

# Making memes matter: Internet memes as an effective tool for skill development and learner engagement in the ESP classroom

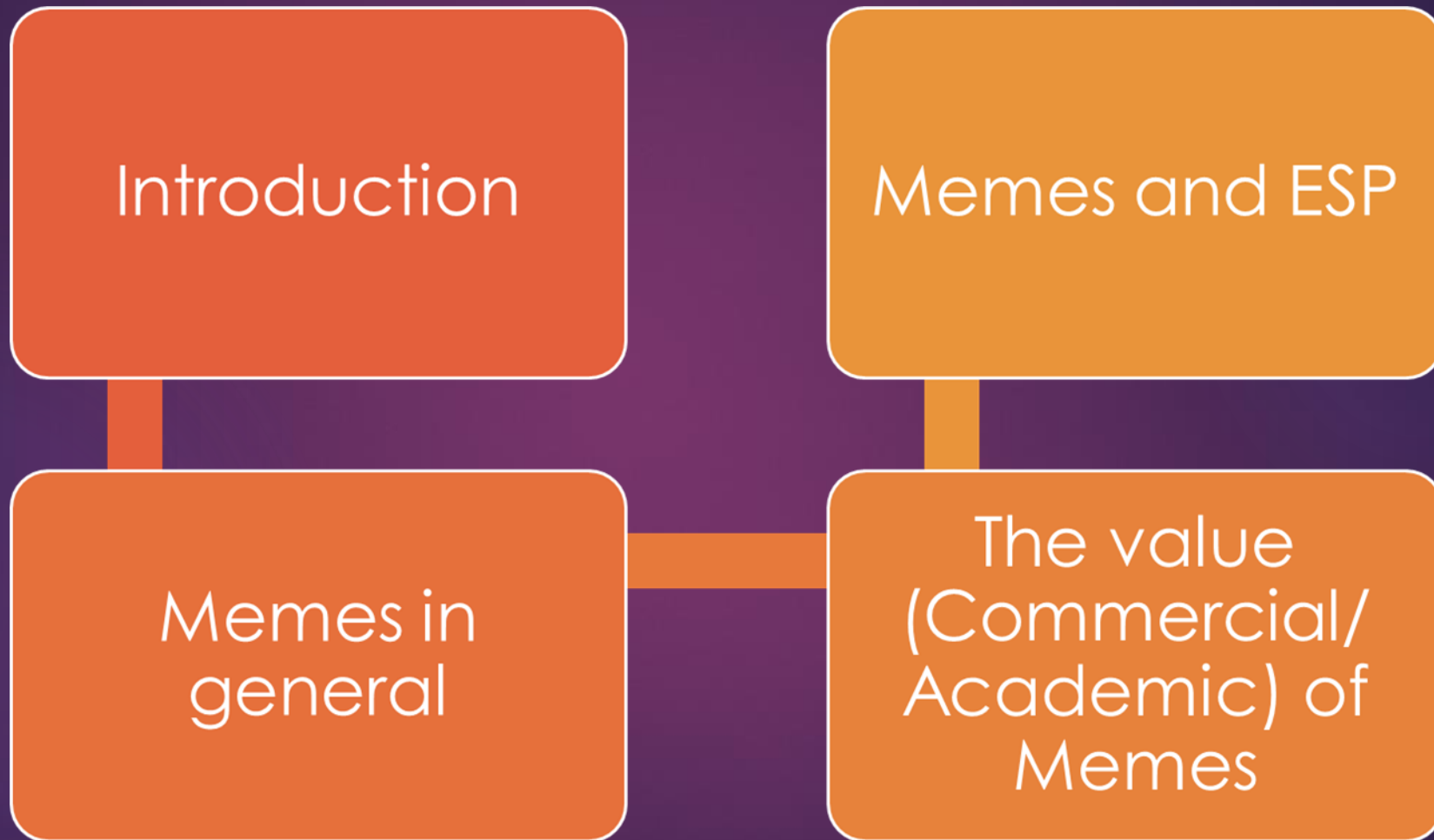
Mark Nicholas Glasford,  
St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.



Future of English Language  
Teaching Conference **ONLINE**



# Order of Discussion



# Introduction

- ▶ Establishment of learning space in the classroom
- ▶ The challenge of information explosion
- ▶ Multimodal functionality of the Gen Z students





# What are memes?

- ▶ Richard Dawkins defined memes as 'small cultural units of transmission, analogous to genes, that spread from person to person by copying or imitation. Examples of memes in his pioneering essay include cultural artifacts such as melodies, catchphrases, and clothing fashions, as well as abstract beliefs (for instance, the concept of God) (Dawkins, 1976).
- ▶ Dawkins' meme was the cultural equivalent of the gene.
- ▶ Memes are a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which were created with awareness of each other, and were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users. (Shifman 2019)



- ▶ shared memory of cultural icons and archetypes
- ▶ take their source from movies, songs, fashion trends, viral challenges and childhood nostalgia

# Why consider memes for the classroom?

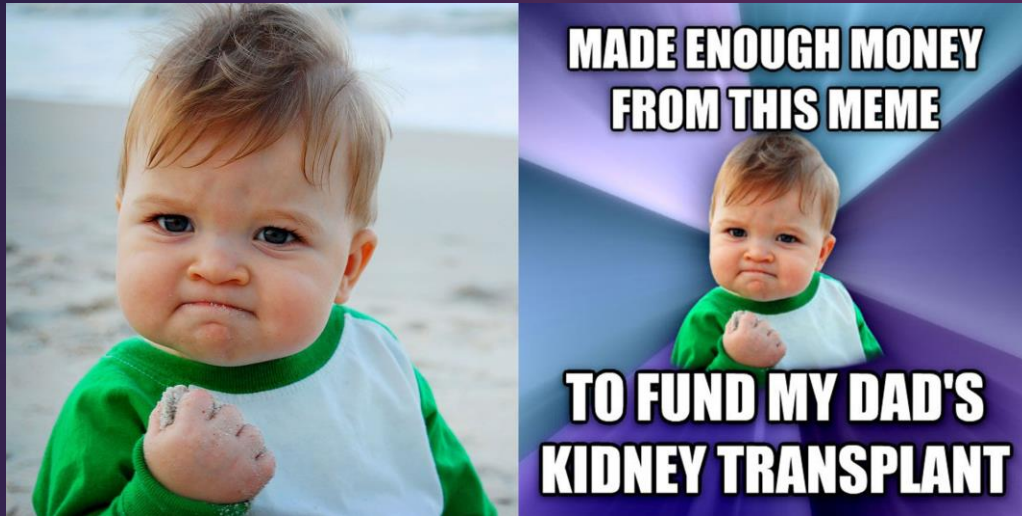
- ▶ classroom motivation (Harshavardhan et al, 2019)
- ▶ classroom participation through instagramming (Purnama et al, 2018)
- ▶ increase visual literacy (Romero and Bobkina, 2017)
- ▶ inducing writing skills (Huang, 2017)

# The rising commercial value of memes

- ▶ need for constant excitement
- ▶ explosion of e-commerce and the growing need for digital marketing

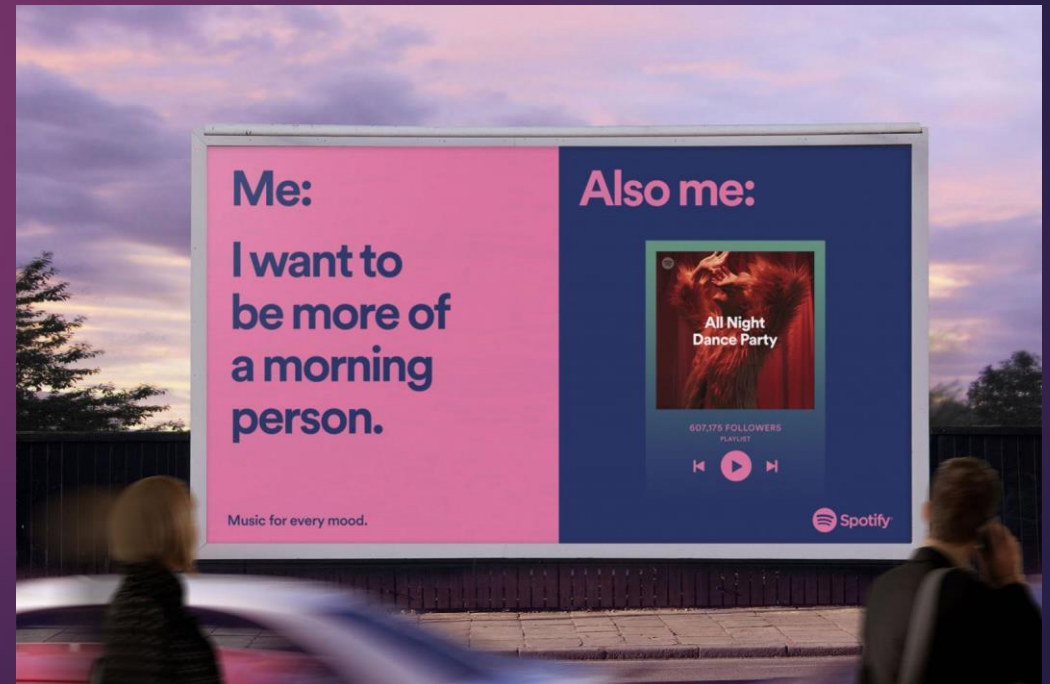






Me: i'm going to sleep early tonight

Also me at 2am:



# Why consider memes for ESP?

- ▶ Meme creation to facilitate L2 acquisition
- ▶ Minimalism in the language
- ▶ Acquisition of meme-creator skills

# Memes for Skill Development

- ▶ Gaining visual literacy
- ▶ Gaining critical thinking
- ▶ Memeing skills

# Learner engagement

- ▶ Memes as a catalyst for genuine interaction
- ▶ Meme-toxicity and language insensitivity
- ▶ Need for a filtration process



# Q & A

- ▶ What sort of interaction would memes provide if introduced in the classroom?
- ▶ Are memes going to be used as an activity or as a process?
- ▶ Why choose memes for an ESP classroom?

## This session has now ended

Please return to the conference programme to choose your next session.

### Webinar: Discover Trinity

Thursday 1 July, 2021

Find out more: [learn.trinitycollege.co.uk/discover](https://learn.trinitycollege.co.uk/discover)



**Future of English Language  
Teaching Conference** **ONLINE**