РОЗДІЛ 6. ТЕОРІЯ І МЕТОДИКА ВИХОВАННЯ

USING INTERNET MEMES TO DEVELOP UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COGNITIVE ORIENTATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ІНТЕРНЕТ-МЕМІВ В ФОРМУВАННІ ПІЗНАВАЛЬНОЇ СПРЯМОВАНОСТІ СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ В ПРОЦЕСІ ВИВЧЕННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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The article examines the educational potential of Internet memes as a contemporary multimodal tool for fostering university students' cognitive orientation during the process of learning a foreign language. Based on an analysis of works by foreign and Ukrainian scholars, the essence of the concept «Internet meme» is revealed, and its linguistic, cultural, and communicative characteristics are outlined. It is emphasized that Internet memes, by combining visual content, humor, cultural references, and linguistic innovations, contribute to the development of critical thinking, the activation of cognitive processes, and increased student motivation. The study demonstrates that Internet memes are effective in foreign-language instruction when working with slang items, phrasal verbs, idioms, and intentional lexical or grammatical errors, thereby fostering language sensitivity and bringing the learning process closer to real communication contexts. Particular attention is paid to the didactic possibilities of using Internet memes during practical foreign language classes, including content analysis, error correction, context interpretation, and creating original memes via online platforms. It is proven that the use of Internet memes enhances students' emotional engagement, encourages lively discussions, and strengthens the interactivity of the learning environment. The study concludes that the integration of Internet memes into the educational process is a promising direction for improving foreign language teaching methodology, one that aligns with the informational needs and communicative practices of Generation Z. The article also highlights the prospects for further research on the use of Internet memes as a means of forming the cognitive orientation of university students in the process of learning foreign languages, in particular in the context of their influence on various language skills, as well as methodological recommendations for their effective use in the educational process.
Key words: *cognitive orientation, students, university, foreign language (FL), Internet memes, motivation.*

У статті розглядається освітній потенціал Інтернет-мемів як сучасного мультимодального інструменту для сприяння когнітивній орієнтації студентів університетів у процесі вивчення іноземної мови. На основі аналізу праць зарубіжних та українських науковців розкривається сутність поняття «Інтернет-мем» та окреслюються його лінгвістичні, культурні та комунікативні характеристики. Підкреслюється, що інтернет-меми, поєднуючи візуальний контент, гумор, культурні відсилання та лінгвістичні інновації, сприяють розвитку критичного мислення, активації когнітивних процесів та підвищенню мотивації студентів. Дослідження демонструє, що інтернет-меми ефективні у навчанні іноземної мови при роботі зі сленговими елементами, фразовими дієсловами, ідіомами та навмисними лексичними чи граматичними помилками, тим самим сприяючи розвитку мовної чутливості та наближаючи процес навчання до реальних комунікативних контекстів. Особлива увага приділяється дидактичним можливостям використання Інтернет-мемів під час практичних занять з іноземної мови, включаючи аналіз контенту, виправлення помилок, інтерпретацію контексту та створення оригінальних мемів через онлайн-платформи. Доведено, що використання інтернет-мемів підвищує емоційну залученість студентів, заохочує до жвавих дискусій та посилює інтерактивність навчального середовища. У дослідженні зроблено висновок, що інтеграція інтернет-мемів у освітній процес є перспективним напрямком удосконалення методики викладання іноземних мов, що відповідає інформаційним потребам та комунікативним практикам покоління Z. У статті також висвітлено перспективи подальших досліджень щодо використання інтернет-мемів як засобу формування когнітивної спрямованості студентів університетів у процесі вивчення іноземних мов, зокрема в контексті їх впливу на різні мовні навички, а також методичні рекомендації щодо їх ефективного використання в освітньому процесі.
Ключові слова: *пізнавальна спрямованість, студенти, університет, іноземна мова (ІМ), Інтернет-меми, мотивація.*

Statement of the problem in a general form and its connection with important ones scientific or practical tasks. In recent years, higher education has undergone significant changes, particularly with the widespread popularization of digital media, such as social networks, online platforms, and multimedia services, which have substantially transformed traditional approaches to foreign language learning. Among these digital tools, Internet memes stand out as a unique cultural phenomenon that combines humorous elements, visual representation, and condensed linguistic content. The broad popularity of Internet memes among Internet users, and in our case, university students, makes them a promising resource for enhancing students' cognitive orientation in the process of learning a foreign language. Due to

their multimodal nature, Internet memes present information in a format that stimulates rapid comprehension, critical thinking, and associative learning. They activate cognitive operations such as comparison, establishing logical connections, interpreting context, and recognizing cultural references, all of which are important for the development of higher-order cognitive skills in the language learning process.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of developing university students' cognitive orientation has been actively addressed by contemporary researchers, who emphasize the growing role of Internet memes as an effective tool for enhancing motivation and cognitive engagement among learners. A. Prykhodko demonstrates the didactic potential of memes in the language training of international students [1]. R. Altukruni highlights their positive impact on students' motivation and engagement in the EFL/ESL learning process [2]. The conceptual understanding of memes as units of cultural information was proposed by R. Dawkins [3], while their communicative and psychological characteristics were analyzed by M. Dias [4]. R. Gibb emphasizes that memes facilitate discussions and simplify complex concepts [5], whereas A. Kalyuzhna, I. Lavrinenko, and O. Radchenko demonstrate their effectiveness in teaching grammar and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) [6]. The linguistic and sociocultural features of memes are outlined in the work of B. Kostadinovska-Stojchevska and E. Shalevska [7]. Ukrainian researchers A. Kyrpa and O. Stepanenko consider memes as a valuable means of increasing student interest and improving the retention of learning material [8]. Indonesian scholars S. E. P. Djahimo and M. K. Nelloe confirm the effectiveness of memes in developing communicative skills and student motivation [9; 10]. N. Rybka emphasizes the influence of memes on the development of critical thinking and cognitive orientation [11], while L. Shifman describes the mechanisms of their global dissemination and evolution [12]. Thus, the body of research confirms that Internet memes are a promising tool for fostering university students' cognitive orientation.

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem. Although in recent years there has been growing interest in the implementation of Internet memes in the educational process of higher education institutions, particularly in the context of students' language training, this issue is only beginning to gain widespread attention. At the same time, several aspects of this problem remain insufficiently studied. In particular, the impact of using Internet memes on the development of university students' cognitive orientation in the process of learning a foreign language remains largely unexplored.

The purpose of the study is to explore the educational potential of using Internet memes as a tool for fostering university students' cognitive orientation in the process of learning a foreign language.

Presentation of the main research material. To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of an «Internet meme», it is appropriate to refer to its scientific definitions. For example, R. Dawkins, who is considered the founder of this term, argued that a meme is a unit of cultural transmission, as he coined the term by shortening the Greek word μίμημα (mimema), meaning «imitation» or «similarity» [3].

According to A. Prykhodko, an Internet meme should be understood as a complete unit of textual or visualized information that carries an ironic character, reflects attitudes toward certain events, phenomena, or circumstances, and spreads through the Internet [1].

M. Dias considers an Internet meme as a unit of information that is copied to facilitate communication among users [4].

From the perspective of L. Shifman, an Internet meme − «is a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, created with awareness of each other circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users» [12].

According to researchers from North Macedonia (B. Kostadinovska Stojchevska and E. Shalevska), a distinctive linguistic feature of Internet memes is the use of slang as well as the deliberate violation of grammatical structures [7].

It should be noted that in the modern media space, Internet memes are not limited to static images or captions; they also include viral video clips, such as YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, TikTok videos, content from Telegram channels, excerpts from talk shows and reality shows, political events, scenes from films and cartoons, as well as various challenges and advertisements.

Focusing on the educational potential of using Internet memes during foreign language practical classes, it is important to emphasize that numerous Ukrainian and international scholars highlight a significant positive trend in enhancing university students' cognitive orientation.

For example, R. Gibb emphasizes that Internet memes stimulate lively discussions and simplify complex ideas, making them more relatable to students' everyday experiences. According to him, Internet memes have a significant impact on attention, perception, and information retention, while also contributing positively to students' overall motivation to learn [5].

N. Rybka notes that Internet memes are best used as supplementary tools alongside other traditional and innovative pedagogical instruments. She highlights that memes represent a unique language of Generation Z, allowing educators not only to communicate effectively with students on their level and understand their «communication language», but also to design effective teaching models that facilitate information retention and the development of cognitive skills in foreign language learning [11].

Among the positive and effective aspects of using Internet memes, N. Rybka identifies that memes, by uniting groups of people around shared interests or thematic content, help establish contact among students and promote active communication, which in turn fosters a collaborative atmosphere and stimulates lively discussions with real-life questions and examples. According to the researcher, this undoubtedly enhances cognitive interest and creates an environment of open-minded thinking. Thus, active communication contributes not only to better understanding of learning materials but also to the development of critical thinking and intellectual independence among students [11].

A similar perspective is shared by R. Altukruni, who, in her study *«A Systematic Literature Review on the Integration of Internet Memes in EFL/ESL Classrooms»* (2022), presents research findings confirming the positive impact of Internet memes on students' motivation and engagement with the subject matter. The author argues that Internet memes are not merely jokes but constitute a valuable educational activity [2].

Delving deeper into the application of Internet memes for developing university students' cognitive orientation in foreign language learning, it is worth highlighting the positions of several scholars addressing this issue.

Indonesian researchers S. E. P. Djahimo and M. K. Nelloe, in their article *«Using memes as a teaching media in speaking class (a case study of English department students)»* (2025), note that an effective method for practicing grammar involves tasks in which students correct grammatical errors in meme texts and explain the reasons for these errors. This promotes a deeper understanding of grammatical rules. They argue that such activities «refresh» students' attention, as grammar ceases to be dry rules and becomes part of living Internet culture, thereby increasing interest and engagement in the learning process [9].

According to N. Djahimo, the use of *obscurity memes* (less obvious or "mysterious" memes) positively influences the development of speaking skills, as they encourage active participation in discussions. This, in turn, enhances student engagement,

supports the development of communicative skills, and directly contributes to the formation of students' cognitive orientation in the process of learning a foreign language [9].

Other Indonesian researchers, A. D. Purnama, E. M. Desiarti, N. A. Aflahah, and V. C. Ekaningrum, emphasize that Internet memes represent an excellent strategy for increasing students' motivation in foreign language learning, especially for a second language. They identify three key aspects of motivation addressed by meme-based learning: intrinsic – the desire to learn and enjoy the process; integrative – the aspiration to be part of a culture and communicative environment; and instrumental – the desire to apply language knowledge in real-life situations. The researchers also note that Internet memes are compatible with modern technology (gadgets, the Internet), making them a highly relevant tool for language education [10].

Ukrainian researchers A. Kyrpa, O. Stepanenko, and others point out that new forms and methods of information dissemination should be designed to ensure effective memorization by students. One such method is the inclusion of Internet memes, which are part of students' daily communication and convey both cultural and informational realities of the present day [8].

According to A. Kalyuzhna, I. Lavrinenko, and O. Radchenko, Internet memes facilitate foreign language learning because they combine text with images, which aids in interpreting meaning and thus simplifies the process of information acquisition. The researchers argue that, due to their viral nature, Internet memes reflect ideas shared within the linguistic community, placing language learners in real-life contexts, which in turn supports language mastery [6].

In light of these scholarly perspectives, it is important to focus on examples of implementing Internet memes in foreign language instruction. Frequent encounters with certain phrases in social media help students recognize them more quickly in films, podcasts, or real-life situations. This approach is effective because it combines emotional engagement with practical application, significantly enhancing language acquisition and the development of communicative skills.

Fig. 1. Examples of using Internet memes in English language learning (slang, phrasal verbs, grammatical errors, and idioms)

Consequently, in grammar and vocabulary exercises, students can work with Internet memes containing phrasal verbs, slang, idiomatic expressions, and deliberate grammatical errors. This approach integrates learning with creativity and humor, promoting a deeper understanding of the language material (see Fig. 1).

For example, the first image of an Internet meme illustrates the slang expression «ghosting», which refers to the sudden and complete cessation of communication with someone without explanation. In other words, a person simply disappears, stops replying to messages or calls, and ceases contact «as if they were a ghost».

The second and third images present idiomatic expressions, namely: *«Touch grass»* (e.g., in a conversation: *You need to touch grass and take a break from Instagram*), which means to reconnect with reality, calm down, and take a break from the Internet or computers in general; and *«spill the tea»,* which translates as sharing gossip, interesting or insider information, or revealing the full truth.

The use of such Internet memes containing slang and idiomatic expressions undoubtedly enhances the development of students' cognitive orientation in foreign language learning, as they reflect real and contemporary language practices of Internet users, who are predominantly young people and university students.

The third image demonstrates an Internet meme with an intentional lexical error: *Thank you for your patients* instead of the correct form *Thank you for your patience*. Such memes encourage students to distinguish lexical homonyms and paronyms, increase context awareness, and foster language sensitivity.

An engaging activity can also involve the use of various online platforms (e.g., Clideo, Make it Meme, iLove IMG) for students to independently create their own Internet memes, followed by discussion and analysis.

Conclusions. Thus, Internet memes serve as an effective tool for enhancing students' cognitive orientation in foreign language learning. The combination of visual and textual content, humor, and contemporary linguistic practices promotes motivation, active communication, and improved mastery of grammatical and lexical material. The use of Internet memes makes learning more dynamic, closer to real-life language situations, and aligned with the needs of modern students.

Future research prospects include studying the impact of different types of Internet memes on specific language skills, developing methodological recommendations for their systematic use, and conducting experimental studies on the effectiveness of meme-based content in the educational process.

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