and along with this paper, it is possible to see the multimodal discourses emerging from the text and image modes. The exact excerpts of text that address subthemes and themes. I provided clues supporting the data I collected and analyzed, which made the study trustworthy. I did what was in my power to make sure the outcomes were believable and accurate.

Analysis Framework

The analysis framework proposed for this research has three phases as depicted in Figure 1. The first phase uses thematic filtering (Terry et al., 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2020) to extract the themes and sub-themes of memes to find out what issues and beliefs the memes refer to. The second phase employs a cyberpragmatic approach (Yus, 2019) to obtain data regarding the composition of the meme that causes it to be humorous, images, cultural references and text. Finally, the third analysis phase uses a textual composition analysis (Fairclough, 2003) to obtain the discourses. The combination of both analyses results in a multimodal whole analysis. This work presents the sample results of the three themes that emerged from the data corpus during May 2021, composed of six sub-themes.

Figure 1

Analysis phases
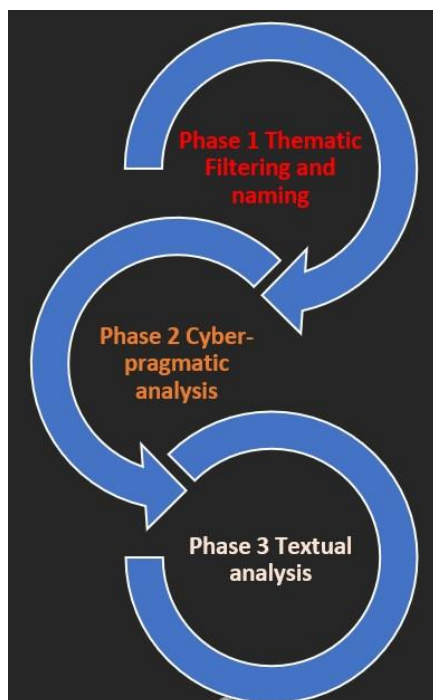
Thematic filtering

Thematic filtering as depicted in figure 2 is a tool that supports different qualitative

approaches (Willig, 2013). Scholars such as Gibson and Brown (2009) state reasons that indicate

that TA is more of a meta-analytic procedure. Some other scholars, such as Langridge and

Hagger-Johnson (2004), present it as a singular approach despite standing their ground by

pointing to TA as a specific analytic technique for analyzing qualitative data. For Terry et al.

(2017), all of the different TA versions have two approaches, one that highlights coding fidelity

and another that endorses a flexible approach to coding and theme progress.

Figure 2

Thematic filtering
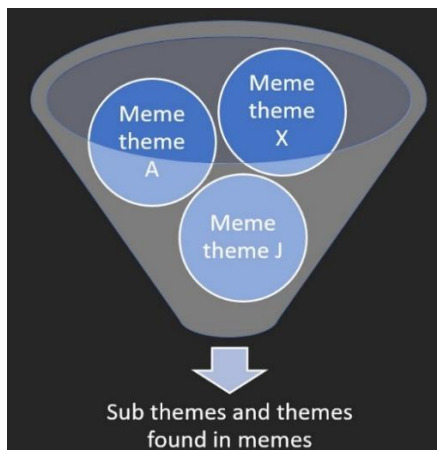
Braun and Clarke's TA explained in Terry et al. (2017) that the researchers' subjectivities

are considered relevant to the analysis process. Approaches to coding and theme development

are more inductive and standard, which begin with familiarization and engagement with the data

for the coding, making it a flexible, organic process. The aforementioned means that the themes

are not imagined beforehand. The codes emerge from the analytic processes, which are

subjective and interpretative; the researcher creates the analysis through the data intersection, the

theoretical, conceptual frameworks, knowledge of the discipline, and the experience and

knowledge in research.

It was helpful because the initial amount of existing data was, and it still might be to

some, considerably big. Memes are considered "a different media source" (Frith, 2015, quoted in

Terry et al., 2017, p. 22) that could be analyzed using TA. The themes in memes were identified

by the text mode, as illustrated in figure 3, and intersecting the data reduced the number of

memes to analyze. To expand on this, I present the steps and procedures of this stage. The initial

data corpus consisted of 221 memes, the initial names of themes emerged from the text mode in

memes since the text allowed me to recognize the commentaries made about issues and beliefs

EFL teachers in private language schools have, as well as to identify the actors of educational

processes, and the discourses carried out in these places. The data was in a process of constant

reanalysis during 4 months, twice or three times a week, with the purpose of narrowing down the

themes and subthemes, as well as the number of memes to analyze.

Figure 3

Identification of themes
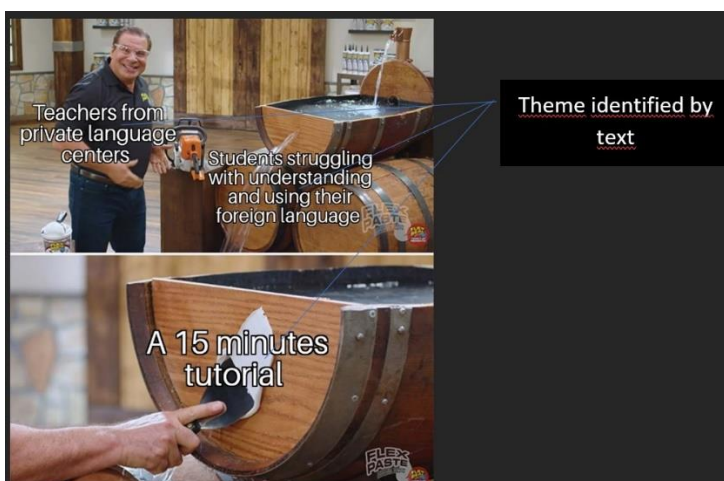
The matrices where I organized and filtered the data were made in Microsoft Excel. The first matrix kept list of themes and sub-themes, a thematic matrix (Appendix A). On the left column, and on the right column, the numbers of the meme that addressed that topic were placed. The colors of the numbers indicated if the meme appealed once in an only theme (black) or if the meme appeared in two themes (red). The quotation mark in parenthesis next to some numbers helped me mark those memes whose sub-themes were unclear. Once the list was finished, I employed color coding as a criterion to define what the sub-themes were and the number of memes present in each sub-theme. The Color Yellow in the excel cells was used to indicate three memes, or more, fit a particular theme to be considered a sub-theme as a whole. The cells in blue Color indicated that two memes fit a theme but could or not be considered a sub-theme. I had to find the links between the yellow and blue subcategories to group them into the main category. The black color cells indicated that the meme did not fit the criterion for data to be analyzed, e.g., the setting did not match the one seen in a private languages school, or the relationship between educative actors was not clear enough.

The data were organized in a second matrix (Appendix B) that allowed me to see the memes that comprised the sub-themes and the sub-themes that were part of the main themes in a more organized design. In the first level in black I named the cell with the month, the level above contained the themes found in that month, and in the level above I wrote the names of the sub-themes and the memes that belonged to that subtheme. To ensure validity, I designed the matrices with cues that reminded me of the data I needed to register there in the excel cells of the matrices, so they could help me measure what I intended to measure (Bui, 2020). For the sake of reliability, I did three piloting stages on a few memes corresponding to the first month, May,

which two peers and my thesis director reviewed to verify that I was not misregistering the data I

extracted, and thanks to their feedback I was able to adjust the tool (Bui, 2020).

The remaining matrices had the purpose of sorting the data I collected, with a label

regarding the themes and sub-themes the memes addressed, as well as the memes that were

discarded and the reason why they were discarded. The labeled themes and sub-themes that

emerged from the data were assigned a color for easier recognition in terms of coding. The

sorting of meme themes and sub-themes was constantly refined and changed during the analysis

stage, it depended on what I noticed. Other matrices (Appendix C) served the purpose of keeping

a record of my findings in terms of the type of image macro meme, the salient elements in the

meme, the picture text relation, the cultural references it had if that was case, the textual

discourse analysis, and the humor style present in the meme.

The thematic and sub-thematic matrices were organized by the month the data were

collected and the main theme that emerged during that month. Each tab had a different color per

month in order to avoid confusion with the data collected. The label 'May' was colored green,

the label 'June' was labelled red, and the label 'July' was labelled blue. The last tab in the

document contained the definitive names for the main theme and the sub-themes that were

mentioned in Chapter two and will be addressed in Chapters four and five. Now I introduce the

second stage of the piloting, the cyberpragmatic analysis.

Cyberpragmatic analysis

This type of analysis helps to make sense of the meme interpretation by focusing on the

pragmatic implications of what is considered relevant for the different combinations of the image

and text discursive modalities, because in the same fashion that there are explicit and implicit

implicatures in verbal utterances (Yus, 2016 as cited in Yus, 2019), there also are visual

implicatures and visual explicatures. Visual explicatures imply users identify the visual

information in any given image to match it with any of the mental referents they have; the visual

implicatures have to be procured with the help of context, making them completely inferential

(Yus, 2019).

Yus (2019) provides six different inferential strategies to respond to the user's

expectations (AKA the meme reader)

Strategy 1: To decode and inferentially enrich the verbal content of the meme (top

and bottom lines of text) in order to obtain the explicit interpretation of the text or

explicature.

Strategy 2: To derive implicatures from verbal content, if these are necessary to

reach a relevant interpretation of the verbal content of the meme.

Strategy 3: To decode and inferentially enrich the picture to yield a visual

explicature.

Strategy 4: To derive implicatures or implications from the picture in the meme, if

these are necessary to reach an adequate interpretation of the meme as a whole.

Strategy 5: To infer possible combinations of text and picture to yield

interpretations (typically implicated ones or verbal-visual implicatures) that are

only possible from the combination of these sources of information (text and

picture) and not from either of them taken separately (Tsakona, 2009, p. 1172).

Very often, the information obtained from the picture will lead to an inferential

backtracking (and reinterpretation) after the accompanying text has been

processed, in the light of the information provided by visual content. On other

occasions, the text will force a new interpretation of the picture, resulting in either

a new visual explicature or leading to the derivation of a previously unforeseeable

visual implicature ... the effects of this combination of text and picture are the

ones that are more interesting for a cyberpragmatic analysis of why memes turn

out effective (e.g., humorous), since the eventual interpretation demands the

user's active participation in combining sources of information for the sake of an

eventual satisfactory (i.e., relevant) interpretation ...

Strategy 6: To access as much contextual information as is necessary to obtain

interpretations out of strategies 1–5 above. In the case of some memes, the

reader's background knowledge on current affairs, newsworthy events, political

issues, and so on (his/her literacy) is crucial to understanding the meme properly,

to the extent that, very often, the meme makes little sense if it is separated from

the specific time frame and pieces of news that justified its publication (El Refaie

& Hörschelmann, 2010, p. 197; Kardaş, 2012, p. 208) (P. 108-109).

For this analysis, to follow the interpretative steps 1 to 5 with step 6, the idea was to find

how the memes teachers make were humorous, the step 6 also allowed the meme reader to

access the pop culture references so a meme can be understood. The pop culture references might

depict power relations that are known by the meme readers, and could be identified in the image

or in the text in the form of a catchphrase. The reading of the meme for the interpretation also

depended on salience. Salience lead the meme reader to pay attention to any discursive mode

before processing information about any other parts of the artifact itself. In other words, instead

of reading the first textual discursive mode, then the visual discursive mode, and finally the last

line of textual discursive mode, readers might begin by reading the artifact part that caught their

attention more, maybe the discursive image is what readers see first, and then the text lines or

any other possible reading path (Yus, 2019). The aforementioned is due to what Van Leeuwen

(2015, p.47, quoted in Yus,2019, p. 110) states, texts do not follow a sequential order to be read.

Hence, salience, either in text or in an image, affects the order in which a multimodal artifact is

read. Pop culture references might influence salience if the meme reader is familiar with them.

Figure 4 presents an example of what to consider in cyberpragmatic analysis, as I described it.

Figure 4

Cyberpragmatic analysis
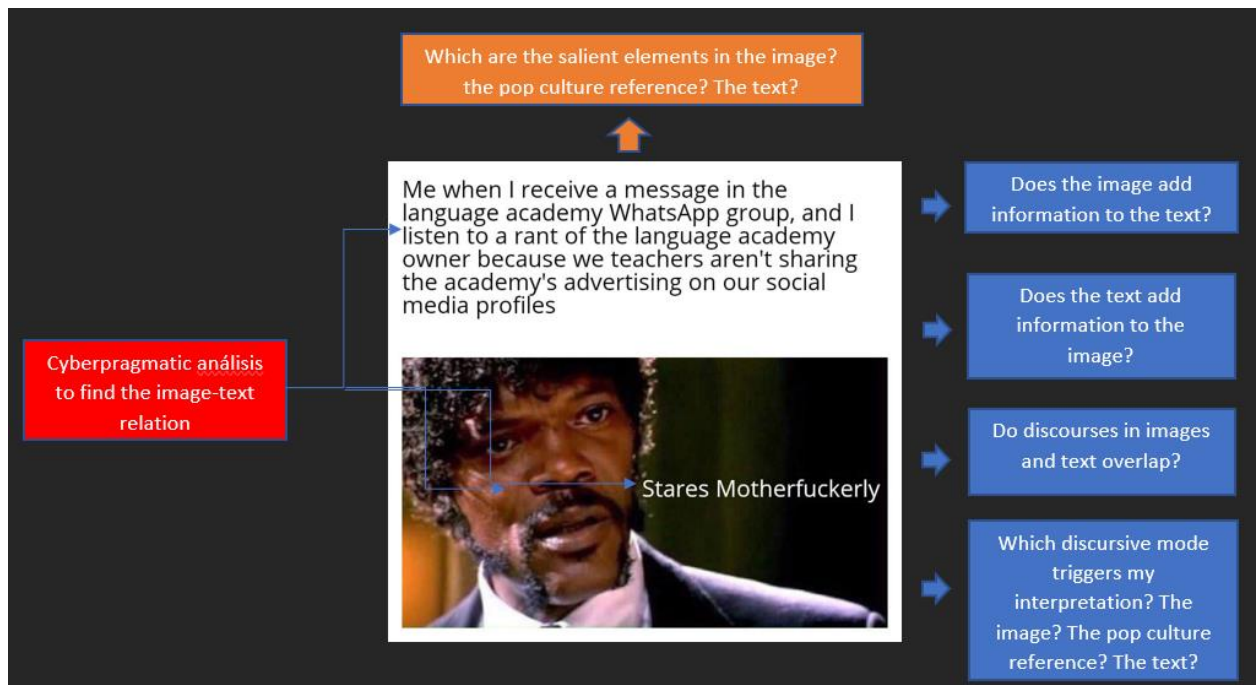
Yus (2019) indicates that this type of analysis focuses more on how the textual discourse

and image discourse codependency helps to interpret multimodal texts, as memes, more properly

instead of just focusing on the sole semiotic interpretation of modes. Put differently, to solve the

inferential applications of text and image interrelations, and how their combinations produce

interpretive results. In addition to that, to Yus (2019) it was essential to find out the type of text-

picture categories in image macro memes (the type of memes to analyze in this study). Yus proposed various categories, but the following ones were selected since the memes to analyze present the text-image combinations: Word Specific: Pictures clarify, but will not add more information to texts; Picture Specific: The picture is more influential, and words are just supplementary; Duo Specific: Image and text send the same message; Additive: The text amplifies what the picture tries to communicate, and vice versa; Interdependent: Picture and text convey an idea that cannot be communicated through the separation of modes; and Ad Hoc Visual Referent adjustment: The final interpretation of one of the modes is forced by the other (2019).

For this type of analysis, it is crucial to consider that the meme discourse interpretation is subjective and based on one's subjective conceptual framework, and that the salient elements in a meme differ from person to person. For example, in the salient element in the image, I described the image of the meme as detailed as possible, considering the elements that were the most salient to the least salient. I also added some explanation for the origin of the image, quite related in some cases to pop culture references. For the salient elements in the text, I wrote them and explained them, considering that I usually read any text from the top-down, from left to right. What I just mentioned has influenced how I read the texts in memes. Some words or phrases required some explanation, so, if it were possible some clarification was provided, especially if the text was identifying a participant inside the picture.

In the columns of the Text-Picture category section of the matrix, I depicted whether the meme fit that particular description. For Word Specific, whether pictures add more information to texts or not. For picture specific, whether texts amplified the meanings of pictures. For Duo, specific if there was overlapping between text and image. For additive, if words in the text

helped or not to find an interpretation of the picture. For interdependence, the meme discourses could be interpreted with the text separated from the picture. For Ad-Hoc Visual Referent adjustment, the interpretation of the meme is made in my own words indicating first which mode pushed the interpretation. In the right section of the matrix, I registered the style of humor found in the meme after the cyberpragmatic analysis, Incongruity, Metaphor, Irony and Sarcasm, which were already explained in chapter two.

This type of approach to multimodal discourse was chosen because Cyberpragmatic is perceived by Waugh et al. (2016) as a toolkit for this research. I want to see the interest in co-construction of sociocultural practices in context. It can help me analyze multimodal discourse containing insinuations or allusions, wordplay, presuppositions, and implicatures. It also foreshadows critical discourse analysis works[6]. In addition to those mentioned earlier, this "toolkit" will allow me to detect and analyze coded, hidden meanings within multimodal discourses. It is relevant to say that recent works approaching metaphor[7] also employed MCDA and sociopragmatics (Waugh et al., 2016). Having explained that, I can now present the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

Textual Analysis

Fairclough (2003) considers texts as parts of social events, although social events in themselves do not have a highly textual character. Events have causes that originate them and cause texts produced to have the features they are known for. In this study the events are occurrences in private language schools. The texts of memes are created as a result of those

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[6] Van Dijk and Wodak used pragmatics in their pre-CDA and current CDA/CDS work (Waugh, et al., 2016), the pragmatics I refer to is the European view, not the American view. European pragmatics is more compatible with CDA and CDS.

[7] Multimodal discourses usually address metaphors when modes such as image or text are extracted from movies, TV series, comics, anime, manga and videogames.

occurrences. The texts in memes are created by social agents, which for this study are EFL

teachers from private language schools. Fairclough (2003) also points out the "causal powers"

that influence the shape of texts: the social structures, social practices, and the social agents.

These social agents are socially restricted, but their actions are socially purposeful. They have

their own "causal powers" that make social agents compose texts and assemble relations between

text elements (Fairclough, 2003, p. 22).

　　　　The texts produced by EFL teachers from language schools in memes result from social

structures and orders of discourse in their setting, as a social structure with social practices

mediated through the Internet and social media. For example, which factors influencing and

shaping the EFL teachers' texts are; these social practices link discourse with other social

elements that are not considered discoursal, such as social relations, but despite that, they are

partially discoursal, and discourse is partly social relations (Fairclough, 2003).

　　　　The following discourse figures proposed by Fairclough (2003) genres, understood as

ways of acting, discourses understood as ways of representing, and styles understood as ways of

being, are the base of the text components I intended to analyze. The genre is the text of the

meme, and the discourse it contains is that way of acting; the representation as a discursive

matter are the perspectives and positions teachers use to represent their world; the ways of being

are the discourse figures and human behavior that constitute the way teachers are, and their

particular social and personal identities (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26).

　　　　The discourse figures that I mentioned before can be seen in texts simultaneously. Text,

event, the physical and social world, and individuals implicated in the event allow us to talk

about three types of meaning that are closely related to the following kinds of meaning: Action

(the text and the social relationships implied), identification (the style of the text), and

representation (the discourses in the text). The types mentioned above of meaning are what I will

analyze in this study since they umpire between the text and the social context (Fairclough,

2003). Hence it will be possible to see the discourses linked to issues and beliefs from EFL

teachers in language schools. Figure 5 depicts what I explained, what the different types of

meanings of a text can be found during the textual analysis in a meme.

Figure 5

Simultaneous types of meaning in the text of a meme
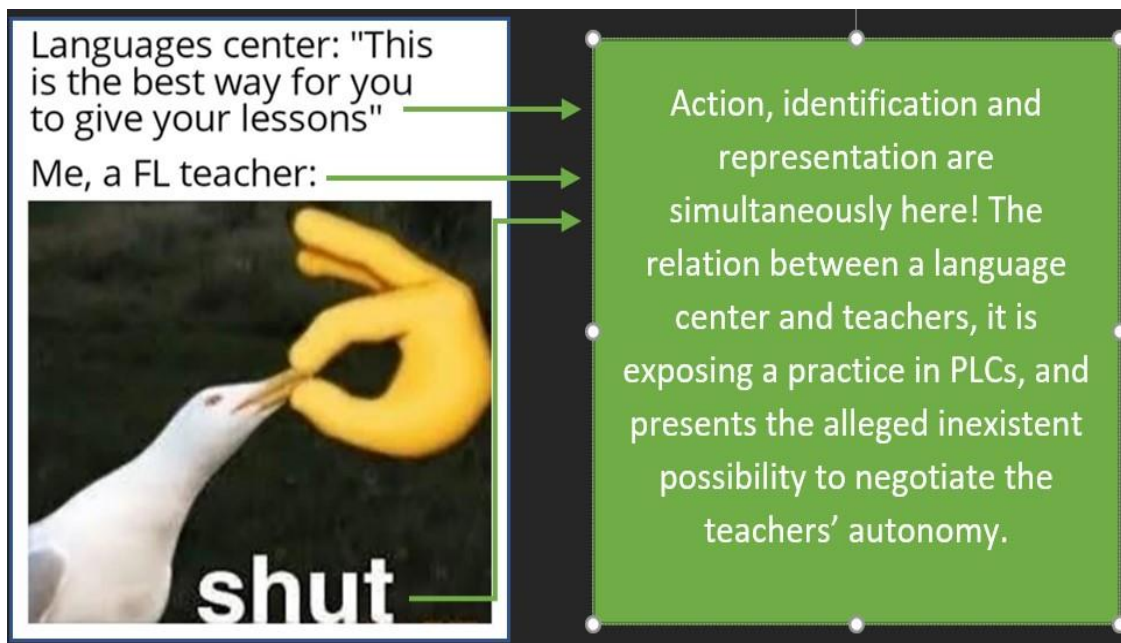
Once the aforementioned was taken into consideration for the textual analysis, I

registered my findings in the meme composition matrix (Appendix C). In some memes, I

analyzed all texts, even the phrases like subtitles, figuring out what the teachers intended to

identify or represent in terms of their relationship with the language schools and their beliefs and

issues within that setting. However, in other memes, I noticed that sometimes for the textual

analysis, it was not necessary to analyze the whole text, but excerpts that I considered were

relevant to the textual discourse in the multimodal artifact, and that could help me answer the research questions properly.

Final Steps in Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Once I got the matrices filled, I combined my interpretations coming from the cyberpragmatic analysis and the textual analysis to obtain what EFL teachers reported in terms of beliefs, and, issues in the context of language schools, and additionally to find out the humor styles that were used to convey such discourses. In addition to that, it was possible to see how discourses and use of humor could add to the existing portrayal of EFL teachers in the context of language schools (Figure 6). In this chapter, I presented the research design and research methods used to conduct this study.

Figure 6

Data analysis
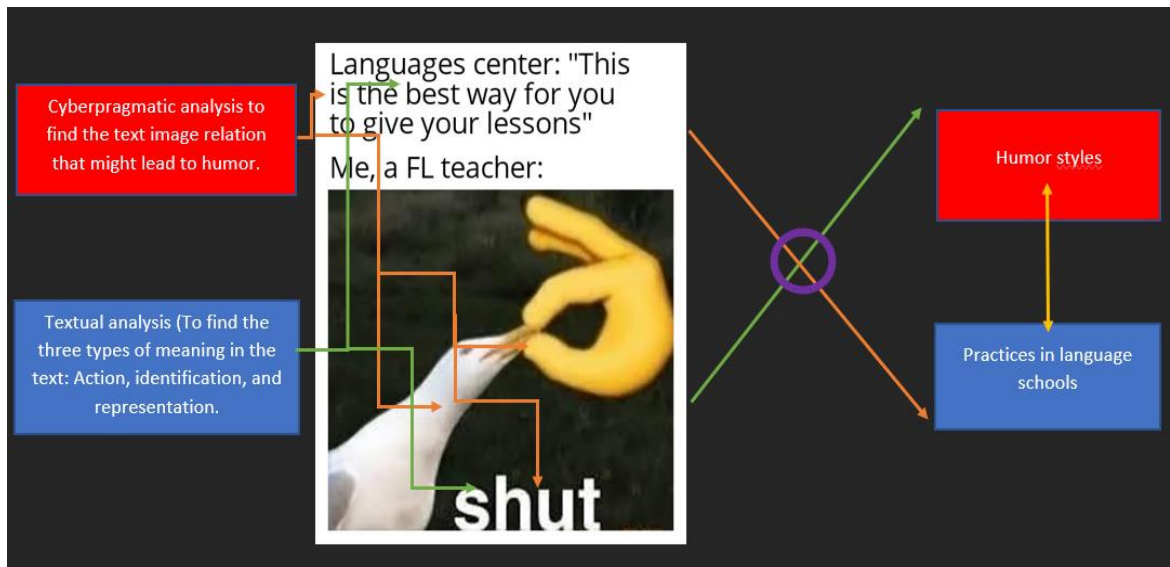
To sum up, the themes of discourses in memes were found mostly by the textual modality, and that allowed the first phase of the analysis, the thematic filtering and the naming of themes and subthemes. Once the initial names of themes and subthemes were obtained the second phase started, the cyber-pragmatic analysis, which allowed to help me find out what the relationship between image and text were for salience, sometimes the salient elements were the texts, some other times were the images. Pop culture references could be embedded in either the image or in the text modes, they are loaded with discourse even before being used in a meme, and hence affected salience and how the meme was read. Salient elements allowed me to know which mode pushed my interpretation of the meme. Salient elements vary from reader to reader, and the salient elements in this research go from what I noticed first to what I noticed last. In some memes the text was the salient element, in others it was the image. No matter the salience, all memes went through the textual analysis. The textual analysis allowed me to find what occurrences happened in language schools, the social structures, issues, agents' beliefs and how they were related. The cyberpragmatic analysis and the textual analysis allowed to find what humor style was used to convey the discourses that informed EFL teachers' beliefs, issues and occurrences in language schools.

After those three phases, there was an additional thematic filtering stage, which also employed an MS Excel tab (Appendix D) to register data. This stage lasted for four months and it was necessary for narrowing down the themes and subthemes, which are Marketization and Commodification of Education, comprised by four subthemes: Power dynamics, Incivility, For Profit and Deprofessionalization; and Work conditions in the TEFL industry, comprised by three subthemes: Corporate tantrum (made of the following sub-sub-themes: Exclusivity and Academic mercenaryism, Online silencing, and Astroturfing); Policy Questioning (made of the

following sub-sub-themes: Conform or Complain, and Salary); and Written and non-written rules
(made of the following sub-sub-themes: Obedience and subordination, and Trustworthiness and
Requirements). I address next in the following research section, the results of the data analysis,
the research findings.

Chapter 4 – Results and Findings

The analysis of memes offered some knowledge to the researcher concerning the beliefs and issues EFL teachers go through in language schools, as well as the styles of humor used in the memes that conveyed the discourses that revealed such beliefs and issues. During the analysis, the researcher first found what to him were the salient elements in the image and the text, then found the pop culture references (if available), they are explicitly mentioned in this part of the research so the readers of this document have an idea on how the memes were read. It is important that the salient elements in a multimodal artifact as the ones that were analyzed vary from person to person, what the researcher considered were salient elements in image and text, to another reader might not be. In addition to that, he found whether the images added or not more information to the text: whether texts amplified the meaning of images; whether the picture meanings and texts overlapped or not; if the words in the texts helped to interpret the image; if the discourses in images and texts were interdependent, and which was the mode that drove the meme interpretation.

After that first phase of analysis of the visual composition, which intended to know the type of humor it encapsulated, another phase followed. In the second phase, the textual composition analysis focused on the text analysis but not on separating it from the cultural references and visual composition. Although the textual composition allowed one to know the purpose of the text, depending on how long the text was, it was also possible to analyze some of the words or phrases used in the memes. The words and phrases chosen for analysis were the ones that helped to identify patterns, the ones that caught the researcher's attention more. Once the analysis processes were finished, it was necessary to obtain the major themes per month by checking the data repeatedly until obtaining labels to name those themes. Among those

labels, it was necessary to recombine and rename them to obtain the final themes. Two of them emerged from the analyzed data: Marketization of education, and Teachers' Points of View (POV) about their work conditions, their coworkers, and themselves. Since the data analyzed is quite a lot for each meme, I will only show only the analysis of two memes per sub-theme. The memes I show next were chosen bearing in mind how strongly they resound for the subthemes they represent.

Figure 7

Emerging themes and sub-themes
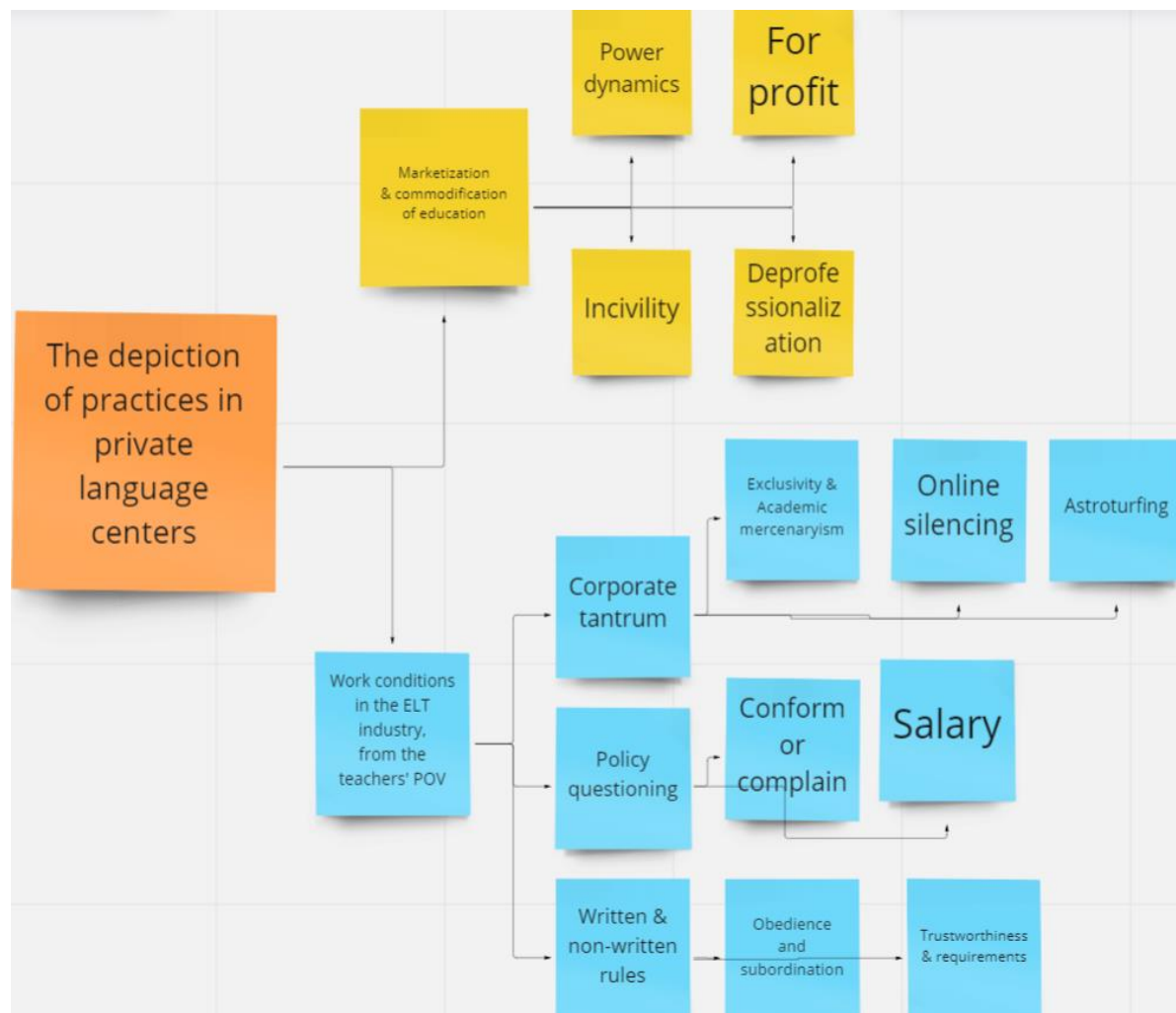
Marketization and commodification of education

The marketization and commodification of education have transformed the way we view education, teachers, and students. Marketization, or the expansion of the market's logic into all aspects of life (Sandikci, 2021) has led to a rise in consumer culture, where students are viewed as customers, and educational institutions as businesses. The commodification of education is a behavioral and perceptual process of transforming goods that were not previously considered as marketable into commodities. This commodification process objectifies and dehumanizes people and things, including teachers and education respectively. It is a process of converting objects and concepts into exchangeable objects, including goods, ideas, and even people for sale as merchandise. This theme delves into the feelings, thoughts, and opinions of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers after being exposed to the marketization and commodification of education in memes made by them.

The market expansion into people's lives is what Tadajewski (2020) defines as marketization. A.F Firat (2020) explains that marketization is the rising systemization of society and its culture in compliance with the "ideology, goals and principles of the modern market where economic exchanges predominate—that is, money and commodities produced for the market to receive economically valued resources in return are exchanged" (p. 21). Firat asserts that there is a tendency of the market logic to infiltrate all activities and presents an example of how educative institutions, including government funded universities, began to be thought of as businesses in which members are becoming part of centers that aim to develop products to sell to students as customers, and hence make a profit (Tomlinson, 2017 as cited in Firat, 2020 p. 22).

This market logic generates education reforms (Benadé, 2012). In addition to that, Firat asserts that the dominance of economic and corporate capitalism caused the consumer culture,

making people recognize themselves as consumers. He indicates that commodity consumption became a success indicator, a definition of happiness in which students ended up considering themselves as consumers of education (Firat, 2020) and generates a feeling of deprofessionalization in teachers (Benadé, 2012). The "Consumerization of education" causes a decline in public intellectualism and a decrease in public funding for education (Firat, 2020). The nature of modern marketization affects relationships among fellow human beings (Manno, 2002, as cited in Firat, 2020).

Marketization and commodification are concepts that are usually paired together, and it might seem that their meanings are similar. However, according to Belk (2020) marketization is seen from an institutional point of view; commodification is more behavioral and perceptual. It is the process of transforming goods that in the past did not use to be considered as to be marketed, this means that they are prone to "be priced, branded, promoted, and sold in a capitalist marketplace that fosters and sanctions competition" (Beer, 2016 as cited in Belk, 2020, p. 31), and originate in the neoliberal ideology (Lemke 2001; Mirowski 2013). Belk states that education and childcare are part of what is known as the commodification of people (2020), and it presents objectifying and dehumanizing potential (Belk, 2014). To Belk, commodification is defined as a process of converting objects and concepts into exchangeable objects, among their goods, ideas, and even people for sale as merchandise. An example he provides is childcare; in it, commodification takes place when taking care of children moves from unpaid parents, relatives, or neighbors to paid daycare (2020).

People also commodificate themselves (Belk, 2014). Sacred goods, once they have a price, they become commodities, and that is a common practice within our consumer culture. Among the sacred goods, we can find religion, human lives, love, and education, to name a few.

Commodification is transforming human transactions into market transactions (Belk, 2020).

Despite education is a commodity nowadays, it is also among the many realms that are resisting

commodification (Belk, 2020). There are additional critiques to the concept of commodification

that are anchored apart from its inroad extension into the "untouchable" realms of human life;

however, the one that might be concerned with education is the "erosion of human dignity" (p.

45)

The outcome of commodification is to fog the limits between what can be considered as

commercial, social, public, private, and what people are expected to give away for free and what

needs to be incentivized (Belk, 2020). Commodification presents some consequences regarding

culture, among them we can find "A Monetized Perspective of Life", coming from the belief that

"everything can be regarded as a commodity with a market price that is theoretically revealed by

preference functions" (p. 47). Human commodification is another consequence being considered

by the author as obnoxious, and presenting dilemmas and moral questions regarding setting

differences between people and objects; self-commodification is another consequence echoed in

hazardous jobs, and even "wage labor" in which "the worker as being alienated from the product

of his labor" (Marx, 1867/1999 as cited in Belk, 2020 p. 53), workers that require to offer

friendly service to even the most disagreeable people (Hochschild, 1983, as cited in Belk, 2020),

and workers who are "estranged from their own feelings and faces by having to offer a cheerful

demeanor on the job." (Van Maanen, 1991, Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989, as cited in Belk,

2020 p. 53), and personnel who must be overly deferential to customers (Hanser, 2008, as cited

in Belk, 2020).

The commodification of education reshapes the social relationships between professors

and students (Saunders & Blanco, 2017). Belk (2020) asserts that decommodifying people and

things may be challenging to do with time, and the fact that professors are seen as commodities indicates a failure to value them for their personalities and abilities. As commodification progresses, the boundaries between treating someone as a human versus an item become blurrier (Belk, 2020).

Most language schools are private enterprises run with the purpose of making a profit through the sale of a product: foreign language courses. The marketization and commodification of education are processes originated in the neoliberal ideology, in which the value of exchange is a priority, and language schools are the outcome of commodification processes. Education, once a sacralized good, a human right, and hence an important part of people's lives, began to be marketed, had a price to be paid, and became commodified. The commodification of education commodifies teachers as well since they are considered to be the embodiment of the sold product. As a result, the relationships between students and teachers were reshaped, students are customers, and teachers are service providers. Service providers are deprived of their humanity, dignity, creativity, and other aspects that are not related to the product that is part of the transaction. The comprehension of this concept is not only useful to understand the setting, but also to better comprehend the beliefs and issues EFL teachers go through in language schools, and how these influence the teachers' discourses in their memes, which might also help us portray EFL educators within this particular setting.

Marketization and commodification of education causes in teachers to either accept and embrace their roles and actions as part of a commercial educative system or an internal conflict caused by the collision of what they consider are their roles as educators and their views of education with the business affairs imposed by educative enterprise owners as a sort of added responsibility. Educative entrepreneurs cause the participants in educative processes to perform

certain actions. Consequently, other related issues emerge, such as the positioning of students as customers and their demands to service providers (their teachers), which might be or not out of line with the services that are really being offered.

Due to what was mentioned above, there is a kind of dynamic of power among the class participants, resulting in incivility in some cases and feelings of deprofessionalization in teachers. Therefore, this major theme is comprised of the following sub-themes: Power dynamics, for-profit, and deprofessionalization. Next, I explain these themes with the sub-themes that include them.

Power dynamics

This sub-theme presents us the disagreements teachers and students have over the control within different stages of the educative process. Teachers are usually the ones in charge of leading the class, and despite that, they understand their place in language schools, they understand power as dynamic and changing, and as a result they can give their students some of that control in certain stages of the learning process for customer service. On the other hand, students as customers struggle with the idea of power being a changing element since they are paying customers; they consider they should be the ones leading the class as constant power holders. The memes that belong to this sub-theme are 001, 048, 071, 076, 084, 093, 116, 161, 169, and 173. These memes are characterized by depicting moments in which teachers display power in class as rule enforcers or moments in which students exert power in class as customers. The latter is one of the most frequent. The selected memes do not show a clash for power between students and teachers simultaneously. Next, I offer the analysis of memes 048 in Figure 8 and 084 in figure 9 as examples.

Figure 8

Meme 048
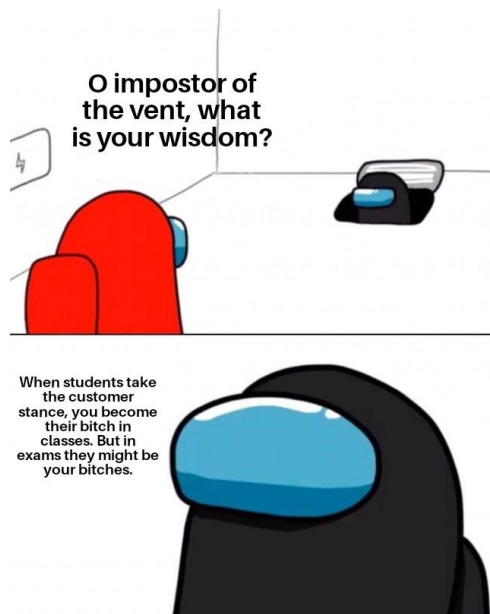
This is an exploitable meme, it is a meme template whose images are edited by different apps or programs to get the intentional humorous effect (Know Your Meme, 2022, Vásquez & Ehran, 2021). It is known as 'Impostor of the vent.' The images used in the meme were extracted from a video made by the YouTuber known as Matongchi on September 3rd, 2020, based on the popular videogame 'Among Us' (KnowYouMeme, 2022). The salient elements of the image in the upper panel are the red crewmate, we see his back, and he is staring at Black impostor. Black impostor is leaning his head out from a vent. The second panel makes it possible to see a Black impostor's helmet close-up. There are two segments of text, the salient elements of the text are in the upper frame of the meme, and the segment below has another segment of text. The text in the upper image is a question that the red crewmate asks the black impostor: "O impostor of the vent, what is your wisdom?". The response by the black impostor is the second text segment

"When students take the customer stance, you become their bitch in classes. But in exams they might be your bitches".

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis, the images in memes provide additional information in relation to the text, with some being word-specific and others picture-specific. The text, on the other hand, amplifies the meaning of the picture. Meanwhile, duo-specific and additive memes show no overlap between the picture and text, but the words in the text assist in interpreting the picture. Interdependence between the picture and text is revealed, implying that meme discourses cannot be understood by separating the image from the text.

Furthermore, the ad-hoc visual referent adjustment in memes highlights that the text directs the interpretation of the following meme. In a specific example, a less experienced teacher is seeking wisdom from a more experienced one. The communicated wisdom is that teachers can be dominated by their students in the classroom. During exams, the power dynamic is reversed, with teachers now demanding things from students.

The textual analysis reveals that the texts in this meme have the function of working as a dialogue between the two characters as if they were the dialog frames in a comic strip. In the first frame, the red character asks for advice, "what is your wisdom?" advice that comes from the experience of having taught classes and evaluated students' performance for years. The black character provides that advice in the second panel based precisely on that acquired wisdom. The words used by the character "bitch" and "bitches" with the possessives "their" and "your" to address who dominates who in the classroom and the context of education as a business, the use of such language evidences power relations influenced by market affairs. A teacher becomes a dominated character in classes when students take a customer position (See Tomlinson, 2017 as cited in Firat, 2020). EFL lessons are a service, and the teacher is considered just as a provider of

such service; the teacher is the server that presents the knowledge as students prefer to consume it since they are paying for it, and money grants them that power, which generates in EFL teachers a feeling of deprofessionalization (Benade, 2012).

Although the roles are reverted during exams, money is no longer a guarantor of power for EFL learners in language schools, but the knowledge of the foreign language. Teachers, in their role of examiners, clearly have a lot more knowledge than their students for the years they have studied; the ones who decide which students approve and fail are teachers. Their knowledge on the subject granted them authority, hence power over their students (See Fairclough, 1989).

The analysis revealed the following humor styles. First, the incongruity can be seen in the interaction of the characters seen in the pictures. The impostor is the enemy to identify in the game 'Among Us'. The red crewmate in the game is his objective. It makes no sense that a foe is providing advice to a potential victim, it is a failure of logic to the connoisseurs of the game (See Gimbel, 2018). Second, there are metaphors in the picture. The black impostor (the source, according to Goatly, 2012) represents an experienced teacher from a language school who understands the positions students have been taking in classes and in exams (the target according to Goatly, 2012). The red crewmate (the source) might be a less experienced teacher who is looking for some advice (the target). The stretched distance between the source and the target, components of the metaphor, cause it to be humorous (Attardo, 2014).

Third, the meme text contains sarcasm. It might lie in the use of the word bitch. The word "bitch" has many different meanings and connotations, but the one that is more accurate to what the meme intends to express is to be the subordinate of another person. The word "bitch" presents the power dynamics between teachers and students in language schools, which works as a critique toward the positioning of students as customers. Finally, the meme also presents irony,

it depicts the EFL teachers' dissociative attitudes (Yus, 2016) toward the commodification of

education itself, and the positioning of students as customers. The claims some students make

sometimes might not have solid arguments, and due to "customer satisfaction," a teacher might

grant approving grades in exams, workshops, or papers, hence students losing valuable learning

experiences that come from failure.

Figure 9

Meme 084
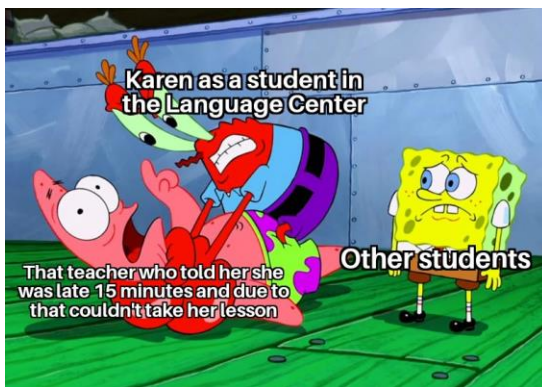
This object labeling meme is called Mr. Krabs and Patrick fight. An object labelling

meme is one in which labels are created and placed on the characters in an image to create a

humorous interpretation of the picture (Know Your Meme, 2022). The image is a screenshot

from a SpongeBob SquarePants episode. The salient elements of the image are three of the

characters of the show, SpongeBob, Mr. Krabs and Patrick. SpongeBob has a concerned look

because Mr. Krabs is choking Patrick Star. Mr. Krabs seems angry. Patrick intends to say

something, but he cannot say anything because Mr. Krabs is choking him. The salient elements

of text are three lines located in the following way: The first one is on Mr. Krabs saying: "Karen

as a student in the Language center." The second is on Patrick, who says, "That teacher who told

her she was late 15 minutes and couldn't take her lesson." The third one is on SpongeBob, and it says: "Other students."

The cyber-pragmatic approach reveals that the images provide additional information to the text, while the text enhances the picture's meaning. In duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the text and image overlap, and the text helps interpret the picture, with the meme discourse being inseparable from the text and image. Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment shows that the text drives the meme interpretation. In an unspecified foreign language class, a student named "Karen" is seen attacking her teacher after being reprimanded for being late. The teacher had enforced the punctuality rule of the language school, where students arriving 15 minutes late are not taught their corresponding lesson but can still participate in class activities. The image depicts a physical attack, with the other students appearing concerned but not intervening.

The textual analysis reveals that the meme texts serve the purpose of labeling the characters in the meme. However, the text that is over Patrick Star labeling him as a teacher also explains the reaction of Mr. Krabs as a Karen, who is a language school student here. The teacher reminded the student the punctuality rule that is applied in some private language schools. Students can get into the classroom and participate in the class, but the teacher will not cover their class content. It would seem that learners in language schools dislike rules that keep them from obtaining the product or service they paid for.

The uncovered style of humor is metaphor based on a pop culture reference. Mr. Krabs (the source) represents the irascibility and intolerance of "Karens," who attack Foreign Language teachers even for applying the punctuality rule to them (the target). Mr. Krabs in the series is SpongeBob's boss. Patrick (the source) represents the teachers who Karens attack (the target).

They try to argue their actions, and even if they are given a chance to remind the rules, they will still be attacked. Although Patrick is portrayed most of the time as a low intelligence being, in the series, he has been employed by Mr. Krabs a few times. SpongeBob (the source) represents the students who usually witness such attacks but are sometimes helpless (the target). Attardo (2014) explains that the humor in metaphors is evidenced in the stretched distance between the sources and targets. SpongeBob works for Mr. Krabs in the series, and he is a loyal employee who does not question Mr. Krabs's acts, no matter how unethical they could be. Incongruity, sarcasm and irony are absent from the meme.

Incivility

This sub-theme refers to what we understand as rudeness, not necessarily in the use of coarse language, but in other subtle yet still questionable acts as not greeting, not responding when being asked questions, misinterpreted expressions or words among others that may vary from person to person depending on the actions people find rude. The memes 031, 066, 076, 084, 093, 116 were collected during the COVID19 pandemic, and they depict rude acts from students to teachers and vice versa within an online setting. COVID19 forced us, teachers and students, alike to teach and receive classes remotely. Acts of incivility might include not saying hello or goodbye at the beginning and end of class sessions or making poorly expressed comments about the class without making sure the microphone of the computer was closed. Next, I present the analysis of memes 031 in figure 10 and 066 in figure 11 as examples.

Figure 10

Meme 031

This reaction meme is named 'You get what you fucking deserve.' Also known as reaction images, reaction memes represent a particular emotion as response to the text in the upper text part (Know Your Meme, 2022). The image is a frame from the 2019 movie Joker. In this part of the film, Joker, starred by the actor Joaquin Phoenix, appears in Murray's late-night talk show as a guest, for later having an altercation with the host Murray Franklin, interpreted by the actor Robert De Niro. As a salient element of the image is possible to appreciate that Arthur Fleck, the Joker, is already using the outfit and makeup that characterizes him, and he looks angry. The salient elements of text are located in the upper text, and it says, "When students, who usually log out of your online English sessions without getting feedback, fail your exams". The next salient element is the text as a caption of the Joker's dialogue says: "You get what you fucking deserve," which is why the meme is named like that.

The analysis of cyber-pragmatics uncovers the following in relation to the meme's composition with regard to image and text. Concerning word and picture specific, the pictures do not modify the meaning conveyed in the text, but they supplement the text with additional

information, while the texts magnify the significance of the images to create an interpretation derived from the combination. As for duo specific, additive, and interdependence, there is no overlapping meaning between the image and text. Instead, the words utilized in the text assist in arriving at an interpretation of the image, and the discourse of the meme cannot be deciphered with the text and image viewed separately. Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment reveals that combining the image and text drives the meme interpretation. The following scenario is depicted: during an online English lesson, some students leave the virtual session before the teacher provides feedback, which is essential for better exam results. Later, these same students fail the exam. Consequently, the teacher silently thinks that the students deserved the grade they received.

The textual analysis reveals that the first segment of the text intended to provide us with the context in the following part: "students usually log out of your online English sessions without getting feedback." The meme positioned the reader as an EFL teacher. The positioning has the purpose of empathizing with the teacher's reaction under the depicted circumstance. That reaction is represented in the text by The Joker's quote: "You get what you fucking deserve," an upsetting, improper answer from a teacher, but an answer that not only expresses the frustration a teacher might feel but also expresses what the consequences are to students who are not interested in the knowledge you are transmitting.

The styles of humor the analysis revealed are metaphor and irony. The Joker (the source) represents the teachers' emotional reactions they cannot express in public (the target). What makes the metaphor work is the analogy, the similarity between the source and the target (Goatly, 2012). It might mean what goes through their minds whenever a student fails an exam that evaluates the contents of the classes of those students who abandoned a class session earlier

without feedback. The students cannot be seen in the picture; instead, their behavior is depicted in the upper part of the text. The irony here is evidenced in the students' actions and the Joker's response, it is an aggressive, intentional faultfinding complain (see Giora and Attardo, 2014) which expresses the individual's dissociative attitudes (Yus, 2016) toward the disdain students have regarding their foreign language course, by not using the entire time of the lessons they are receiving. The ones affected by their own behavior are the students themselves, although their position as customers provides them with the privilege of choosing how long they will stay in class. When being evaluated, the time they did not use for practice and feedback just affects them academically in the long term. The meme does not show incongruity and sarcasm.

Figure 11

Meme 066

This catchphrase, exploitable, reaction meme is named 'Will you shut up man?'. Catchphrases in memes are expressions, phrases that have been repeated and because of that are recognized (Know Your Meme, 2022). The salient element of the image is a screenshot of the

presidential debate broadcast on September 29th, 2020. The image of Biden is used to express irritation and annoyance as a reaction to someone who will not stop speaking (Know Your Meme, 2022). The image is one of the two or three existing variants. The image used for this meme is taken from the Instagram account koreantrump; it is the first version of the meme. In this image it is possible to see the new president of the US, Joe Biden, in a frame that does not exactly correspond to the moment he asks Trump to keep quiet. He is wearing a blue suit, and he holds a serious facial expression.

The salient elements of text in the meme are three sections of text, the first two segments above the image and the last one below as a caption of the image. The first segment says: "FL teacher: *Used a few minutes after the class finished to explain a hard topic*." The second section of text says: "The remaining 2 students whose topics weren't covered in class:" The third and last section of the text is the famous quote by US President Joe Biden: "Will you shut up, man?".

The cyber-pragmatic analysis demonstrates that the categories of text and image are connected. Specifically, for the word and image specific category, it shows that the images provide additional information to the text, while the text amplifies the meaning of the picture. In the duo specific, additive, and interdependence categories, it is revealed that the text and picture overlap and that the text helps to interpret the picture, and that the meaning of meme discourse cannot be separated from the text and image. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment also demonstrates that the text plays a role in pushing the interpretation of the meme. The image shows two students looking at their teacher, who seems to be explaining a difficult grammar topic. The students are expressing frustration because they believe that the teacher did not

manage the time of the class properly. It is suggested that there were multiple topics to cover in a limited amount of time, and that each student has a different class topic.

The textual analysis uncovers that the text helps clarify who the participants of the situation are and indicates the actions some of them do when asterisks enclose it. The phrase to check is: "Used a few minutes of the class to explain a hard topic;" this is an action done by the teacher, who is not graphically represented in the meme. The time the teacher used is not quite specific. The phrase gives the idea that the teacher might have taken from five to ten minutes after the conclusion of the class. The next phrase, "to explain a hard topic," causes a reader to imagine that in the English language, there are grammar topics that are complex to explain to students, and understandably, they take more time from the class to explain, yet we can only speculate about which specific topics the meme maker is referring to because they are not explicitly addressed in the meme text.

The text that labels the students in the second segment gives us the reason they react (Biden's angry expression in the image) as depicted in the third segment of text "The remaining 2 students whose topics weren't covered in class." I can only speculate why the teacher took longer to cover the class grammar topics. As mentioned above, profitable, mass production class procedures force a teacher to explain any class topic in a certain amount of time. In addition to that, we can only speculate about how long the class might be in a private language school. What we know is that some of the class topics were not covered, causing the students to be upset since education is a market transaction (Belk, 2020), and the situation depicted is a failed one. As stated above, the text in the third section of the meme is a reaction, but the meme never states whether this answer is something the students really said in class or just represents something they would like to say in such a situation. That reaction, "Will you shut up, man?" might also be

considered a command from the students to their teacher, a display of incivility emerging from the frustration of not having been able to take their class as they expected, a run aground transaction in which customers did not receive the product or service they acquired.

What the analysis revealed were metaphor and irony as styles of humor. The metaphor is evidenced here since an upset Joe Biden (the source) represents students who are not satisfied with their teacher's time distribution to explain the class topics (the target). The teacher is not shown in the image but mentioned in the text, the stretched distance between the source and the target is what makes the meme humorous (Attardo, 2014).

The irony might be seen here in students who showed up to class with the expectation to get their corresponding language topics explained and maybe some feedback after solving exercises and using the language, which will help them satisfy their need to learn a foreign language. Instead, the students received a class topic that was not theirs because of the class organization procedures employed by the language school. It seems that the students are taking lessons in one of those language schools that cramp many topics in a class session whose time is never mentioned in the meme, but we can assume it is not much, and the class contents might be dense. The lack of comprehension the students have regarding the meaning of taking foreign language lessons in such setting is exposed, hence the teacher who made the meme is demonstrating superiority (Beermann, 2014), causing the meme to be considered humorous. The students pay for "a product" that is not satisfying their needs. The teachers governed by profitable, mass production class procedures cannot satisfy their students' wants and needs.

For-profit

The sub-theme refers to all the different acts meant to be done to obtain and retain the money of paying customers. Some of these acts might be considered sales, and others as

customer care or customer service. Regarding the latter, they imply the shrieking of certain rules

established by the educative enterprise. Bypassing these rules because of customer service might

affect or not the customer-students' experience with educative businesses and their teachers. The

memes that belong to this sub-theme are 033, 093, 131, and 221. As examples, I present the

analysis made on memes 033 shown in figure 12 and 221 presented in figure 13.

Figure 12

Meme 033

This exploitable meme is named 'Trade offer.' The salient element in the image shows

TikTok user bradeazy (Know Your Meme, 2022). He is dressed in formal wear with a rather

attentive expression on his face, with his hands together in front of his face. The salient elements

of text are four lines. The one on the upper side of the screen says, "Trade offer." Below that line

of text, on the left side of the screen, can be read "I receive," and, on the right side of the screen,

it says, "you receive." Below the "I receive" text, it says: "An approving grade in my exams."

Below the "you receive" text it can be read: "*Awful word order. *Made up vocabulary *Lousy

pronunciation." The last line of text is positioned at the bottom of the image and identifies the

man in the picture as "Foreign language students."

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis of text-picture categories, it was found that in the case of word and picture specific, the images do not change the meaning of the text but provide additional information, while the text amplifies the meaning of the picture to create a combined interpretation. For duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the analysis revealed that there is an overlap in meaning between the text and the image, with the words in the text helping to interpret the picture, and that meme discourses cannot be understood by separating the text and the image. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment indicates that both the image and the text contribute to the interpretation of the meme. In the context of foreign language exams, some students attempt to negotiate a favorable grade with the examiner for their language production, even if it does not align with the teacher examiner's expectations.

The textual analysis revealed that the phrases "I receive," "You receive" position us in a negotiation or trade of some sort. The "You," in "You receive," makes us participants in that trade, and in addition to that, it positions us as the EFL teacher of the student. The phrase "An approving grade in my exams" is what students, represented by the man in a suit in the image, expect as a result of the negotiation. It seems that any approving grade is enough as long as they do not have to repeat the exam. The teachers receive the following: "Awful word order, made up vocabulary, lousy pronunciation." It is not clear in what context the meme maker means with the words "awful" and "lousy," but it is possible to infer that the teachers will receive language production that does not stick to what is expected from students: language close to what the standards want from foreign language learners.

The styles of humor were revealed after the analysis are metaphor and irony. Regarding metaphor, the man in the suit (the source) represents foreign language students (the target). He establishes eye contact with us (the source) to be positioned as teachers here (the target). The

distance theory is what makes metaphors to be considered as funny (See Attardo, 2014). Students want their effort in the oral skill to be acknowledged because it is worthy to them despite the interpretation EFL teachers might make of the language standards for certain levels. The student's level is not mentioned in the meme, but what we can notice is the teachers' judgement over that skill, which demonstrates superiority (Beermann, 2014) by exposing students who have forgotten that the point in some of these language schools is to try to stick to a standard language production, the resulting allegory (Goatly, 2012) results in humor. All the student wants to receive for the effort is an approving grade. The irony can be evidenced in students being concerned about an approving grade; however, they should worry about learning the language. Mistakes in exams are a learning resource (Cherepinsky, 2011), and missing the chance to learn from mistakes is simply ignoring a valuable learning resource. The situation results stressful to teachers (Mercer, 2020) The students are customers, but they sometimes forget what they bought. They did not buy an approval grade, but the chance to learn and use a foreign language.

Figure 13

Meme 221
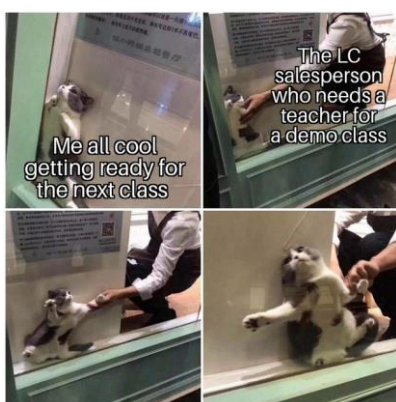
This object labeling meme is named 'Cat being dragged from window' (Know Your Meme, 2022) Among the salient elements of the image, we have that this is a four-panel image macro. The first panel shows a grey tuxedo cat that seems to be stuck in the space between a wall

and a window. The cat looks relaxed. The second, third, and fourth panels show a person in a white shirt pulling the cat out of that space without causing it any harm. The salient elements of text are the text over the cat in the first panel that says: "Me all cool getting ready for the next class," and the text in the second panel is over the person in a white shirt, and it says: "The LC salesperson who needs a teacher for a demo class." The third and fourth panels do not have any text.

The cyber-pragmatic analysis on the text-picture categories provides the following insights: concerning word and picture specific, images supplement the information in the text, and the text intensifies the meaning of the picture. With regards to duo specific, additive, and interdependence, there is an overlap between the picture and text, the words in the text assist in understanding the picture, and meme discourses cannot be interpreted by dividing the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment indicates that both the text and image are responsible for influencing the meme interpretation. The sales department can arrange for teachers to give sample language classes to those interested in the course; however, teachers only do so because they are obligated, not because they want to.

The textual analysis reveals that the texts in the meme have the purpose of labelling the characters, their actions, and the motivations of those actions. The 'Me' in the first segment of the text positions us as teachers about to teach the coming class. The "LC salesperson" refers to a worker of the language school who "needs" a teacher "for a demo class." Demo classes are a sales strategy employed by some language schools to consolidate the sale of a course, in which a teacher shows a prospective student the structure of the class in order to get the student to enroll. The demo class might be seen as a moment that helps a customer (student prospect) decide whether to study in a language school or not since it shows what the classes might be like as if

foreign language classes in that particular language school were different from the rest, and they might be. The teacher is used as a toolset to follow the procedural steps of a language class on a customer-student prospect, a class whose procedures have been modified to obtain profit. The language of work rules and procedures are the demonstration of power the language school has to define the reality of teachers in that setting (see Fairclough, 1989).

The humor styles that were revealed after the analysis are metaphor and irony. The cat in that space between a wall and a glass (the source) represents a teacher working for a language school (the target). The person in the white shirt (the source) represents the language school salesperson (the target). The metaphor is humorous because of the distance theory (see Attardo, 2014). The act of pulling the cat out of its position means that the teacher is being repositioned, not as a teacher, but as a product sample for the customers (not represented in the meme picture) to try and decide whether they will acquire the language course or not. Being a product, or the sample of a product to be sold is the manifestation of the power language schools exert to change their employees' realities regarding their occupation (Fairclough, 1989), thus eroding teachers' human dignity under the context of marketized education (Belk, 2020). The irony comes in when a teacher has to teach a demonstration class, so a person makes a final decision to learn a language when the interest to learn a language or anything must come from the students themselves. A sacralized aspect of life is marketized (Belk, 2014).

Deprofessionalization

This sub-theme refers to the feelings teachers have after having faced the imposition of certain duties in educative enterprises. Such obligations undermine the freedoms of individuals and leave them with inner conflicts caused by acts of labeling and silencing performed on them and by being assigned functions that, in their views of teaching, do not correspond to what

teachers are supposed to do as part of their job: facing the limitations of academic freedom,

losing the hope of keeping their value as professionals, the lack of support from higher-ups and

sales staff when facing issues with customer-students, among others. In addition to that, it also

refers to norms such as the imposition of uniforms, the adhesion to class procedures, the

relocation to companies not focused in education for not reinforcing other language schools'

workforce, and in the process, depriving a teacher of obtaining enriching teaching experiences.

The memes under this subtheme are 093, 118, 169, 162, 161, 182, 188, 211, 149, 200, 208, 221,

178. I present as examples the analysis of memes 162 in figure 14 and 178 in figure 15.

Figure 14

Meme 162
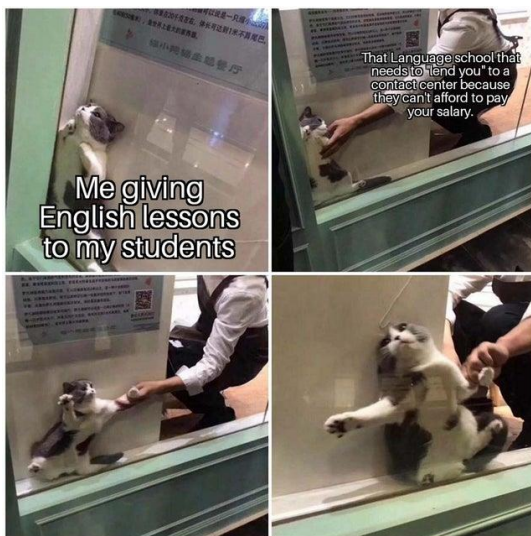
The meme 162 is the same image macro meme analyzed a few pages above 'Cat being

dragged from window', demonstrating a key feature of Internet Humor, repetition either in text or

images (Shifman, 2014b). The salient elements in the image are the same as described above.

However, there is a significant change in the salient elements of the text. The text over the cat in

the first panel says: "Me giving English lessons to my students." The text in the second panel is

over the person in a white shirt, and it says: "The language school that needs to 'lend you' to a contact center because they can't afford to pay your salary." The third and fourth panels do not have any text.

The cyber-pragmatic analysis conducted on text-picture categories has shown that the relationship between text and image is similar to that described in meme 221. However, the Ad-Hoc Visual referent adjustment has been influenced by the text, revealing that both the text and image contribute to the interpretation of the meme. For instance, teachers who have been providing language classes for a certain language school are suddenly notified that they will be transferred to a contact center due to financial constraints faced by the school.

The textual analysis of the meme reveals that the texts in the meme not only label the meme characters but also indicate their actions, needs, and impossibilities. The meme has a context; it was made and posted during the COVID19 pandemic. Several enterprises went bankrupt because most people worldwide were locked up; however, certain words in the text might indicate a different reason for the actions the meme depicts. A language school decided to "lend" a few English language teachers to a contact center. The word "lend" implies that teachers are not professional human beings with agency, but equipment, or things, that belong to the language school. The "they can't afford to pay your salary" means this non-mentioned language school seems not to be able to pay their teachers for the job they are doing due to the reasons mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph. However, the language school took such an arbitrary decision of relocating an English teacher to work in a company that does not mean competition for them, a "contact center" would seem suspicious. Bear in mind that language school owners have a deep knowledge of ELT as a business, which grants them the power to change their teachers' realities by relocating them to a contact center

The humor styles revealed after the analysis are metaphor and satire. The metaphor is slightly similar to the meme 221. The cat in that space between a wall and a glass (the source) represents a teacher working for a language school (the target). The difference, though, is seen in the person in the white shirt (the source); this individual represents the language school higher-ups (the target) The stretched distance between the source and the target is what causes humor in metaphors (Attardo, 2014). The act of pulling the cat out of its position means that the teacher is being relocated, but not to a position where the teacher feels more comfortable, a teaching position in a different language school, but to a position that is more comfortable to the higher-ups of the language school, one that does not imply strengthening the labor force of their competition.

The irony lies in the language school higher-ups believing their teachers lack the initiative to look for another teaching job, and their alleged ignorance regarding their reality within the ELT business which has objectified and dehumanized them (Belk, 2014). Language school owners also ignore that EFL teachers are not passive entities that do not question such drastic decisions, the meme is fun because it depicts teachers as having knowledge, and power to change their realities from their discourses as a resistance ground (Mills, 1997), which in the end will result in a situation the higher-ups of language schools wanted to avoid, their former teachers strengthening the labor force of economically stronger language schools.

Figure 15

Meme 178

This object labeling meme is called 'Megazord transformation' or 'Power Rangers combine'. The salient elements in the image are within a six-panel screenshot of the 90's television series 'Mighty Morphin Power Rangers,' the North American version of the Japanese show 'Super Sentai.' In the upper row to the left, there is the black mammoth ranger; next to him, in the middle, there is the red tyrannosaurus ranger, and next to him on the right, there is the blue triceratops ranger. In the middle row to the left is the yellow saber-tooth tiger ranger, and next to her in the right panel, there is the pink pterodactyl ranger. Each ranger makes a different pose. The last panel is a bigger image of the Megazord, which results from the combination of their own five zords.

The salient elements of the meme text are in the form of captions over each ranger. The text over the black ranger says: "Not being able to plan my classes." The text over the red ranger

says: "Not being able to choose the hairstyle and outfit that reflect my personality." The text over the blue ranger says: "Finding difficulties to distribute 6 lessons in 1hr 20 mins of class." The text over the yellow ranger says: "Entitled students that see you as a 'servant'." The text over the pink ranger says: "Sales staff that see you as either a good or defective product." Finally, the text over the Megazord says "Working in a private language center."

The analysis conducted on text-picture categories using cyber-pragmatics shows that images do not change the meaning of the text, but they do provide additional information, while the text enhances the meaning of the image to create an interpretation based on the combination of both. For the duo-specific, additive, and interdependent, the analysis indicates that there is a shared meaning between the text and the image, and the words in the text help to understand the image. Also, the discourse in memes cannot be separated from the image or text. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment reveals that the interpretation is driven by both the text and image together. The text contained within each character caption is essential to the overall meaning. Working for a private language school requires following their procedures for teaching, adhering to a dress code, and keeping within strict time constraints to cover six lessons within a limited time of 1 hour and 20 minutes. Even though most students are respectful, some may demonstrate incivility, as they view themselves as customers, which can lead to the perception of a teacher as a "defective product."

The text analysis reveals that the texts in the image are used to label the components of a whole experience. The expression "Not being able to" in the first and second images indicates either the lack of skill or the inability to do something because of some prohibition. The latter is the most probable one due to the existence of class procedures and a dress code in language schools. "Finding difficulties" is quite explicit, and implies something that results in a challenge:

the time distribution among students in class happens to be a challenge similar to running a marathon or a videogame speedrun. Language schools usually receive a big number of learners (Mercer, 2020). "Entitled students that see you as a servant," the words "entitled" is an adjective that describes people who believe they have unlimited rights thanks to the money they have but not of obligations. Students see teachers as "servants" because they are considered service providers in a teaching position in these workplaces. They are paying a language course that covers a teacher's salary, so teachers are obligated to comply with their students' requests. Education is shown in this meme to be just a market transaction (Belk, 2020), in which students are aware of the power they have as customers to define and change their teachers' reality (Foucault cited in Cameron, 2001, and Jäger, 2001).

"Sales staff" makes reference to the people who sell the English language courses. They consider some of their teachers to be "a good or defective product", a good product is the one that fulfills customers' expectations not only in terms of "effective teaching" (leaving the responsibility of a learning process to the teacher only) but in terms of subordination (a teacher fulfills any request the student makes because the student is paying). On the other hand, a defective teacher is "not effective" (takes the learning responsibility and not the students) and someone who will not take most of students' requests (someone who imposes limits on that matter). Salespeople are aware of the product they sell, they do not seem to have more powers than teachers since they are also employees, but they are backed up by the language schools' owners to objectify teachers and shape their individualities so they are adjusted to market transactions (Belk, 2014, Jaworski and Coupland, 2006). "Working on a private language center" in the last image means that all of the texts above are the components of this last one, meaning

the prohibitions, difficulties, and perceptions of a teacher as a professional and human being are implicit in this job under such a setting.

The types of humor the analysis revealed are incongruity and metaphor. The incongruity can be seen in the contrast between the pop culture reference and what the texts communicate. The pop-culture reference reminds us that the zords combination forms the ultimate weapon to wipe out the evil monsters that attack the Earth, that is very well known to the connoisseurs of the series. However, the texts over each ranger expose stressful situations for EFL teachers which are market mediated (Belk, 2020, Mercer, 2020) when working as a teacher in a language school. Hence, their combination does not translate into a pleasurable or enjoyable teaching experience. The metaphor in the meme consists of each of the rangers (source) representing a situation that occurs in a language school (target). The black ranger represents the follow-up of class procedures; the red ranger represents adherence to the dress code; the blue ranger represents the difficulties with time distribution among the class topics, which might be considered exploitative (Belk, 2014, 2020, Mercer, 2020); and the yellow and pink rangers represent the commodification of education, teacher deprofessionalization, and teacher dehumanization (Saunders and Blanco, 2017). All of their zords combined represent the negative implications of working in a language school, the many disjunctures EFL teachers experience in language schools (Codó, 2018).

Work Conditions in the ELT Industry from the Teachers' POV

ELT jobs are atypical in terms of how precarized and flexible they are (Goulding 2016, as cited in Codó, 2018). ELT practitioners are part of the global precariat[8] and ELT professionals experience disjunctures in their professional and personal lives even in contexts with optimal

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[8] "Precariat" is a new Japanese word combining the English words "precarious," referring to the insecurity of part-time and contract work, and "proletariat." (Wordreference, 2022)

work conditions; their daily practice does not offer career prospects (Codó, 2018). The author also showed the social context of the ELT sector in Barcelona, Spain, language schools are consolidated, accredited, with many branches in the city, other language schools have only one branch, some schools are located in neighborhoods outside the city. The author also mentions that some language schools might have some dubious reputation. All schools offer their services to a demographic ranging from children to adults, being the former quite popular for their effective advertising and allegedly effective methodologies.

Codó characterized the ELT sector in Barcelona as exploitative and precarized. Although language schools have, according to the author, a preference for native speakers of English, it is usual to see native and non-native teachers together in that setting. EFL teachers in Barcelona are paid low salaries, the salary does not include preparation or correction times, and they have to work long hours especially in the evenings, and in addition to that the ELT sector has many educators with different professional trajectories. The teachers also have a perception of the ELT sector as exploitative, insecure in terms of salaries and social benefits, and in which many educators aspire to be part of the local mainstream education (understood as working for a school or university, the author does not specify whether in the private or the public sectors). Many EFL teachers (native and middle-aged) have had difficulties finding decent and stable work conditions and being inserted in a new society (2018).

As discussed, a few paragraphs above, EFL teachers from language schools work on enterprises that look for profit. According to Mercer (2020), EFL teachers' language when talking about their jobs reveal that when they refer to the courses as "products" and the students as "clients" (p. 9). The Summer season is one in which Maltese language schools receive a considerable number of EFL learners, causing in language schools a shortage of teachers. Hence,

Maltese language schools begin hiring temporary EFL teachers to provide the service, however, most of these temporary teachers do not have a degree in the TEFL or in education, causing in Maltese ELT educators the perception of their temporary coworkers of being the cause of their reputation flattening. Maltese EFL teachers also feel frustrated, disappointed, and stressed due to their work conditions, perceived by them as poor for the paucity of union representation, the inadequacy of their contracts, and the scantiness regarding the job stability. In addition to that, the author also states that most EFL teachers have financial difficulties not only due to their payment, but to the living costs on the island which are on the rise.

Mercer (2020) adds to the concept of the work conditions in ELT the ecology of language schools, mostly related to the EFL teachers' perception on their workplace environment, depicted by them as positive in small language schools since they have a strong connection to their peers who they can count on and, are willing to cooperate and are friendly. EFL teachers have, according to the scholar, build up a solid sense of belonging to their workplace. Regarding their bosses EFL teachers perceive their relationship with them also to be positive, they feel respected and appreciated. About the buildings where they work and the investment done in teaching material and technology teachers feel disrespected as professionals, since the classrooms are cramped and the buildings show the lack of maintenance, and when the damages in facilities are not repaired immediately teachers feel stressed out.

Additional causes of stress in EFL teachers in Maltese language schools, according to Mercer (2020) are poorly stocked libraries and old, slow computers, and the strictness to follow certain fixed class and evaluation procedures because they consider it is a display of disrespect to them as education professionals, and causes them frustration, and questions their autonomy and creativity. EFL teachers in administrative roles also feel stressed due to the long work hours and

the lack of coffee or lunch breaks. Mercer (2020) also states that Maltese EFL teachers describe

their relationship with students as positive, however, not fulfilling their expectations is a cause of

stress for them, since customer satisfaction is a business affair that leads to profit maximization,

hence it affects, according to the scholar, the teachers' "job satisfaction and wellbeing" (p.15).

Breshears (2019) explored the working conditions of English language teachers in

Canada, with a focus on the precarious nature of their employment. The author argues that the

current neoliberal economic climate has contributed to the rise of precarious work in the English

language teaching industry. The article provided a brief overview of the history of English

language teaching in Canada and its connection to immigration policies. The author notes that

while the demand for English language teachers has increased over the years, the working

conditions for teachers have become increasingly precarious.

The author defined ELT as precarious work and discussed its characteristics, including

low wages, lack of benefits, job insecurity, and a lack of access to training and professional

development opportunities. The author argues that the precarious nature of English language

teaching work is exacerbated by the fact that it is often seen as a transitional or temporary job.

The research discussed the impact of neoliberal economic policies on the English language

teaching industry, including the trend towards marketization and the commodification of

education. Breshears (2019) argues that these policies have contributed to the rise of precarious

work and have led to a decline in the quality of education.

In addition to that, the author discusses the impact of precarious work on English

language teachers, including high levels of stress and burnout, a lack of job satisfaction, and

limited opportunities for career advancement. Breshears (2019) also notes that the lack of job

security and benefits can make it difficult for teachers to advocate for themselves or speak out

about poor working conditions. The author also expresses the need for greater awareness of the precarious nature of English language teaching work and the need for advocacy and support for English language teachers. The author argues that addressing the issue of precarious work requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy changes, unionization efforts, and increased support for professional development opportunities.

In my own experience, ELT jobs in Colombia are no different. Many colleagues from different backgrounds are interested in having more stable, better-paid jobs. Most workplaces pay by the hour and do not offer social benefits, and those language schools that do have better working conditions, might have other background issues that I know well but I cannot mention because they have not been explored yet. They do not appear as part of serious research in the setting of language schools. However, knowing how such circumstances in language schools might influence EFL teachers' discourses is useful. We have a glimpse of some of the issues and beliefs that EFL teachers have in the context of private language schools.

Bearing in mind what was mentioned above, this category describes the reflections and questionings teachers make about their workplaces, the written and non-written rules that govern the educative enterprise, their relationship with coworkers (bosses or peers), and their perceptions of them and themselves within the context of a market influenced educative setting. It is composed of the following sub-themes and complements: Corporate tantrum: academic mercenaryism & exclusivity, online silencing, astroturfing; policy questioning: conform or complain, salaries; written and non-written rules: obedience and subordination, trustworthiness and requirements, necessary for a class, and real English teachers. Next, I explain these sub-themes and the complements that comprise them.

Corporate tantrum

This sub-theme refers to the expression of conniptions or outbursts by the owners of educative enterprises as described by their teachers. The owners of language schools usually do not communicate much with their teachers face to face, but when they do, it is usually by means of messenger apps such as WhatsApp to manifest their discomfort toward their teachers' behavior. The reasons for these rants are related to the obedience and subordination to non-written rules, exclusivity, and academic mercenaryism, which are explained below. This theme comprises the following sub-themes: exclusivity & Academic mercenaryism, online silencing, and astroturfing.

Exclusivity & Academic mercenaryism. This sub-theme complement refers to the acts of teachers working just for one educative enterprise only and teachers distributing their working time among more than one school and educative enterprise to increase their earnings. In some private language schools, the higher-ups are lenient with that. In contrast, within other language schools, exclusivity is a written rule that must be followed, and it can be seen in reminders from higher-ups to keep following it. The memes 038, 105, 124, 145, 162, 167, 193 contain those characteristics; I present the analysis of memes 045 in figure 16 and 193 in figure 17 as examples.

Figure 16

Meme 045

When the academic director talks about raises and other benefits for teachers in the LC, but you're zoning out, thinking about that job you got at that public school.

This reaction meme is named 'Confused Private' (Know Your Meme, 2022). The image corresponds to a screenshot of the 2014 movie Penguins of Madagascar. The salient elements of the image show Private, one of the deuteragonists of the movie, staring ahead of himself, looking confused; however, the image was edited, so there is another overlaid image of him, so Private seems to have an out-of-body, disassociating reaction. The salient element of the text is above the image, and it says: "When the academic director talks about raises, and other benefits for teachers in the LC, but you're zoning out, thinking about that job that you got at that public school."

Through cyber-pragmatic analysis of text-picture categories, it was concluded that images provide additional information to the text, and the text amplifies the meaning of the picture. The analysis was conducted on text-picture categories, specifically for word and picture relations. When analyzing duo-specific, additive, and interdependent text-picture relations, it was found that the text and image overlap, with the text helping to interpret the picture, and

discourses of memes cannot be interpreted by separating the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment indicated that the interpretation of the meme is influenced by both text and image. A teacher who has secured a job at a public school is considering the job's benefits, including a higher salary and better benefits package, which leads him to disregard the information provided by his current employer at a meeting. It demonstrates that EFL teachers have aspirations to be part of mainstream education, schools or universities (Codó, 2018).

The text analysis reveals that the text intended to set us up in the meme situation to understand the reaction depicted in the picture. It also places us in the teachers' position. "Raises and other benefits" are not explained in detail. The texts in memes are meant to be short, which would explain the reason the idea behind raises and benefits cannot be more explicit. The teachers are "zoning out" because they are daydreaming about the job they "got at that public school." Money is seen as the cause of daydreaming because of those reasons, since EFL teachers have financial issues, their salaries are low-paid, or they are living in an expensive city (Mercer, 2020).

The humor styles revealed after analysis are metaphor and irony. Private zoning out (the source) represents a teacher that is daydreaming in a teacher's meeting (the target) the stretching of source and target makes a metaphor humorous (Attardo, 2014) because it generates an analogy, a similarity (Goatly, 2012). The text mentions the academic director but not shown in the image. The irony in the meme indicates that the salary raises and social benefits a private language school offers seem not to top what a teaching position with the government offers. It exposes language school owners (Beermann, 2014) as being against their workers' dignity (Belk, 2020) by paying them low salaries (Codó, 2018). The situation forces EFL teachers to have two or more part time jobs in order to ensure financial survival (Valeo and Faez, 2013 as cited in

Breshers, 2019). However, the governmental benefits for teachers vary from country to country, and some countries provide their teachers with better perks than others. I cannot say what these extra benefits might be since there is no explicit mention of a country in particular.

Figure 17

Meme 193
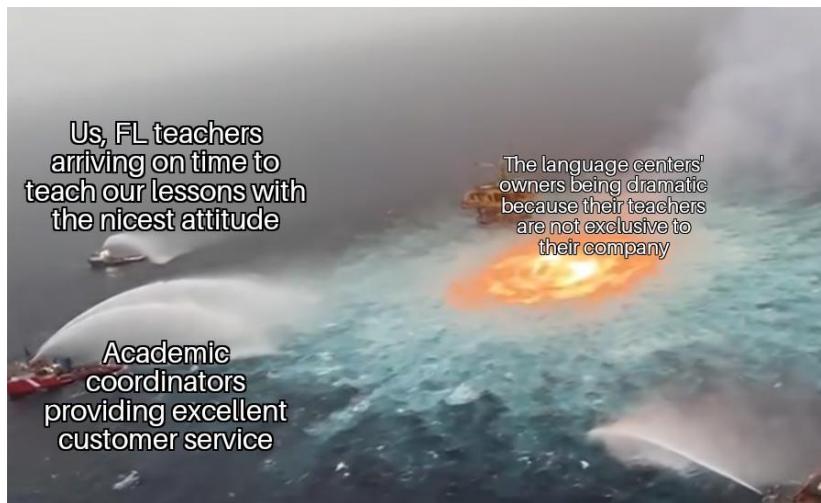
This object labeling meme is named 'Gulf of Mexico ocean fire.' The picture is a screenshot of a video posted on twitter by the Mexican journalist Manuel López San Martín in his account @MLopezSanMartin on July 2nd, 2021 (KnowYourMeme, 2021). The video shows a raging fire over the ocean of the Mexican gulf being put out by state-owned Mexican petrol company PEMEX. The salient elements of the image show the oil platform, next to it the fire, and around the fire, three boats spraying the burning section of water. The salient elements of text are the text over the first boat on the upper left section of the image that says: "Us, FL teachers arriving on time to teach our lessons with the nicest attitude." The text over the boat on the lower-left section of the image says: "Academic coordinators providing excellent customer

service." Finally, the text over the burning section of the ocean says: "The language centers' owners being dramatic because their teachers are not exclusive to their company."

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis of text-picture relation, images provide more information to the text and texts enhance the meaning of images, especially in the categories of word and picture specific. Additionally, for duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the text and picture overlap, and the words in the text assist in interpreting the picture. However, the discourses of the meme cannot be interpreted if the text and picture are separated. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment indicates that the text and image jointly impact the interpretation of the meme. Despite teachers and academic coordinators doing a great job in running the language school, the higher-ups get irritated when they learn that their teachers are teaching for other schools as well as their own.

The text analysis revealed that texts in the meme have the purpose of labelling the characters, their actions, and attitudes. Among the parts of the text that are more interesting for the purpose of the research, there is the action academic coordinators make "providing excellent customer service." Academic coordinators are teachers in a "managing" position, a stressful position due to the long working hours (Mercer, 2020), since it is a business affair leading to profit increases (Belk, 2020), where academic coordinators have to provide affable service to obnoxious individuals (Hochschild, 1983, as cited in Belk, 2020), while being put asunder their feelings (Van Maanen, 1991, Van Mannen and Kunda, 1989, as cited in Belk, 2020). In addition, they are there to make sure that the language school handles properly "the production line" and "the product," the teachers, class organization, examination, and student/customer satisfaction, thus reshaping relationships between the learners and the language school (Saunders and Blanco, 2017). They are also providing customer service. The word "excellent" means that the

coordinator keeps students happy by agreeing to their requests, which are never mentioned in the meme.

The aforementioned contrasts with "The language centers' owners being dramatic." The expression "being dramatic" in particular can be interpreted as they taking action such as sending emails, messages, and even organizing meetings to manifest that they are aware of the situation that is mentioned next in that segment of text "because their teachers are not exclusive to their company." It might be possible to deduce that the messages they send teachers contain some words, expressions, and voice tones that intend to refrain teachers from working in other places in a way that might sound like a passive-aggressive conniption, like the fire in the water. The explanation behind the reaction of language schools could be the result of the kind of laboral relation higher-ups and teachers have, such as a 'standard relationship', in which the teachers' fidelity to the language school is rewarded with continued full-time labor (Strauss and Fudge, 2014, as cited in Breshears, 2019).

The types of humor revealed after the analysis were metaphor and irony. The metaphor is the following: the boats trying to put out the fire (the source) are the teachers and academic coordinators of a language school (the target). The fire (the source) represents the irritability the owners of language schools feel when some of their teachers work for other language schools besides theirs (the target) the stretched distance between the sources and targets as well as the similarities are the cause of humor in metaphors (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The irony is evident in the picture itself; water is what usually puts out fire, yet, water is on fire, a thing is said meaning the opposite to it (McGraw and Warren, 2014). The reaction of language schools' owners over an activity that almost all teachers have always done, either taking their own students or working for other language schools is exposed, a characteristic of some ironies and

sarcasm (Beermann, 2014). Teachers might as well keep quiet about the other language schools

they work for and the language schools' owners might not even worry about that situation.

   Online silencing. The sub-theme complement refers to the non-written rule of keeping

quiet about events that might harm the reputation of a language school. It implies avoiding the

questionings about procedures, posting information about a particular situation online, and

prohibiting unionizing. Teachers in language schools might post these events on their social

media, and the language schools' owners and higher ups will do whatever is in their power to

avoid the repercussions that this information leak might bring to the brand and the company's

profit. The memes belonging to this sub-theme are 015, 041, 124, 177, 141, 186, 206, 149, 180,

197. The memes that were analyzed were 180 in figure 18 and 206 in figure 19 and are presented

as examples below.

Figure 18

Meme 180

   This reaction, exploitable, meme is named 'Among us - Emergency meeting' (Know

Your Meme, 2022). The image is a screenshot of a videogame that was quite popular during the

COVID19 pandemic, 'Among us'. The salient elements of the image show a black crewmember pushing an emergency red button. In the middle of the screen, there is a wide red thunder or flame. There are three segments of text: the first two above the image and one inside the image. The salient elements of text are the first segment above, which says: "Language center teachers: *Made a group to upload memes*." The second segment of text above says: "The administrative staff in that LC:" The text inside the image is just on the red wide thunder, and it says: "EMERGENCY MEETING."

The results of the cyber-pragmatic analysis conducted on text-picture categories indicate that images provide additional information to the text, and the text enhances the meaning of the picture. Additionally, the analysis of duo specific, additive, and interdependence shows that the picture and text overlap, with the words in the text aiding in the interpretation of the picture. The discourses of the meme cannot be understood by isolating the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment highlights that both the text and image contribute to the interpretation of the meme. In another scenario, a group of teachers who work in a language school have raised concerns among higher-ups after creating a group to share memes. This has resulted in the administrative staff of the language school convening an emergency meeting.

The textual analysis revealed that the text in the meme serves the purposes of providing context with the actions of characters that cannot be seen and labelling the meme characters that do appear in the meme. The text also indicates an action as a response to the presented situation. An "emergency meeting" is meant to be convoked in a situation that can be really considered an emergency, such as agreeing on the procedures to teach lessons during a pandemic. However, the emergency here is that a group of teachers formed a meme making group. We can suppose that an emergency meeting for this institute is how the group might reveal to the internet information

that might be sensitive due to its nature, such as procedures and practices which might affect an educative enterprise's reputation.

The analysis revealed the following styles of humor: metaphor and irony. The metaphor here consists of the black crew member (the source) representing someone who found the meme group made by teachers and wanted to inform the higher-ups of the language school (the target). The metaphor is humorous due to the analogy created and the stretched distance between the source and the target (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). This person's identity is not mentioned, we can only infer that this person works for the language school. Neither the teachers nor the language school higher-ups are seen in the picture; they are just mentioned in the text. The irony can be evidenced in the same EFL teachers uncovering (Beermann, 2014) other acts that they can do to express their experiences in a dissociative attitude toward the difficulties of being critical to a language school's particular matters.

Figure 19

Meme 206

This object labeling meme is called 'Chocolate gorilla melting.' This four-panel meme is a photo posted on the site imgur (Know Your Meme, 2022). The salient elements of the image are the following: The first panel shows a block of chocolate shaped as a gorilla[9], and it is in a pot filled with milk. The second and third panels show how the milk is boiling and how the chocolate gorilla dissolves. The fourth panel shows a pot of chocolate milk, where the gorilla is no longer there for obvious reasons. The salient elements of text are only found as captions in panels one to three; the fourth panel does not have any text. The text in the first panel says: "Listen language school teachers." The text in the second panel says: "I don't have much time…" The text in the third panel says: "The only way to unionize despite your contractual obligations is..."

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis, it is clear that images provide additional information to the text, while texts enhance the meaning of the picture. The analysis also showed that there is a close relationship between the text and picture, as the words in the text help to interpret the picture. The meme discourses cannot be interpreted by separating the text from the picture, and the text and image both contribute to the interpretation of the meme. In a peculiar scenario, a person dressed as a chocolate gorilla appears to be trying to convey a secret to language school teachers about unionizing, despite contractual obligations. However, the gorilla dissolves in the milk, and the secret is never revealed.

The textual analysis revealed that the texts in the image serve the purpose of being the dialogue the character in the meme has. The first segment of text intends to greet and position us as teachers to catch our attention. The second line of text indicates the time the character in the meme is limited, since the character is a chocolate gorilla in a pot of soon-to-boil milk. The third

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[9] The name of the product is "Zoology Chocolate Gorilla" sold in the online site 'Sugoi Mart' (KnowYourMeme, 2021)

text intends to reveal these language school teachers a secret, to form a union no matter what their contracts stipulate, but the ellipsis indicates that the gorilla's voice has been silenced.

The types of humor revealed after the analysis are metaphor and irony. The metaphor in the meme indicates that the chocolate gorilla (source) might be a subject informed about laws in education (target). The boiling milk (source) might be another subject that prevents the gorilla from sharing the secret of unionizing with language school teachers (target). The metaphor is humorous due to the stretching of distance that results in a fun similitude (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). Teachers do not appear in the image but are mentioned. The identity of both, the person who wants to reveal the secret and the one silencing him, are not mentioned, and it might be difficult to find out who they are in reality. Should the meme be backed up by a real circumstance in a language school, then the irony might lie in the contractual prohibition of a right workers have. Workers in most countries do have the right to form unions in order to protect their working rights, such as the right to a fair salary (Power analysis, 2000 cited in Breshears, 2019).

Astroturfing. The sub-theme complement refers to the non-written rule of teachers producing, liking, and sharing social media content with the purpose of helping the sales department increase the sales of the foreign language courses offered by the educative enterprises, as well as increasing the visibility of the brands of the educative enterprises. This sub-theme is comprised of memes 124, 196, 171, 215. The meme analysis I show as examples below corresponds to memes 124 shown in figures 20 and 215 shown in figure 21.

Figure 20

Meme 124

The salient elements in the picture are the same, as explained above for meme 033, which shows one relevant characteristic to internet humor, repetition (Shifman, 2014b) although the texts are different. The salient elements in text are in four lines. The one on the upper side of the screen says "Trade offer." Below that line of text, on the left side of the screen it can be read "I receive," and on the right side of the screen, it says "you receive." Below the "I receive" text says: "Your knowledge of the foreign language, your experience teaching it, your exemplary behavior, your subordination, and your social media accounts". Below the "you receive" text it can be read: "A salary I consider fair." The last line of text is positioned at the bottom of the image and identifies the man in the picture as "Language center's owners."

The analysis of text-picture categories through cyber-pragmatics indicates that images provide additional information to the text, while the text enhances the meaning of the picture. In terms of duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the analysis suggests that the text and picture overlap, with the words in the text contributing to the interpretation of the picture, and that the meaning of the meme cannot be understood by separating the text from the image. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment suggests that both the text and image contribute to the

interpretation of the meme. Language school owners demand that teachers possess English language proficiency, teaching experience, professional behavior, obedience, and a willingness to give access to their social media accounts or support the language school's social media posts for more visibility, all for an arbitrarily determined salary. In other words, it is a market-oriented negotiation that aims to obtain human resources for a small investment, which is part of the ideology, goals and principles of modern market (Firat, 2020).

The textual analysis revealed that meme texts not only label the meme characters but also "involve" the meme reader in a negotiation as a teacher. The texts also help indicate the wants of one of the negotiation parts and what they are willing to give up to obtain it. The language school owners want not only what EFL teachers can give in terms of their job but also want more personal things such as social media accounts, hence making foggy the limits of what can be commercialized regarding social, public, or private realms (Belk, 2020). Social media accounts are quite personal since they register the private affairs of a person. Some employers in realms distinct to education have required their employees' passwords to social media accounts. However, I believe that what language schools' owners want is online visibility to increase sales and profit, including in their rules the 'teachers' duty' to advertise the language school by astroturfing. Language school owners gained power over through rules to shape EFL teachers as advertisers (Fairclough, 1995). In addition to that, they are willing to give teachers a salary they consider to be fair, but what their interpretation of a fair salary for teachers is when astroturfing is involved is unknown. EFL teachers' salary is low-paid, though (Fudge & Owens, 2016, Strauss, 2017, Strauss & Fudge, 2014, Vosko, 2006 cited in Breshears, 2019).

The types of humor emerged from the analysis are metaphor and irony. The metaphor is the following, the man in the picture (the source) represents language schools' owners (the

target). Teachers are not represented in the picture, but since the man in the picture is looking at us, we (the source) can be positioned as teachers (the target). The stretched distance between the source and the target creates similarities, which fuels humor in metaphors (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The irony here lies in setting up a trade offer, a negotiation that does not give the teachers the chance to speak up for what tasks they are willing to perform while working for a language school, such as astroturfing, which I can infer EFL teachers are expected to engage out of paid hours (Breshears, 2019). Language schools' chiefs might ask their employees to like and share any ads for gaining visibility online through their social media, teachers could deny they have any social media accounts, though, and language school higher-ups cannot force teachers to make social media accounts for that purpose.

Figure 21

Meme 215

This reaction, exploitable meme is named 'Lily Lu.' This two-panel meme that first appeared in Twitter in 2015 resembles the 'before and after' images (KnowYourMeme, 2021). The salient elements in the two panels of the meme show a chihuahua dog named Lily Lu. The left panel shows an angry Lily Lu. The right panel shows a relaxed Lily Lu. The salient elements

of the text are above the pictures, the text is split in two segments; the text on the left says: "Whenever your teachers make memes about your language academy." The text on the right says: "Whenever your teachers make memes to advertise your language academy."

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis of text-picture categories, images provide more information to the text, while texts amplify the meaning of the picture, in the case of word and picture specific. Additionally, the analysis reveals that there is an overlap between the picture and text, where the words in the text help interpret the picture. The meme discourses cannot be separated from the picture, as they have an additive and interdependent relationship. Furthermore, the Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment showed that both the pictures and texts influence the interpretation of the meme. Teachers who work in language schools may incur the wrath of their bosses if they create memes about the school. However, if the memes are designed to promote the language school, the administration will likely be more forgiving.

The textual analysis revealed that the meme texts intend to indicate two different situations that might make the meme character angry or happy. The word "whenever" positions us in a non-specific situation regarding the time the action making memes is performed. The ones making memes are "your teachers," the possessive and the plural noun indicate the relationship we have with those people. That phrase positions us as the language school's owners. The "about your language academy" on the left of the meme indicates that teachers are talking about any other affairs regarding the school, which is ours due to the possessive used in the text, the affairs might be consider negative to the business. To the right of the text the analysis can be similar until we reach the following piece of text "to advertise your language academy", advertising implies telling other people about the existence of the school, and thus providing people with educative services in exchange of money. In other words, advertising is a

positive thing for a business, and allegedly it is among the EFL teachers functions, it is their

reality (Fairclough, 1989), hence making language schools happy due to a boost in sales.

The types of humor that emerged from the analysis were incongruity and metaphor. The

incongruity can be seen in the language school owners' double standard about teachers making

memes. How they consider meme making is fine only if used for advertising the language

school, and not for the teachers to express their opinions about the situations in their workplaces.

It is a failure of logic due to unfulfilled expectations of EFL teachers being reserved about

occurrences in their job when they are critical in their job (Gimbel, 2018). The metaphor consists

in understanding how Lily Lu (the source) represents the language schools' owners (the target).

When Lily Lu is mad, she represents their anger; when Luly Lu is happy, she represents their

happiness. The stretched distance between source and target in metaphor provides an analogy

that results humorous (Attardo, 2014, Gimbel, 2012).

Policy questioning

This sub-theme is perceived as a series of moments in teachers' lives where they question

the rules and policies they have to follow and apply when they are in their workplaces, out of

their workplaces, during classes, as invigilators during exams, even as coordinators when they

have gotten a promotion. This theme also shows the doubts teachers have in regards to their

salary. Two sub-themes comprise the theme: Conform or complain and salaries.

Conform or complain. This sub-theme complement can be depicted as the result of the

policy questioning, in which there might be two possible outcomes, either teachers conform to

rules and policies, which implies to comply and keep silence from their part, or they complain.

However, such complains will be mostly verbal to their peers, and perhaps to their bosses. This

sub-theme emerged after the analysis done to memes 015, 050, 094, 122, 133, 162, 194, 209,

178, 206, 217, 180, 197, 210. Next, I present the analysis of memes 094 shown in figure 22 and 210 depicted in figure 23 as examples.

Figure 22

Meme 094

This object label, Wojak comic meme, is named 'Soyjaks VS Chads' (Know Your Meme, 2022). The image is a format of the Wojak comics to express conversations. In the salient elements of the image, we have two soyjaks (in the upper panel) and two chads (in the lower panel). The soyjaks on the left of the image in the upper panel is the "masked crying Wojak', where the frustrated Wojak's face is covered with the mask of a "smug Wojak" face. The soyjack on the right is a frustrated Wojak. The facial expression of these soyjaks allow us to tell that they are displeased about the topic they are discussing. In the lower panel on both the left and right side of the image, we can see two Chads. The Chad usually represents the acceptance of shortcomings and downsides or laughs about the topic discussed.

The salient elements of text can be found above the soyjaks in the first panel says: "Recently graduated teachers in language centers." The text below the masked crying Wojak says: "We've got to be thankful to have a job." The text below the frustrated Wojak says: "We're

oppressed with these many rules to follow." The text above the chads says: "Experienced teachers in LCs." The text below the Chad on the left says: "We've got full house pal." The text below the Chad on the right says: "Yes." Needless to say, the conversation texts are found in a non-conventional way, not enclosed by a text bubble but below the characters.

The analysis of text-picture categories through cyber-pragmatics reveals that images provide additional information to the text, and the text amplifies the meaning of the picture for word and picture specific. As for duo specific, additive, and interdependence, it shows that there is an overlap between the picture and text, and that the words in the text are essential to interpreting the picture. Furthermore, meme discourses cannot be understood by separating the text from the image. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment reveals that both the text and image contribute to the interpretation. At a language school, two inexperienced teachers are discussing the abundance of workplace rules, one of them acknowledges that having a job is something to be grateful for in these times. Meanwhile, two veteran teachers are discussing a different issue - the large number of students they need to teach and how their classrooms may be at maximum capacity.

The textual analysis shows that texts in this meme serve two purposes, to label the characters in the meme by taking into account their working experience in the language school, and as dialogues the characters have with each other. To be "thankful to have a job" implies avoiding complaining about the situations that might make a worker uncomfortable for the sole fact of being the member of a language school and receiving a salary from them. Money is seen as retribution not only for the time used to teach and the knowledge about the matter that the work implies but also for the upsetting circumstances a teacher might face while on the job, part of the modern market principles (Firat, 2020).

In addition to that, other workers, the "recently graduated" ones, can only manifest their discomfort toward rules that might affect their individuality and, perhaps, their professional identity. This lack of chances to express themselves might make them feel "oppressed," which I interpret as having to follow rules that might be related to a dress code wearing a uniform or following class procedures. More "Experienced teachers," interpreted as teachers, who have worked for years in the language school, and have gone through several different experiences in the workplace, might focus their thoughts and redirect their comments to common situations such as having lots of students for the day, expressed with the phrase "we've got full house.", which is a regular situation in language schools, to have a considerable number of students (Mercer, 2020) What was just mentioned perhaps means these teachers accept any situation deemed negative for them in language schools due to rules and policies will not easily change "yes."

After the analysis, the four styles of humor that emerged are incongruity, metaphor, sarcasm and irony. The incongruity is evidenced in how the chads accept or ignore those inconveniences despite the complaints of the soyjaks. It might be considered a failure of logic for unfulfilled expectations (Gimbel, 2018). The metaphor consists of the soyjaks (the source) representing those teachers who started working in language schools and feel irritated by some of the rules of the language schools (the target). The Chads (the source) represent those experienced teachers that stopped complaining and might comment on any common occurrences a particular day brings (the target), the analogy result of stretching the distance between the sources and targets makes metaphor humorous (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The sarcasm here can be seen in how experienced teachers might also have the same complaints as the inexperienced teachers, but they might have decided to stop expressing them for expressing superiority to inexperienced

teachers who do not comprehend the realities of working in a language school, by expressing

something different than what is actually meant (Beermann, 2014).

Figure 23

Meme 210
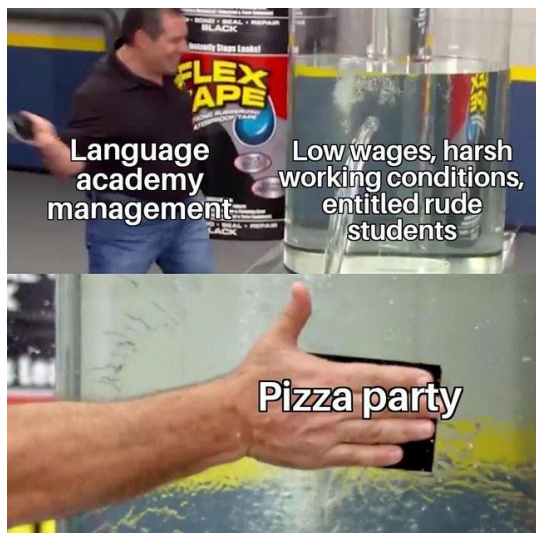
This object labeling meme is named 'Phil Swift slaps on Flex Tape.' The screenshot

comes from a commercial uploaded to YouTube by North American adhesive Manufacturer

Swift Response on January 12th 2017 (Know Your Meme, 2022). The salient elements of the

picture show the company's spokesman Phil Swift whacking a piece of Flex Tape onto a leaking

water tank. There are two panels. The upper panel shows Phil Swift with a piece of tape in his

hand, preparing to hit with to a leaking transparent water tank. The second panel shows a close

up of his hand sticking the piece of tape over the leak fixing it. The salient elements of text can

be found in the upper panel on Phil Swift, where it says: "Language academy management;" and

on the water tank, where it says: "Low wages, harsh working conditions, entitled rude students."

In the lower panel the text says: "Pizza party.",

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis of the picture text category, it is evident that images provide additional information to the text while texts enhance the meaning of the picture. As for duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the analysis reveals that the picture and text are intertwined, and the words in the text aid in interpreting the picture. Additionally, memes cannot be interpreted by separating the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment indicates that both the text and images contribute to the interpretation of the meme. Language schools face several problems such as low pay, unfavorable working conditions, and treating students as customers. However, the school managers tend to use a pizza party as a quick fix to resolve these issues.

The textual analysis revealed that the texts in the meme label the characters and their characteristics. The text does not exactly mention how low wages are, but it is possible to infer that the money received for the teaching job might not help teachers cover their expenses. EFL jobs are low-paid in language schools (Breshears, 2019, Codó, 2018, Mercer, 2020). What the harsh work conditions are like is not mentioned either; although it is possible to infer that the attitude of fellow teachers and higher-ups is not friendly, it can also mean that the classrooms are in wretched conditions or the technology used is not updated or in conditions to be used. "Entitled rude students" is interpreted as students taking a customer position, who are constantly demanding from the language school the service they paid for and perhaps something more in terms of that service. How rude these students are is not mentioned; however, incivility can start from something as simple as not greeting to insults and physical violence toward any other member of the educative community. The situation depicted above evidences the students seeing themselves as consumers of education (Firat, 2020).

Post analysis, the emergent styles of humor are metaphor and sarcasm. The metaphor here lies in Phil Swift (the source) representing the managers of a language school (the target). The tank leaking water (the source) are the language school's issues (the target). Phil Swift's hand slapping the flexi tape (source) on the leaking tank (source) is the language school's management solving the school's problems with a pizza party (target). The sarcasm here is evidenced in the exposition of a language school that pretends to solve substantive problems with superficial actions. A pizza party might keep teachers quiet for a while since their mouths are filled with the Italian delicacy, but the issues the language school has will resurface the moment the party is over. The meme maker showed a dissociative attitude (Yus, 2016) toward the language school's approach to the management's approach to problem solving, characteristic of irony and sarcasm alike.

Salary. This sub-theme complement refers to the perceptions teachers have about their own salaries, and how satisfied they are or not with them in terms of their capacity to afford their expenses and pay their debts. The theme also refers to the strategies employed by teachers to cope with low wages and how the wages of other workers in a language school might be higher than theirs. The memes 006, 038, 063, 065, 105, 118, 124, 139, 145, 151, 167, 194, 199, 202, 209 contain these characteristics as described a few lines above. I now present the analysis done to memes 194 in figure 24 and 202 in figure 25 as examples.

Figure 24

Meme 194

This object label, Wojak comic meme has the same salient elements in the image as the meme 094 because it is the one known as 'Soyjaks VS Chads,' which demonstrates an important characteristic of internet humor, repetition either in text or in images (Shifman, 2014b). Although, the salient elements in the text are quite different. The text above the soyjaks in the first panel says: "Recently hired FL teachers in a language academy." The text below the masked crying Wojak says: "At least we are paid a salary." The text below the frustrated Wojak says: "Our income is not enough to make ends meet!" The text above the chads says: "Expert FL teachers in a language academy." The text below the Chad on the left says: "Have you been saving money?" The text below the Chad on the right says: "Yes." Needless to say, the conversation texts are found in a non-conventional way, not enclosed by a text bubble but below the characters.

The text-picture category was analyzed using cyber-pragmatic analysis, which found that images provide additional information to the text and the text amplifies the meaning of the picture in terms of word and picture specificity. In terms of duo specific, additive and

interdependence, the analysis showed that the picture and text are not overlapping, but the words in the text help to interpret the picture. However, meme discourses cannot be analyzed separately. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment demonstrated that both the text and image influence meme interpretation. Two inexperienced teachers at a language school are discussing how their salary is insufficient to cover their expenses, while two experienced teachers in the same school have accepted that saving money is the key to living a decent life despite their low earnings.

The textual analysis revealed that texts in the meme have the purpose of labelling the meme characters, their characteristics, and they also serve as the dialogue lines. Two recently hired teachers have received their salary and their views seem to be opposite "At least we are paid a salary" VS "Our income is not enough to make ends meet!" By reading the texts only without the image, it seems that one of them seems to be OK with the salary, the other teacher cannot cover expenses with it. The two more experienced teachers have a different conversation, with the question "Have you been saving money?" The tense of the question is present perfect continuous, and it is used for talking about actions that began in the past and are still in progress. The affirmative answer to that question, "yes," makes us infer that experienced teachers acknowledge their salary is low, which is confirmed throughout the literature EFL teachers' salary is low (see Codó, 2018, Lewchuk, Procyk, and Sheilds, 2017, Fudge and Owens, 2006, Mercer, 2020, Strauss, 2017, Strauss and Fudge, 2014, Vosko, 2006) but if they want to take advantage of it, they have to save it. The conversation between the experienced teachers might mean that either they gave up on demanding a higher salary or have another income from other schools or their own students who pay them a fare.

The types of humor that emerged from the analysis are incongruity, metaphor, sarcasm and irony. The incongruity can be evidenced in how the chads accept or laugh off those inconveniences despite the complaints of the soyjaks, which demonstrates a failure of logic (Gimbel, 2018) due to unfulfilled expectations, it would be expected of the veteran teachers to complain since nobody could be OK with a low salary. The metaphor can be found in the soyjaks (source) representing those teachers who started working in language schools, and feel irritated by their low salary that does not help them cover their expenses (target). The Chads (source) represent those experienced teachers that stopped complaining and might have found the solution to their financial issues by saving money (target). The stretched distance between the source and the target results in analogies that can be considered humorous (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The irony and sarcasm here can be seen in how experienced teachers might also have the same complaints as the recently hired teachers but have decided to stop expressing them perhaps for displaying superiority (Beermann, 2014), which comes from the experience they have had, and it has made them solve the issue by saving money. The irony can be seen in how some recently hired teachers did not pay attention to the contract conditions where the salary they make is informed. Their exposure in this regard is considered humorous and a common characteristic of irony and sarcasm (Beermann, 2014). In addition to that, how they even stay for months with a low salary, when they have the autonomy to look for a better-paid teaching position might be beyond our comprehension.

Figure 25

Meme 202

This reaction meme is known as 'Thomas had never seen such bullshit before.' The image comes from a screenshot of the episode "Thomas in trouble" on December 18th 1984 from the British TV show for children' Thomas the Tank Engine' (Know Your Meme, 2022). In this episode, he whistles to greet a police officer who was not in a friendly mood, the policeman pointed Thomas had neither a cowcatcher nor a side plate, which caused Thomas' reaction as seen in the picture. That reaction is the salient element of the picture Thomas' irritated facial expression. The salient elements of text can be seen above the picture, where it says: "When the language school managers told you that you would receive your delayed salary the following week. It's been three weeks since that happened." The next salient element of text in the picture is a caption that says: "Thomas had never seen such bullshit before."

According to the cyber-pragmatic analysis conducted on the text-picture category, it was found that images provide additional information to the text while the text amplifies the meaning

of the picture. As for duo-specific, additive, and interdependence, it was discovered that the picture and text overlap, and the words in the text assist in interpreting the picture. Furthermore, the analysis showed that meme discourses cannot be analyzed by separating the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment demonstrated that the interpretation of the meme is influenced by both the text and picture. The image depicts the managers of a language school making a promise to pay their teachers' delayed salaries, but the teachers have not received their payment after three weeks, leading them to doubt the managers' sincerity.

The textual analysis reveals that texts in the meme provide context and identify the characters of the meme, as well as the actions they do. The text above the image provides a context, "language institute managers," the ones who are in charge of managing a language school in all aspects, including the payment of salaries, promised their teachers to pay a delayed salary "the following week," which means the payment would be received soon. However, the managers are taking a much longer time to pay salaries, the reasons for that situation are not stated in the text, although research states that in language schools EFL/ESL teachers receive a delayed payment or no payment at all (Breshears, 2019). In the caption that works as the character's response, we have the coarse word "bullshit" that helps express disagreement and can be used to point out something like a lie. The whole expression "Thomas had never seen such bullshit before" does not correspond to actual dialogue from the series, but it was a phrase added by Internet users for the meme to have humorous effect, to express disbelief (KnowYourMeme, 2022). Pieces of text that do not fit the culture elements in the image is a characteristic of Internet Humor (Shifman, 2014b). Hence, taking into account that Thomas in the image represents teachers' reaction to a delayed salary, the text can be interpreted as teachers in disbelief of an employer that makes salary payment promises that are unfulfilled.

The styles of humor revealed after the analysis are incongruity and metaphor. The incongruity is evidenced in the existing mismatch between the images of Thomas, a children's show character as seen in the picture, and the profanity used in the caption "Thomas had never seen such bullshit before", added by Internet users since nobody expects that any of the characters of a show for children to use such language to express the reaction to a situation. The metaphor consists of Thomas the tank engine (source) representing the teachers whose salary has been delayed for three weeks (target). The language school managers are not seen in the picture but mentioned in the text. Stretching the distance between the sources and targets for creating similarities is what makes metaphors fun (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012).

Written and non-written rules

This sub-theme refers to rules and policies that appear officially in the manuals and procedures of language schools and the rules and policies that are not mentioned in manuals and procedures. Even though non-written rules do not appear in the language school handbooks, they are expected to be followed and applied since the higher ups of educative enterprises consider them a matter of common sense backed up by the written rule of obedience and subordination. This theme is comprised by two sub-theme complements: Obedience and subordination, and trustworthiness & requirements.

Obedience and subordination. This sub-theme complement refers to the written rule in which a teacher becomes a subordinate to the higher-ups in a language school. This can also be understood as why teachers must follow non-written rules while an educative enterprise hires them. The analyzed memes contain elements such as the adherence to procedures, and internal work regulations, a constant remembering of a teachers' place in the language school, the use of uniforms and badges, and on the market affairs. The memes that belong to this sub-theme are

015, 020, 025, 041, 122, 133, 124, 161, 177, 196, 171, 211, 153, 200, 208, 221, 197. Next, I

present the analysis done on memes 20 in figure 25 and 200 shown in figure 26 as examples.

Figure 26

Meme 20

This exploitable meme is called 'I do as the crystal guides.' The screenshot comes from

episode a Rick and Morty titled: "Edge of Tomorty: Rick Die Rickpeat," in which Morty comes

into possession of a crystal. This crystal shows the people holding it how they are going to die.

He becomes obsessed with the vision the crystal shows him, so Morty begins to plan all his

actions in order to reach it. The salient element of the image is Morty with the crystal already in

his forehead with a numb like facial expression. The salient elements of text are above the image,

where the first segment of text says: "When you strictly apply the teaching practices proposed by

the language center you work at;" and the second segment of text as a caption that says: "I do as

the crystal guides."

The text-picture category was analyzed using cyber-pragmatic analysis, which found that

in relation to word and picture specific, images provide more information to the text and texts

enhance the meaning of the picture. In terms of duo-specific, additive, and interdependence, it was discovered that the picture and text are intertwined, the text assists in interpreting the picture, and the meme discourse cannot be analyzed by separating the text from the picture. The Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment showed that the interpretation of the meme is influenced by both text and image. The teachers in a language school mechanically follow the institution's guidelines without awareness of their actions or questioning the purpose, in order to achieve the school's objectives.

The textual analysis revealed that the first segment of text has the function of providing context. The "you" in the first segment of text positions the reader as a teacher. The "strictly apply the teaching practices proposed by the language center you work at" part of the text is the combination of an adverb and an action. The adverb "strictly" indicates a lack of freedom or flexibility in teaching practices. This means that teachers adhere to what language schools stipulate in terms of teaching a class. Morty's quote, "I do as the crystal guides," makes me infer that teachers who unquestionably follow a handbook to teach the class, according to what the language school indicates their classes are meant to be, are giving their creativity up to become obedient teachers that comply with the institute's rules. The next part is not said in any part of the meme, it is a predictable outcome, not following procedures might cause a teacher problems, so this strict adherence to class procedures from the institute, doing "as the crystal guides," shows the intention of teachers to be good subordinates that do not want to cause anybody inconveniences.

The types of humor that emerged after the analysis are metaphor and irony. The metaphor here is the following. The crystal that Morty has stuck in his forehead (source) represents the procedure for teaching classes in a private language school (target). Morty (source) represents

the teachers in language schools who strictly follow the guidelines in the procedure manual

(target). The distance stretching between sources and targets to create similarities is what make

metaphors amusing (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The irony is evidenced in how the meme

exposes teachers consider they have a sense of autonomy in classes, and yet adhere to procedural

manuals for teaching classes (Beermann, 2014). That autonomy is lost as soon as the teacher

decided to stick to a handbook for teaching. The teachers who made the meme are presenting the

superiority to those teachers who do not follow handbooks (Beermann, 2014). On the one hand,

following procedures for teaching a foreign language class is a comprehensible situation in

teachers who are new to the labor. On the other hand, a few experienced teachers might still stick

to the handbook procedures voluntarily to teach an English class to achieve the goal of customer

satisfaction, hence the satisfaction of higher-ups toward the job done, which is a cause of

consumer culture (Firat, 2020).

Figure 27

Meme 200

This reaction, exploitable meme is known as 'Nileseyy Niles disappears' (Know Your

Meme, 2022). The salient elements of the image show three panels in which African American

comedian Nileseyy Niles is holding up a peace sign (in the first panel to the left) as he becomes

transparent (second panel) to finally disappear (third panel). The first panel, the one on the left, is bigger. The second and third panels are smaller and located to the right, they show a zoom in to the character's face. The salient elements of the text are above the picture in two segments. The first one says: "The language school: *Makes you wear a McDonalds looking uniform*." The second segment says: "Your professional integrity:"

In the text-picture category, the cyber-pragmatic analysis found that images provide additional information to the text, while texts amplify the meaning of the picture in terms of word and picture specific. In terms of duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the analysis revealed that both the picture and text overlap and that the words in the text help to interpret the picture. It also indicated that the discourses of the meme cannot be understood by separating the text from the image. The Ad-hoc visual referent adjustment showed that both the text and picture contribute to the interpretation of the meme. Teachers are required to wear uniforms similar to those worn by fast-food chain employees, which compromises their professional integrity.

The textual analysis revealed that the texts in the meme have the purpose of helping to identify the meme characters and to indicate the actions done by the meme characters, hence, providing context. The text that is enclosed by asterisks means that someone is doing an action, the language school is the one doing it. The verb "make" here is understood as forcing someone to do something, in this particular case, to wear a uniform. The fact that someone is represented in the text by "you," positions the reader as a teacher. The language school is forcing you, the teacher, to wear a uniform. The next part of that text enclosed by asterisks "a McDonald's looking uniform" simply describes what the uniform looks like and which connotation it has when associated with a fast-food brand. The uniform is never described; although the brand association makes us imagine the uniform we are forced to wear is the one similar to the one a

fast-food chain server would use. "Your professional integrity:" indicates the reaction shown in the image as described above.

Uniforming teachers can be related to McDonaldization. According to Ritzer (2004), one of the key principles of McDonaldization is "the substitution of non-human for human technology" (p. 13). In the context of education, this can manifest through the standardization of teaching practices and the implementation of technology and systems that limit teacher autonomy and creativity. Uniforming teachers through a dress code can be seen as an example of this principle, as it imposes a standardized appearance and potentially limits individual expression. Furthermore, the dress code can also be seen as a way of imposing control over the teachers, which is another aspect of McDonaldization. Ritzer (2004) notes that one of the consequences of McDonaldization is the "irrationality of rationality," where efficiency and control become ends in themselves, often at the expense of individuality and human interaction (p. 21). In the case of uniforming teachers, the dress code can be seen as a way of enforcing control over the teachers and reducing their individuality and agency. While dress codes for teachers may have practical reasons, such as maintaining a professional appearance or promoting a sense of unity, it is important to consider the potential implications for teacher autonomy and individuality.

The types of humor revealed after the analysis are metaphor, irony and sarcasm. The metaphor consists of Nileseyy (source) representing the vanishing professional integrity of a teacher in a language school (target). The creation of an analogy through the distance stretching between sources and targets make metaphors humorous (Attardo, 2014, Goatly, 2012). The irony and sarcasm can be seen in how the design of the uniform positions the professional of education. If the uniform is similar to the one used by an academic, teachers wearing it might

feel as such. If the uniform is similar to the one used by servers in a fast-food chain, they might feel as servers. It is faultfinding (Giora and Attardo, 2014), says a thing meaning the opposite (Beermann, 2014), as uniforms imposed to teachers for keeping a professional appearance cause in them the feeling of their professional integrity vanish, which causes EFL teachers to experience disjunctures in their professional lives (Codó, 2018).

   Trustworthiness and requirements. This sub-theme complement refers first to the written rule that establishes the requirements that a teacher working in an educative enterprise must follow to be considered trustworthy to all the different participants in that setting, such as fellow teachers, coordinators, students, among others. In addition to that, some memes focus more on the perception that educative actors in the setting of private language schools have about who they consider are "real" English language teachers. Last, it also references the written rules regarding the elements essential to teaching a foreign language class in a private language school. These elements can be human and non-human, being the human elements teachers, and non-human elements the different tools that are necessary to teach an EFL class. The memes belonging to this sub-theme are 029, 030, 071, 103, 115, 116, 118, 134, 136, 138, 139, 142, 153, 161, 178, 182, 183, 184, 188, 195, 203, 208, 211, 216. As example, I present the analysis done on memes 138 shown below in figure 27 and 203 in figure 28.

Figure 28

Meme 138

This object labeling meme is known as 'Cat and Cat Cake'. The image was first posted on Tumblr in 2014, and became an image macro-object labeling meme in 2019 on reddit (Know Your Meme, 2022). The salient elements of the image show an orange and white cat standing next to a boorishly composed cake sculpted after the cat. The salient elements of text are the labels over the cat, which says: "Foreigners who speak English as a mother tongue," and the label over the cat cake says: "Graduated Non-native EFL/ESL teachers."

The results of the cyber-pragmatic analysis showed that in the text-picture category, images provided additional information to the text, while texts helped to enhance the meaning of the picture. The analysis also revealed that the picture and text were closely related, and the text was instrumental in interpreting the picture. Separating the text from the picture was found to be ineffective in analyzing meme discourses. Additionally, the Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment demonstrated that both text and picture played a role in influencing the interpretation of the meme. The meme conveyed the notion that native English speakers are considered to be superior language teachers compared to non-native speakers, even those who have obtained advanced degrees in the field of EFL/ESL teaching.

The textual analysis revealed that the texts in the image are used to label and depict the characters in the meme. The label "Foreigners who speak English as a mother tongue" refers to people who were born in a country where English language is spoken as a mother tongue, it is possible to infer, due to the meme context, that these foreigners work as English Language teachers in a language school. The label "Graduated non-native EFL/ESL teachers" refers to people who were not born in a country where English is a mother language, although they studied and graduated from a university, more precisely from an English as Foreign or as Second Language program. They studied that program to become teachers.

The styles of humor revealed after the analysis were metaphor and irony. The metaphor consists of the cat (source) representing Native speakers of the English language (target). The cat cake (source) represents the degree holders of teaching English as either a foreign or a second language (target). The metaphor highlights the perceived differences in language proficiency between these two groups. Irony can be evidenced in the image of the cat cake, which is supposed to represent a non-native English teacher, is boorishly made and appears inferior to the real cat. This is ironic because in reality, non-native English teachers may have more expertise and experience in teaching English as a second or foreign language than native English speakers.

This perception of the superiority of native English speakers in language teaching has been widely criticized in the field of Applied Linguistics. Medgyes (1994) argues that native speakerism "rests on the assumption that 'native speakers' are the best language teachers, and that non-native speakers should, at best, try to emulate them" (p. 238). Phillipson (1992) similarly criticizes the belief that native speakers are automatically better teachers, stating that "the native speaker is by definition always potentially the best language teacher. This ignores the reality that 'native speaker' competence does not include teaching expertise" (p. 57). Canagarajah (1999)

also points out that the assumption of native speaker superiority is a form of linguistic

imperialism, stating that "the ideology of native speaker superiority is one of the mechanisms

that maintain the dominance of English in the world" (p. 31).

Figure 29

Meme 203

This catchphrase, object labeling meme is named 'I gotta get one of those.' The image is

a screenshot of the 2020 Disney+ 'The Mandalorian,' Star Wars spinoff series (Know Your

Meme, 2022). The salient element of the image is the Mandalorian, who is seeing a member of

the enclave using a jetpack. He is inside of his spaceship piloting it. There are three salient

elements of text, the first one is on the enclave member in a jetpack in the background of the

image, it says: "A FL certificate in C2." The second segment of text is over The Mandalorian,

and it says: "Me after seeing the promotion requirements for a special position in the LC I work

at." The third segment of text is, as a caption, the catchphrase that names the meme: "I gotta get

one of those". The text over the enclave member and The Mandalorian is in white color. The text

of the caption is in yellow.

In the cyber-pragmatic analysis, it was found that images provide additional information

to the text while the texts amplify the meaning of the picture in the text-picture category, word,

and picture specific. For duo specific, additive, and interdependence, the study revealed that the text and picture overlap, and the words in the text assist in the interpretation of the picture. It was also found that meme discourses cannot be analyzed by separating the text from the image. In addition, the Ad-Hoc visual referent adjustment showed that both the text and the image contribute to the interpretation of the meme. The desire to obtain a C2 foreign language certificate by a foreign language teacher to be promoted at work is an example of object of desire for another object of desire.

The textual analysis revealed that the purpose of the texts was to label the meme characters and also to express actions and needs to comply with a requisite. The expression "I gotta get one of those" might be considered a monologue, and it implies a necessity the teacher represented by The Mandalorian has, to obtain a C2 CEFR certificate that demonstrates his proficiency in the language use. A necessity caused by an action he did, having interest in being promoted and setting a goal to fulfill the requirements to get a promotion.

The styles of humor revealed after the analysis are incongruity, metaphor and irony. Regarding incongruity and resolution, where the desire for a language certificate is juxtaposed against the image of the Mandalorian seeing a jetpack for the first time. This incongruity creates a humorous effect, which is resolved through the caption, 'I gotta get one of those,' expressing the speaker's desire for the language certificate (Gimbel, 2018). The metaphor elements that the meme contains consists of the enclave member with a jetpack (source) representing a language teacher with a C2 foreign language certificate (target). The Mandalorian (source) represents a foreign language teacher who wants to be promoted but needs a C2 foreign language certification to do so (target). The image of the jetpack is used as a metaphor for the language certificate, which is a desired object that the speaker wants to obtain. The elements of Irony and sarcasm in

the meme are there as a C2 certificate might not prove to be useful if the position the EFL

teacher aspires to get is administrative, very seldom a member of the management staff in a

language school would need to show any proficiency in the foreign language. The caption "I

gotta get one of those" is ironic because the phrase is typically used to refer to material objects

such as gadgets or toys, but in this case, it refers to a certificate (Attardo, 2014, McGraw and

Warren, 2014)

The requirement of a C2 foreign language certificate for a promotion in the language

school where the speaker works highlights how education is increasingly viewed as a

commodity, and language certificates are valued for their marketability. Firat (2020) argues that

marketization commodifies education and turns it into a commercial product. Similarly, Benadé

(2012) argues that the commodification of education is leading to a shift in educational values

from knowledge and skills to employability and marketability. Belk (2014, 2020) also discusses

how the commodification of education has resulted in an emphasis on brand names, prestige, and

certification rather than learning outcomes.

Regarding the work conditions in the ELT industry. As noted by Codó (2018), "the

English language teaching industry is characterized by precarious working conditions, low

salaries, and the overreliance on temporary and part-time contracts" (p. 48). The desire for a

promotion and a C2 certificate reflects the competitive nature of the industry and the need for

language teachers to constantly improve their skills to secure better job opportunities.

All in all, the study has yielded significant findings and insights into the use and

interpretation of memes in language teaching and learning contexts. Through a cyber-pragmatic

analysis of image macro memes, it was discovered that the text and image components of the

meme work in tandem to convey meaning, with the text providing additional information while

the image serves as a visual referent. The discourses in memes are conveyed through various styles of humor, including incongruity, metaphor, and irony, to express the EFL teacher's issues and struggles within the context of a competitive and commodified ELT industry, and reflecting the everyday experiences, emotions, and challenges of EFL teachers in their professional context.

The discourses in EFL teachers' memes served as a ground to reveal concepts such as marketization, which refers to the expansion of market logic into all aspects of life, including education. The commodification of education is the process of transforming education into a commodity that can be bought and sold, and discourses in memes made by EFL teachers through incongruities, metaphors, ironies and sarcasm have become a ground to resist those controlling discourses that attempt to dehumanize them and their students, as well as the transformation of education into a consumer culture, which fogs the limits between what can be considered commercial, social, public, and private. This meme making phenomena in EFL teachers demonstrates that education is one of the many realms that are resisting commodification.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Research in TEFL regarding EFL teachers from schools and universities has been much more exhaustive than the research done on their counterparts working in language schools. What is known about EFL teachers from language schools from research covers from how they contribute to the EFL industry better in terms of product quality to more critical issues such as the combined use of the English language and the learners' mother tongues, EFL teachers' perceptions on world Englishes, cultural issues in EFL textbooks, and the work conditions of the many different EFL teachers worldwide in varied settings. However, discourses in memes produced in the context of online communities by EFL teachers have not yet been observed.

The objectives of this research were to find out what discourses in memes could inform about teachers' beliefs, and issues in their setting, language schools. Additionally, it intended to figure out how discourses EFL teachers employed are related to Internet humor; and, lastly, to help expand the already existing depiction of EFL teachers from language schools regarding their discourses and the styles of humor employed in their memes. In order to reach such objectives and to answer these research questions, I collected two hundred eleven memes corresponding to the image macro family from an EFL teacher subreddit known as /r/EFLteachersmemes in reddit, a social media like forum, during the months of May, June and July 2021. Since the subreddit is public, the memes can be accessed easily and there was no need of asking for informed consent to the meme makers, the collected memes are stored in a hard drive, and that hard drive is in a vault in my residence. I employed thematic filtering, cyberpragmatic and textual analyses.

The aforementioned resulted in two main themes: Marketization of Education -comprised of these subthemes: Power, Incivility, For Profit, and Deprofessionalization-, and Work

Conditions in the ELT industry -comprised of the following sub-themes: Corporate tantrum (with Exclusivity and Academic Mercenaryism, Online silencing, and astroturfing as complements); Policy questioning (with Conform or complain, and salary as complements); and Written & non-written rules (with Obedience and subordination, and Trustworthiness & requirements as complements). The data analysis was registered in matrices designed by the researcher in Microsoft Excel, and went through three piloting stages. The matrices were revised by peers and the thesis director in order to ensure validity and reliability. Now I proceed to the discussion section of the chapter, in which I present a summary of my findings and their interpretation.

Marketization & Commodification of Education

In a society where every aspect of human life, including education, is profitable, some EFL teachers working for language schools became aware of the existing power struggles between them and students. Djelic (2006 as cited in Tadajewski, 2020) points out marketization signifies the expansion of the market into people's lives worldwide, and the commodification of social contexts and nature, in order for investors in financial markets to effectuate profit growth. Education as part of a social context, part of people's lives, can get involved with the market, causing in education investors an increase in their income. It changes the relationship between students and educators (Saunders & Blanco Ramírez, 2017) because, in a market setting, students as customers have paid money for a service, English language lessons, to a company, the language school, represented by a service provider, the EFL teacher.

Nowadays, EFL teachers might believe they have two options either accepting that education and themselves are a commodity or might struggle with that discourse imposition, and as an outcome, they could have decided to express their feelings about the matter (Belk, 2020). In a marketized society where EFL teachers are considered to be the product to be sold by

language school managers, owners, and even by themselves, although they might believe there is no place for decommodification despite the struggle and resistance to the imposition of such discourses, education is one of the many marketized realms that is still in the endeavor to de-market itself (Belk, 2020).

An issue EFL teachers in language schools face is that students will consider themselves as customers since there is a market transaction; money is exchanged in a marketplace for a product or a commodity, such as an English language course. Despite the fact that some students might try to impose their position with 'an attitude,' (Bowen, 2013; A. Irwin & A. M. H. Cederblad, 2017; Porath & Pearson, 2013) many others may have chosen not to do so, and in a way or another, no matter the type of student they have and the rude or nice attitudes they might display, EFL teachers in language schools understand that they are subordinates, who besides teaching the contents of the class, have to engage in actions that do not represent an economic loss for the educative enterprise they are working for, actions that keep customers satisfied, and cause more customers to buy the English language courses from the language schools they work for (Mercer, 2020; Skinner et al., 2019).

The imposition of discourses that attempt to reshape EFL teachers' purpose from educators to service providers is an issue EFL teachers face in language schools, and it might result in a feeling of deprofessionalization (see Price et. al., 2012;). Such discourses might attempt to bind EFL teachers to keep their opinions about ongoing affairs in their workplaces to themselves, might make EFL teachers stick to fixed class procedures for the sake of a product (Mercer, 2020), might reshape the power dynamics of EFL teachers in a classroom by the imposition of uniforms and dress codes, might make EFL teachers loyal to a brand that may not be interested in their professional growth even if it meant reinforcing other educative settings,

and could have given more relevance to personnel that are knowledgeable about market affairs but not quite education. Due to that, teachers might have felt that their purpose is no different from any other worker from any other realm. On the one hand, some EFL teachers may keep hopes in their inner conflict to be over and, as a result, their job will have a profound purpose in their students' lives. On the other hand, some other teaches might feel as Sisyphus, frustrated and with the sense that their efforts to go beyond being a product might be shallow, and render useless.

Perceptions of the TEFL Industry Work Conditions

Teachers began reflecting about themselves, the people they coexist with every day, peers and higherups, and their own workplace which represents the current EFL industry and its work conditions (Breshears, 2019; Codó, 2018; Mercer, 2020). Reflections regarding higherups in language schools inform their belief that, due to the infrequent contact with their subordinates, and the lack of knowledge regarding the type of specialized professionals EFL teachers are, they might express their concerns in ways that can be interpreted as a tantrum to regain the control over teachers that might be displaying a resistance to authority (Price et. Al, 2012).

Such behaviors could be related to EFL teachers allegedly violating a principle of exclusivity that might be found in their contracts; hypothetically making public certain incidents that occurred within the language school, which could flatten the image of the educative enterprise to a point in which they might lose potential customers; forming unions; and not sharing the language schools pieces of advertisement in their social media profiles in order to increase profit (Varis & Blommaert, 2015). In their reflections, coming from their beliefs, there is space to either question the procedures and policies of the workplace or to accept them, not only policies are questioned, but salaries. They question whether the money is enough to cover

their personal expenses or if the salary they receive is fair enough for their teaching job when compared with the salary salespeople and native speakers in teaching positions receive. Issues that are presented regarding salaries are also related to payment delays and strategies to make ends meet such as saving money (Breshears, 2019; Valeo & Faez, 2013).

Not only written rules and policies are questioned but also non-written rules supported by the ideal traits of obedience and subordination, which in my experience as a former manager of a private language school, is what the owners of language schools expect, ignoring that all teachers acknowledge themselves as critical beings hence evidencing the difference between the outsiders' perception of teachers versus the teachers' self-perception mentioned a few lines above (Connell, 2009; Price et. Al, 2012). Teachers also question the requirements they believe people has to meet to work in the academic area in language schools to ensure trustworthiness among all participants in the educative process, in particular questionings toward who could be an authentic EFL teacher. EFL teachers are aware of their place and situation in language schools, and can be critical beings in their context toward their peers, and higherups, in a fair, balanced way (Mercer, 2020).

They want to work with higherups that communicate appropriately and are not controlling, higher ups that trust them, and grant them freedom to express what they feel, freedom to act toward the respect of the teaching profession, and their peers' protection from unfair treatment at the workplace (Mercer, 2020). EFL teachers also might want freedom from "on the market affairs", since personal online spaces are meant to be personal. Teachers want a fair salary that allows them to cover expenses and save (Breshears, 2019), and also consider there should be a balance among the salaries they earn and other workers. EFL teachers might

want to work with people that they believe really want to be teachers and can contribute to them professionally (Mercer, 2020).

EFL Teachers as users of Multimodal Discourses within Internet Humor

EFL teachers' use of multimodal discourses within internet humor demonstrates that they are critical beings who might have no intention to cause mirth (Gimbel, 2018;), but to intentionally contest discourses that language schools try to impose on them (Flamson & Bryant 2013; Gimbel, 2018;), hence changing the power dynamics with their higherups (Miltner, 2018). Their use of multimodal discourses in Internet humor also helps them to strengthen bonds with other members of the EFL community within their setting by presenting their issues, struggles, feelings and beliefs (Ritchie, 2011; Shifman, 2014a; Yus, 2016). Their use of humor can also describe EFL teachers as connoisseurs of cultural references (Gimbel, 2018; Shifman, 2014a; Shifman, 2014b; Vásquez & Ehran, 2021), as experts in technology -in using hardware and software to create multimodal artifacts- (Shifman, 2014a; Shifman 2014b), as clever individuals able to recognize patterns, memorize and replicate multimodal patterns, able to employ all of the aforementioned to convey combined textual and pictorial discourses through styles of humor such as metaphors, incongruities, sarcasm, and ironies (Gimbel, 2018; Shifman, 2014b). EFL teachers also display creativity and playfulness, playing with the information they already know and crafting it to suit humor styles that communicate their beliefs, and issues (Gimbel, 2018; Shifman, 2014b; Vásquez & Ehran, 2021).

Conclusion

Four major conclusions can be made from this research. The first conclusion is that the discourses in multimodal Internet humor reveal that EFL teachers resist passively to their commodification, seen as an issue by them, through the expression of counter-discourses. Humor helps convey counter-discourses of dissatisfaction to resist the business-oriented discourses of language schools that attempt to deprofessionalize EFL teachers since the purpose of humor goes beyond amusing individuals. Discourses from educative enterprises not only attempt to reshape EFL teachers' identities from educators to service providers but also attempt to redefine the characterization of who an EFL teacher should be within the context of language schools. However, EFL teachers accept that the marketization of education made them commodities, subordinates in a language school who believe they have got to engage in actions that derive into customer satisfaction and 'on the market affairs, hence causing in them a feeling of hopelessness regarding the purpose of their job.

The second conclusion is that Higherups and language school owners are revealed in multimodal Internet humor discourses as individuals who are believed to disregard the critical nature of EFL teachers. The perception EFL teachers have about their higherups might be caused by the higherups' practice of not keeping enough contact with their specialized personnel and by their assumption that all employees in all realms are expected to be obedient beings lacking will and critical thought, consequently believing that their discourse imposition for the sake of control and profit will not be questioned, but blindly accepted. Some EFL teachers are in the position of higherups, so their portrayal in multimodal Internet humor discourses depict them as rule enforcers that have forgotten their criticality in order to help language school owners to make a profit from education.

The third conclusion is that discourses in multimodal Internet humor reveal the EFL teachers' beliefs and struggles regarding the fairness of their salaries. EFL teachers in language schools are revealed in multimodal discourses as being aware of their coworkers' salaries, especially in the memes discourses that refer to nonspecialized personnel, either in the academic area or in other areas, making an allegedly better wage. EFL teachers' discourses in memes confirm what has been evidenced in other studies, such as Breshear's (2019) and Codó's (2018), EFL teachers in the context of language schools have precarious, low-paid, benefit-lacking jobs. EFL teachers then reveal in meme discourses a situation that depicts their job condition. They struggle when working for language schools that do not pay their time and efforts well.

The fourth and last conclusion is regarding EFL teachers' use of multimodal Internet humor to convey their discourses to communicate their experiences in language schools. The use of discourses in multimodal humor depicts EFL teachers in language schools as critical, knowledgeable, playful, and creative beings capable of intentionally employing the resources available to them in order to imbue discourses in multimodal Internet. EFL teachers from language schools do not have the intention to make people laugh but to respond to discourses that are being imposed on them so the power dynamics in their workplaces can be changed, and at the same time, bonds with their colleagues are strengthened. Henceforth EFL teachers in language schools can additionally be defined as concerned about the power dynamics in their workplaces and as interested in reinforcing their relationship with peers who are also going through the same experiences.

I learned that despite the conflict of being educators while undergoing a process to be transformed into silent service providers that are customer satisfaction oriented, in order to make a language school increase its income, language school EFL teachers are autonomous critical

beings that will make their voices be heard in creative ways. EFL teachers in language schools are also observant of their surroundings and thoughtful about their situation, as well as their peers', which are the outcome of the marketization and commodification of education. Such creativity is displayed in breaking the barriers of written and oral language when employing multimodal discourses in Internet humor for such purposes by means of their knowledge of culture, and technology use, in playful and conspicuous ways. EFL teachers have found ways to avoid consequences in their workplaces by employing the services of social networks that guarantee their anonymity. However, I consider that such groups should be easier to find; teachers from language schools should not be afraid of expressing their opinions about their work conditions because of that anonymity. Being reserved about their meme groups is self-silencing to me.

Owners and managers of language schools should come to terms with the nature of specialized professionals as EFL teachers. Owners and managers of educative enterprises should be taught to welcome such critical comments and should learn how to inure themselves from counter-discourses toward control, not with the purpose of ignoring them, but to engage in discussion and negotiation to work together toward the improvement of EFL teachers' working conditions. Controlling the behavior of teachers as if irresponsible youngsters for the sake of productivity and profit does not contribute to improving their work environment. Owners and managers of language schools should be taught to manage teachers humanely by respecting their personnel for their knowledge and capabilities, paying them a fair salary, allowing them to grow professionally in times of crisis, and respecting the boundaries of their private space, such as their social media accounts and their schedules.

Limitations and Weaknesses

To begin with, finding groups of EFL teachers that posted memes was challenging since I know from my experiences as a former language school manager and as an attendant to a teachers' meeting to discuss this issue that these social media groups, at least in my country, are usually dismissed, and hence quite difficult to find. Furthermore, teachers that manage such groups, if caught, are penalized severely, so they do not dare to make and post memes about language schools again, instilling in teachers a fear of expressing their feelings toward their job in a particular institute. Other groups posted images and texts, but due to the factor of replicability, those memes from those groups were not useful for this study.

Another challenge was related to the amount of data I collected. Despite many scholars and colleagues agreeing on the fact that the amount of data I collected initially assured rich data and saturation, it is a daunting task in terms of analysis. I did not consider the factor of the subreddit posting frequency until after the data collection, and had I known about it, I would have considered different criteria to select the data to analyze, but on the other hand, many of the memes I selected were not quite useful for the answers I intended to obtain, the reason I referred to this situation as a challenge and not as a limitation.

On the other hand, what really constituted a limitation that caused me disappointment was that although I collected a considerable number of artifacts containing rich data, the data I collected did not look like the memes I saw in EFL teacher Facebook groups that hosted memes before their disbanding. The memes I used to see in such groups had the logos of Colombian private language schools, and many of those memes addressed particular eventualities that occurred in those places. I think it would have been fantastic to find and analyze such data, I could have narrowed down my research questions more, and the setting and outcomes would

have been slightly, yet significantly different. However, I understand that teachers might already be risking their teaching position by the sole inclusion of their discourses within the memes they make, so thinking that they will ever include the language schools' logos in their memes is simply too much to ask. To add, the meme makers' nationalities was unknown, the reason why I could not narrow my research down to Colombian meme makers, or memes made in Colombia.

In addition to that, I encountered an additional limitation in finding a proper multimodal analysis methodology. Considering that the use of multimodal humor on the Internet is a social practice that uses pop culture references, and bearing in mind that I found critical stances within the units of analysis, I consider there should be a methodology that could be used for critical discourse analysis in multimodal Internet humor. Many critical multimodality theories focus on many details, such as framing, color, distance, and position of the participants of a picture, but they overlook the power issues presented in pop culture and the styles of humor that can convey critical discourse. I believe that a theory of critical multimodal discourse analysis should definitively consider them. I do not intend to say that I am not satisfied with the methodology I employed; on the contrary, it helped me answer my research questions. However, had attempting to design a proper methodology to analyze multimodal discourse with the characteristics I found not been so time costly, I would have liked to develop my own.

To find out what resources the social media platforms might offer to better select data, researchers should consider the amount of likes or upvotes, or the most commented artifacts are just a couple of examples. However, if the data after analysis does not provide the expected answers, do select data, limiting it to a narrower amount of time. Researchers should not underestimate the posting frequency in an online group since there is no way to know when the group members are the most active. Facing the lack of a theory for approaching multimodal

discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis, researchers do have to inform themselves plenty

about the existing possibilities to execute the data analysis. Chances are that either they find a

methodology that suits their studies better or that they even get to develop their own, provided

that they have plenty of time to do so.

In addition, should they decide to use an already existing methodology for multimodal

analysis, researchers should not stick to the first one they find. Researchers ought to set an

outline and run a pilot of the methodology on a few artifacts to find whether the analysis answers

their research questions. If it does not, although it might be frustrating, continuing with another

methodology until they find one that suits their study is highly advisable.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations attempt to complement the limitations and weaknesses that were just explained. One important recommendation is not to give up until finding the adequate setting and data. There are plenty of online groups of teachers around the Internet in which memes can be found, some might be hidden but still accessible. If the group is private and the data is needed, researchers must consider often communicating with the group managers to gain their trust right before informing them of the research. They might be helpful when seeking informed consent from users in case they consider taking EFL teachers as participants in their research. To add up, if they can afford it, researchers ought to get software for multimodal analysis, I realized the existence of such tools right after I concluded the analysis for this study. Researchers might want to set the program up to obtain the necessary results, so it is important that they inform themselves on how to use the tool. Researchers should not expect to find online groups of EFL teachers posting memes with modifiability and replicability factors. Some meme makers still believe that any picture-text combination is a meme. It is important for researchers not expect EFL teachers to include in their memes the logos of their workplaces due to the reasons are explained above. Revising as many groups as possible, and seeing their posts for a few weeks to see whether they post the type of data that suits the needs of research is important. Exploring different social media groups, even the least known ones could help researchers expand this sort of research. In my search of a meme group, I could not find any that was explicitly Colombian, so exploring EFL Colombian teacher groups could help reveal if there are particular issues within the context of Colombian language schools.

This research could also be expanded by looking for additional issues to the ones I found, such as the use of discourse within multimodal Internet humor to explore EFL teachers'

perception of the expenses and investment done by language school owners in the maintenance of their schools' branches. It can also be expanded by deepening on aspects such as the student-teacher or the teacher-manager relationships within these settings. Another aspect to expand on is how teachers react to invitations to certain organized events such as trainings, integration meetings, or New Year's Eve parties. In addition to that, it could also be important to explore how EFL teachers respond in multimodal Internet humor toward the unfair treatment to their peers in language schools. Finally, I consider that EFL school and university teachers have made memes the same way EFL language schools' have, so exploring multimodal discourses within Internet humor can help expand the already vast depiction of teachers in those settings. To wrap up, even exploring the expression of EFL teachers' multimodal discourses through Internet humor, expressing satisfaction and happiness in their workplaces might reveal situations that are being overlooked in this research, and henceforth the study could be expanded on.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The following appendix shows the thematic filtering used for the first data analysis stage. The thematic filtering required color coding for the themes and subthemes and for the number of memes. The colors in numbers indicated how many themes were addressed in the meme

June		
Main themes	**Meme N°**	
Recently graduated teachers	043, 070,	
Payment	044, 063, 065, 105, 118,	Perceptions of educators
Perceptions of Foreign Language Teachers	045, 074, 075, 082, 100, 102, 103, 115,	Perceptions of educators
Reasons to quit	046, 112,	
The best place to work	047	
Perks of Private Language Centers (PLCs)	047, 053	
Commodification -Students as customers-	048, 049, 058, 060, 066, 072, 076, 080, 084, 090, 093, 101	Power issues and commodification of education
The examiner of English	048, 083, 086, 087, 093, 095,	
Roles in the classroom	048, 049, 058, 060, 061, 066, 075, 076, 077, 081, 081, 090, 095, 101, 116,	
The mother tongue in the FL classroom	050, 071, 076,	
Work rules	050, 071, 084, 094, 101, 122,	Perceptions of educators
Impotence and concern	051, 052	
Teacher assessment	054, 072, 109, 116,	Perceptions about educators?
Unilateral negotiation between bosses & employee	054, 092,	

Appendix B

This next appendix shows the second matrix, with the initial names of themes and subthemes. There was a matrix per month. Here I show you the matrix corresponding to the month of May 2021. Both the themes and the subthemes have a particular color. The black color represents a discarded subtheme.

MAY 2021							
Power issues and commodification of education			Perceptions of education during the COVID pandemic	Rules and procedures VS teachers' POV - Language standardization and payment			
The costumer is always right	The examiner of English	Teachers and students roles	COVID pandemic	Where is the money?	Insubordinate!	Class procedures	Work rules
001, 037	014, 016, 027, 028, 031, 032, 033	021, 033, 034, 035	004, 011, 031, 041(?)	006, 038,	015	020, 022, 041,	025, 029, 030, 041

Appendix C

This next matrix kept the registers of the cyberpragmatic analysis, the textual analysis, the meme interpretation, and the styles of humor that emerged from those analyses. In the Excel sheet, May has three tabs, June has three tabs, and July has ten tabs. The image shows the analysis done on one meme. The excel sheet is longer, containing the multimodal discourse analysis of more than one meme per sheet.

					JUNE 2021 Corporate tantrum and exclusivity						**Humor styles (fill in the chart of the categories that apply!)**				
		Meme composition									**Type of humor that encapsulates the presented practices**				
Meme N°	Type of image macro meme	**Salient Element**		TEXT ANALYSIS	Word specific	Picture specific	**Text-Picture Category**				Incongruity	Metaphor	Sarcasm (Satire)	Irony (Satire)	
		In image	In text				Duo specific	Additive	Interdependance	Ad-Hoc Visual Referent adjustment					
176	Catchphrase, pop culture reference, reaction (Stares motherfuckerly)	The image is a screenshot of the 1994 film 'Pulp Fiction', consisting of an image of the Northamerican actor Samuel L. Jackson portraying the character 'Jules'. His facial expression is the one we can associate to the feelings of awe, confusion, or shock. Jules has an afro with sideburns and a mustache, and he is wearing a black suit and tie, and a white shirt.	The text above the image says: "Me when I receive a message in the language academy WhatsApp group, and I listen to a rant of the language academy owner because we teachers aren't sharing the academy's advertising on our social media profiles". The text to the right side of Jules's picture says: "Stares motherfuckerly".	The text provides a context and a description of the action seen in the image. The "Me" in the text helps a person to take the teachers' position. "Stares motherfuckerly" describes the action the character in the picture makes, but influenced by the coarse expression "motherfucker" used constantly by the character in the motion picture "Pulp Fiction". It is possible to infer that teachers are irritated by the request	The images add more information to the text	The texts amplify the meaning of the picture	There is not overlapping between the picture and the text	The words in the text help to interpret the picture.	The discourses of the meme cannot be interpreted with the text separated from the picture.	The text pushes the meme interpretation. A teacher receives a message from the owner of the language academy, it is not specified if it is a voice message on WhatsApp or a corporate e-mail. The petition to astroturf the language academy has a tone that reminds of a conniption. The teachers who received the message are in shock.	There are no signs of incongruity	The language academy owner is mentioned in the text, but not seen in the picture. Jules represent the teachers who received and read, heard the message and are in awe.	There are no signs of sarcasm	There are no signs of irony	

Appendix D

This last matrix was used for narrowing down the themes and subthemes that emerged

from the data. Inside the cells, it is possible to notice the number of memes belonging to those

themes and subthemes.

Marketization-Commodification of education				lang standardization
Power dynamics	**Incivility**	**For Profit**	**Deprofessionalization**	
001, 048, 076, 084, 093, 116, 071, 169. 173, 161	031, 066, 076, 084, 093, 116	033, 093, 131, 221	093, 118, 169, 162, 161, 182, 188, 211, 149, 200, 208, 221, 178	016, 116, 050, 071, 131

Teachers' POVS									
Corporate tantrum		Policy questioning		Written and non-written rules					
Exclusivity	Academic mercenarysm	Conform or complain	Salary	Obedience and subordination	Trustworthyness & requirements	"Real" EFL teachers	Necessary for a class	Online silencing	Astroturfing
124, 162, 167, 193	038, 105, 145, 162, 167	015, 050, 094, 122, 133, 162, 194, 209, 178, 206, 217, 180, 197, 210	006, 038, 063, 065, 105, 118, 124, 139, 145, 151, 167, 194, 199, 202, 209	015, 020, 025, 041, 122, 133, 124, 161, 177, 196, 171, 211, 153, 200, 208, 221, 197	029, 030, 116, 118, 139, 182, 184, 203, 153, 183, 195, 208, 136, 142	103, 115, 125, 134, 138, 139, 161, 182, 184, 195	071, 216, 124, 178, 188, 211, 208, 136, 142	015, 041, 124, 177, 141, 186, 206, 149, 180, 197	124, 196, 171, 215