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Submitted: 15 nov 2023  
Accepted: 18 dez. 2023  
Published: 16 jan. 2024

[doi> 10.20396/riesup.v11i00.8675020](https://doi.org/10.20396/riesup.v11i00.8675020)  
e-location: e025031  
ISSN 2446-9424

Anti-plagiarism Check



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## Exploring the Potential of Memes in Media Education: Reflections in the Context of Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** This study addresses teaching in education, reporting an experience within the Master's in Teaching Humanities and Languages (MEHL) program at the Franciscan University (UFN). **Objective:** The research focused on the Microcontent Production discipline in the Advertising and Propaganda course, emphasizing the teaching of memes based on Media Education. **Methodology:** The qualitative study takes the form of a reflective report, theoretically grounded in works by authors such as Veiga (2014), Lima and Grilo (2008), Morin (2000), among others. The undergraduate activity was guided by the "Reading, Writing, and Participation" tripod of Media Education (Ferrari, Machado, and Ochs, 2020), exploring meme teaching over four meetings. **Results:** Highlight the efficacy of memes as a pedagogical resource, fostering a more relaxed and horizontal communication between educators and students, aligning with contemporary teaching paradigms. **Conclusion:** This study provides valuable insights into the successful integration of memes as a pedagogical tool, highlighting their effectiveness in promoting engaging communication aligned with contemporary educational principles. These findings have significant implications for teaching practices in higher education, suggesting more innovative and student-centered approaches.

### KEYWORDS

Higher education. Teaching. Memes. Media education. Learning

## Explorando o Potencial dos Memes pela Educação Midiática: Reflexões no contexto do Ensino Superior

### RESUMO

**Introdução:** Este estudo aborda a docência no ensino, relatando uma experiência no âmbito do Mestrado em Ensino de Humanidades e Linguagens (MEHL) da Universidade Franciscana (UFN). **Objetivo:** A pesquisa envolveu a disciplina de Produção de Microconteúdo no curso de Publicidade e Propaganda, concentrando-se no ensino de memes com base em Educação Midiática. **Metodologia:** O estudo, de natureza qualitativa, apresenta um formato de relato reflexivo, embasado teoricamente por autores como Veiga (2014), Lima e Grilo (2008), Morin (2000), entre outros. A atividade na graduação foi guiada pelo tripé "Leitura, Escrita e Participação" da Educação Midiática (Ferrari, Machado e Ochs, 2020), explorando o ensino de memes em quatro encontros. **Resultados:** Os resultados destacam a eficácia dos memes como recurso pedagógico, promovendo uma comunicação mais descontraída e horizontal entre educadores e alunos, alinhando-se aos novos paradigmas de ensino contemporâneos. **Conclusão:** Este estudo aborda a integração bem-sucedida de memes como ferramenta pedagógica, destacando sua eficácia na promoção de uma comunicação envolvente e alinhada aos princípios educacionais contemporâneos. Estas descobertas têm implicações significativas para a prática docente no ensino superior, sugerindo abordagens mais inovadoras e centradas no aluno.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ensino superior. Docência. Memes. Educação midiática. Aprendizagem.

## Explorando el Potencial de los Memes a través de la Educación Mediática: Reflexiones sobre la Educación Superior

### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** Este estudio aborda la docencia en educación, relatando una experiencia en el ámbito de la Maestría en Enseñanza de Humanidades y Lenguas (MEHL) de la Universidad Franciscana (UFN). **Objetivo:** La investigación involucró la disciplina Producción de Microcontenidos en la carrera de Publicidad, con foco en la enseñanza de memes basados en la Educación en Medios. **Metodología:** El estudio, de carácter cualitativo, presenta un formato de informe reflexivo, fundamentado teóricamente en autores como Veiga (2014), Lima y Grilo (2008), Morin (2000), entre otros. La actividad de pregrado estuvo guiada por el trípode "Lectura, Escritura y Participación" de Educación en Medios (Ferrari, Machado y Ochs, 2020), explorando la enseñanza de los memes en cuatro encuentros. **Resultados:** Los resultados resaltan la efectividad de los memes como recurso pedagógico, promoviendo una comunicación más relajada y horizontal entre educadores y estudiantes, alineándose con los nuevos paradigmas de enseñanza contemporáneos. **Conclusión:** Este estudio aborda la integración exitosa de los memes como herramienta pedagógica, destacando su efectividad para promover una comunicación atractiva y alineada con los principios educativos contemporáneos. Estos hallazgos tienen implicaciones significativas para la práctica docente en la educación superior, sugiriendo enfoques más innovadores y centrados en el estudiante.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Educación superior. Enseñanza. Memes. Educación mediática. Aprendizaje.

### CRedit

- **Acknowledgements:** Not applicable.
- **Financing:** This study was partially financed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Brazil (CAPES), Financial Code 001.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interests that represent a conflict of interest.
- **Ethical approval:** Not applicable.
- **Availability of data and material:** Not applicable.
- **Authors' contributions:** Carlos Henrique da C. Barreto is the main author of the text, who built the structure according to the magazine's standards. Eliane A. Galvão dos Santos is the teacher of the subject for which the article was initially written. The teacher reviewed the text Taís Steffenello Ghisleni is the student author's advisor. She reviewed the text and contributed to the discussion in the conceptual and methodological part.
- **Translation:** Allan Fontoura Figueiredo.

Editoras de Seção: Maria de Lourdes Pinto de Almeida and Charlene Bitencourt Soster Luz

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Thinking about teaching and being a professor in Higher Education in contemporary times seems to have become an exercise filled with challenges, due to the different perspectives and positions that arise as a result of the broad social developments we experience. When reflecting on these developments, we observe that they have brought about extensive changes between generations, new demands, new technologies, new languages, and, as a result, new profiles of students who require restructuring in everything that was once considered common sense in teaching and learning practices and methodologies that were familiar to us and have prevailed until today – often without a more profound reflection on why the teacher does what they do.

In this reflective context, through the completion of Oriented Teaching in the Master's Program in Humanities and Languages Teaching (MEHL) at the Universidade Franciscana (UFN), we are indeed faced with the challenge of contemplating the role of teaching in Higher Education – something that may even seem straightforward for those who already hold or have held the profession of being a professor at this level of education. In Oriented Teaching, we immerse ourselves in an undergraduate course, take on the role of a teacher, and then deliver a specific number of classes and activities guided by the lead professor of the course – who, in turn, was in charge of the Elective Content Production, offered by the Advertising and Propaganda program, the undergraduate course of the mentored teacher, who is the primary author of this work. Thus, the teaching practice that unfolded for us emerged from a promising idea we had in mind, and we will discuss it further below.

For specifications, according to Leene (2006, p. 25), "microcontents are structured pieces of self-contained and indivisible content, which have a single focus and exclusive address so that they can be (re)discovered." In other words, they are items, objects, creations, or pieces that, by themselves, express the entire necessary message, are self-explanatory, and do not require other means to "translate" their content other than the consumer's own reading. For example: graphics, infographics, images, short videos, podcasts, audio clips, posts, among other elements that combine visual, verbal, auditory, etc., elements to express their meaning.

Therefore, according to the institution's own course program description, the Content Production discipline "addresses how your everyday communication occurs, how you express your ideas clearly, organized, and succinctly" with a focus on this production strategy and specific format (microcontent), which is also used by various brands, companies, and digital influencers, as stated by ASSECOM UFN (2022, online). Upon learning about the discipline, our first surprise was discovering that it was an elective course at the institution. Despite being offered by the Advertising and Propaganda program, it had students from various other undergraduate programs in the institution. In total, thirty-eight students comprised the elective group, divided among programs such as Advertising and Propaganda, Journalism, Law, Administration, Accounting, Computer Science, Dentistry, Psychology, Physiotherapy, and Literature.

The students worked with various types of microcontent, from theory to practice, for their formations and constructions. When we contacted the Advertising and Propaganda Coordination, returning to our idea, the choice for this discipline was related to the theme of the dissertation developed by the researchers of this work (author-supervisor), which involves the use of memes – those humor pieces we know from the internet – in formal teaching and learning strategies. However, before reaching any conclusions about it, it is customary to require a practical verification of any constructed theory. Memes, therefore, can be understood as units of information that convey messages through humor, combining various visual, auditory, verbal, spatial, etc., elements to establish meanings. Therefore, in various readings, memes are a type of digital microcontent resulting from our vast and chaotic Internet Culture.

In this process, as per the planning with the lead professors teaching the course at the undergraduate level, we quickly discovered that one of its contents was also internet memes. We presented our proposal to participate as instructors during the classes on memes, and by combining the super-useful (data for the dissertation) with the super-enjoyable (studying memes), we found that the basic bibliography used by the professors was closely aligned with the content of the dissertation, especially regarding the conceptualization of memes. Thus, Microcontent Production was successfully developed in Oriented Teaching. Throughout the course, we actively sought and continuously developed this association of memes as microcontent.

In this perspective, the mentored teacher developed four classes on the theme of memes as microcontent, along with three evaluative assignments. From each moment and their results, data were extracted for the dissertation topic. We worked on conceptualizing memes from genetics to the internet, drawing on the works of Richard Dawkins and Viktor Chagas. We delved into Cyberspace, Digital Culture, and their peculiar nuances, based on the insights of Pierre Lévy, Manuel Castells, Martha Gabriel, Henry Jenkins, Raquel Recuero, among others. All of this was done without ever straying from an anchoring to the discipline and the interpretation of memes as microcontent. However, none of this happened without extensive daily reflection on what it means to engage in teaching in a contemporary higher education environment; or, in analysis, on what teaching entails, characterized by a complex activity that demands a range of knowledge.

The relevance of memes as a pedagogical tool lies in their ability to engage students in a lighthearted manner, leveraging the concise and humorous format to convey complex concepts. The use of this technology can contribute to stimulating active student participation, fostering creativity, and promoting a more dynamic approach to learning.

By integrating memes, educators can create a more accessible learning atmosphere, establishing a meaningful connection with students. The visual language and shareable nature of memes also facilitate the dissemination of information and student engagement beyond the classroom, expanding the impact of teaching. These considerations raise crucial questions: How can memes be effectively incorporated into different disciplines? How can educators

ensure that humor does not compromise the seriousness of academic content? In what ways can educators adapt their approach to better cater to the diverse learning styles of students?

Based on the above, this article aims to provide a general overview of the teaching experience in Higher Education through a reflective account of the activities in the Oriented Teaching of the Master's Program in Humanities and Languages Teaching (MEHL) at the Universidade Franciscana (UFN). The focus will be on the elective course on Microcontent Production, specifically addressing the teaching of memes.

The work is structured into three main sections: initially, we construct our reflection on the roles and positions of educators regarding the teaching of memes based on the readings in class; next, we discuss the development of the classes with the theoretical implications perceived from the constructed reflection and the questions that guided our teaching approach; and finally, we present our final considerations on the entire reflective account and the lessons learned.

## 2 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This work is a reflective experience report on teaching in Higher Education, related to a series of four classes developed by Oriented Teaching in the Master's Program in Humanities and Languages Teaching (MEHL) at Universidade Franciscana (UFN) in the elective course on Microcontent Production, part of the Advertising and Propaganda undergraduate program. The focus is on the role of teaching in Higher Education, emphasizing the teaching of memes. According to Mussi, Flores, and Almeida (2021, p. 62), an experience report is not necessarily a report of academic research; however, it deals with the record of lived experiences, and these experiences may originate from various research activities, such as teaching observations, participation in university extension projects, among others.

The development of this reflective work is primarily grounded in the thoughts of Lima and Grillo (2008) and Ilma Veiga (2014), respectively in their works "O fazer pedagógico e as concepções de conhecimento" ("Pedagogical Practice and Conceptions of Knowledge") and "Aula: gênese, dimensões, princípios e práticas" ("Class: genesis, dimensions, principles, and practices"). Additionally, a set of authors used in the classes for teaching memes and their contextualizations, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, is highlighted. Through connections among these authors, the work constructed a perspective on the positioning and activities of teaching in higher education, as instructed under teaching guidance, in accordance with the relationship perspective between student and teacher and the object of knowledge proposed by Lima and Grillo (2008). Furthermore, there is a final anchoring in the thinking of Edgar Morin (2000), in his work "Os Sete Saberes Necessários à Educação do Futuro" ("The Seven Necessary Learnings for Education of the Future"), which emphasizes errors in the conception of knowledge ownership, valuing subjectivity and the observations of the researcher.

Therefore, the work also adopts qualitative dimensions: according to Michel (2009), qualitative research stands out for not using numerical data or expressions in its development but for working essentially with events, phenomena, and processes in the real world—in this case, reflections resulting from classroom practices. Furthermore, by describing many of the concepts and thoughts of the reported authors, the work takes on an explanatory-descriptive character (Gil, 2002).

To clarify, we highlight that the Microcontent Production course is divided into 4 Units, as illustrated directly from the course program, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Curriculum of the Microcontent Production Course

<b>1) Identificação da disciplina</b>	
Código	
Disciplina	Produção de Microconteúdo
Carga horária	40h
<b>2) Ementa</b>	
Introdução ao Microconteúdo. Microconteúdo Educacional. Microconteúdo de Marca. Projeto Autoral em Microconteúdo.	
<b>3) Programa</b>	
<b>Título e discriminação das unidades e subunidades</b>	
Unidade 1 - Introdução ao Microconteúdo 1.1 Conceitos e aplicações práticas	
Unidade 2 – Microconteúdo Educacional 2.1 Criação de Microconteúdo Educacional	
Unidade 3 – Microconteúdo de Marca 3.1 Criação de Microconteúdo de Marca	
Unidade 4 – Projeto autoral em Microconteúdo 4.1 Realização de projeto autoral de Microconteúdo	
<b>4) Competências</b>	
<b>Competências discriminadas por unidades</b>	
Unidade 1 – Introdução ao Microconteúdo Competência da Unidade 1 – Compreensão dos conceitos, modalidades e aplicações práticas dos microconteúdos na contemporaneidade.	
Unidade 2 – Microconteúdo Educacional Competência da Unidade 2 – Aplicação dos conceitos de microconteúdo educacional na prática dentro da sua realidade de mercado.	
Unidade 3 – Criação de Microconteúdo de Marca Competência da Unidade 3 – Aplicação dos conceitos de microconteúdo de marca na prática dentro da sua realidade de mercado.	
Unidade 4 – Projeto autoral em Microconteúdo Competência da Unidade 4 – Criação de um projeto autoral de microconteúdo de marca/educacional para cliente real.	

Font: collected from the course curriculum developed by the professors.

Let's note that these units address microcontents in their various types, from the concept to their applications in the market, covering different topics and objectives defined by the creator of the microcontent. Therefore, all our guided teaching and classes on memes – understood as microcontents – were included in Unit 2 of the content, whose presentation, competence, and objective are summarized in Table 1:

**Frame 1.** Description of the Unit included in the Course (translated to English)

**Unit 2** – Educational Microcontent

**Competence:** Application of concepts of educational microcontent in practice within their market reality

**Objective:** Develop educational microcontent suitable for the target audience based on the theoretical assumptions covered”

**Font:** Collected from the course curriculum developed by the professors.

The inclusion of Oriented Teaching in this unit was chosen because originally, memes were addressed by the professors of the course. Therefore, the classes dedicated to memes were reorganized to be taught by the researcher teacher from the Master's program.

Consequently, the results and considerations presented in this experience report aim to contribute to teaching in higher education, promote innovative thinking, and ultimately benefit the areas and courses involved in the study (from the students' perspective). Additionally, it seeks to enrich the field of study, teaching, and learning about internet memes, languages, and products of digital culture. Next, we present our narrative and reflective development constructed throughout the report.

### 3 TEACHING MEMES – REFLECTING ON TEACHING PRACTICES

According to Lima and Grillo (2008, p. 21), "teachers, whether new or experienced [in this case, quite new], do not hesitate in their response when asked about what they do in their classes." They enumerate clearly everything they are going to or have already worked on with their student audience, along with their didactic procedures, methodologies, and other employed resources. They describe, in general terms, a sort of common sense about what teaching involves, basing it on their own classroom experiences, not as teachers, but as students: we learn in a certain way, and we replicate in that same way. In this pedagogical common sense, "mastery of a specific area of knowledge conveyed in school content is a sufficient condition to be a teacher" – the authors conclude (Lima; Grillo, 2008, p. 22).

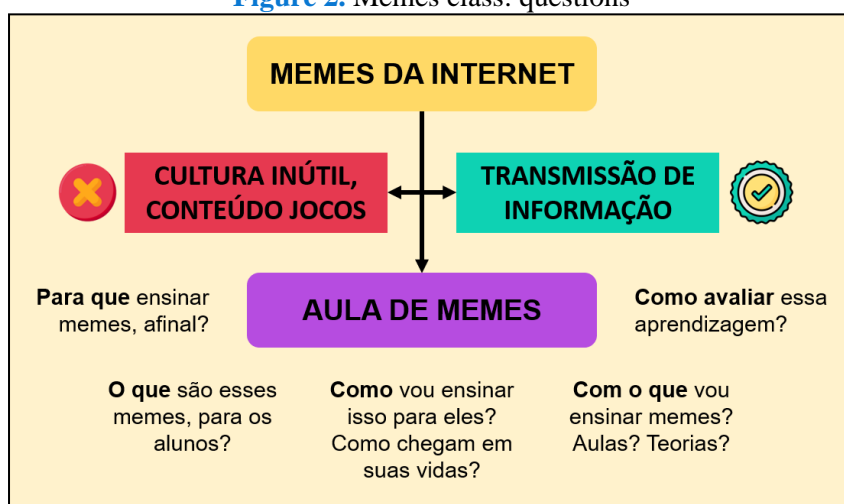
In reality, "it is necessary for teachers to understand that the development of teaching and the development of the student are in a reciprocal relationship," argues Veiga (2014, p. 272). The author emphasizes how planning, execution, and the conception of teaching should escape the mechanical perspective and, as much as possible, be understood as something organic and collaborative. This approach should emphasize the relationship between the teacher and the student, where both should occupy the same position of horizontality, and the teacher should not allow themselves to overshadow the student, as both have much to learn and question from each other. Veiga (2014, p. 274) therefore emphasizes that: "inquiry is a consequence of human incompleteness. Asking, inquiring, questioning are ways of manifesting the curious act in the quest for understanding and developing the world" – not only the world but also life in the classroom.

For Veiga (2014), before any conception of teaching, we must question ourselves "For what?", "What?", "How?", "With what?", "How to evaluate?", among other questions. This is to guide an improvement in teaching that makes sense not only for us as teachers who need to teach content but also for the students. It's important for them to understand why they need to learn that content and how it will make a difference in their journey of learning and development as a human being and citizen.

Therefore, faced with a lengthy and theoretical class on memes, a content that our own reference author, Viktor Chagas (2020), warns us about many hasty condemnations, classifying them as jesting content and the fruit of a useless culture. In reality, he defends that memes are complex structures that produce meaning and reveal various hidden aspects within us, such as tastes, opinions, ideologies, positions, and other elements. Our main challenge boiled down to, essentially, "why teach memes?".

Here are our questions, based on Veiga's (2014) inquiries, as shown in Figure 2:

**Figure 2.** Memes class: questions



Font: Original creation, based on Veiga (2014).

From these guidelines by Veiga (2014) as a guide for teaching, as we thought about how to adapt our content to teaching practices for internet memes as microcontent and objects capable of synthesizing all kinds of content, information, and diverse messages, we also encountered the dichotomy of perspectives on teaching that Lima and Grillo (2008, p. 22) present: "[1] the teacher-centered pedagogy and [2] the pedagogy centered on the relationship between student, teacher, and the object of knowledge."

According to the authors, teacher-centered pedagogy is traditional and, so to speak, easier: the teacher organizes all the content based on their systematic reading, comes to the classroom, and replicates it for the students. As a method of knowledge fixation, an extensive and mechanical battery of exercises is almost a rule (much to the despair of many). And considering this knowledge as something ready, entirely transmitted by the teacher, if any student fails to learn, for any reason, it's their fault: the student didn't achieve the goal of the class, didn't absorb the content, or didn't pay attention to the teacher's words. In this model, the



teacher performs their activities the way they were taught, and we don't need to delve into many memories to remember most of our teachers who did the same during our formative years. In this model, the teacher exactly resumes the pedagogical common sense, as brought by the authors (Lima; Grillo, 2008).

In a *mea culpa*, we realized that we planned—mentally and on paper—a class on memes entirely centered on us, teachers, based on content studied in the dissertation and also built throughout our own training as researchers, even during undergraduate studies. We realized that we studied, planned, and prepared a class for ourselves—not maliciously or arrogantly, but unconsciously adopting this pedagogical common sense that was taught to us at the root of our training: the teacher needs to master the knowledge, arrive, and give the class. Thus, reviewing 141 slides (49 in class 1, 26 in class 2, 43 in class 3, and 23 in class 4), we began to seek answers to Veiga's (2014) inquiries, applying them to the content and abandoning the position of a teacher-centered class, seeking meaning in all this not only for us but essentially for the students.

According to Veiga (2014, p. 275), "the activities of the didactic-pedagogical process that develop in class always have an intentional character, that is, they pursue certain intentions and respond to certain purposes." The whole question for us was to outline these intentions and purposes to adopt the second perspective of positioning pointed out by Lima and Grillo (2008): teaching centered on the relationship between student, teacher, and the object of knowledge. Here, it is essential to understand knowledge as an object that is not possessed by either the teacher or the student but is born from the dialogue between them, palpated, shared, and cultivated by their relationship: like a tree that both create and both cultivate in the teaching space. The teacher is the guide of the method, a qualifier, and the student is the one who walks through it and rediscovers the world that is already unfolding around them. It is with this idea, in fact, that the authors begin the reflection, quoting Morin (2000, p. 86): "knowledge is navigation in an ocean of uncertainties, between an archipelago of certainties."

Consequently, we arrived at what is teaching through the relationship between student, teacher, and the object of teaching: one in which "the teacher believes that the student builds knowledge in interaction with the object [...] [and] organizes teaching to guarantee the student the role of protagonist" in their entire learning process and self-construction as a subject in learning spaces (LIMA; GRILLO, 2008, p. 27). This, in effect, is the main difference in teaching posture compared to the previous perspective: here, the teacher recognizes that knowledge, about the object of teaching, is not centered on them or on the students; thus, the thought of the previous teacher that they had all the necessary support to transmit to the students and that the fault lies with them in cases of non-learning is also called into question here: learning here fundamentally depends on this good relationship.

Reflecting on this, as we delve into specific knowledge—whether for a dissertation, a thesis, or etc.—there is a natural (and inevitable) elevation of a certain ambiguity of authority over this knowledge, and especially, over this knowledge as an object of teaching for other people. Thus, we found ourselves about memes: after long and long months reading the works of Chagas, Dawkins, Jenkins, Lévy, Castells, Gabriel, and other names that gave us so many

reflections, we came to teaching sure that we had more than enough support to transmit to the students in the mixed Microcontent Production class. Only through practice did we realize how the posture centered on the relationship between student, teacher, and the object of knowledge is so necessary in terms of contemporary teaching. The plurality of ideas, minds, lives, experiences, and experiences, we could clearly see through the enthusiastic and dialogued participations about internet memes, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other networks for each concept and theory explained— which was often deeply reinterpreted or reinterpreted by the students in entirely applicable, understandable, and relevant ways.

We verified, according to the authors, that in the balanced interaction between the students, myself, the teacher, and the object of knowledge—the memes— "there is a contribution from the student with their previous ideas and from the teacher, with their ability to select and organize content and activities" in order to promote an approximation between these two actors to specific knowledge through the object of teaching (Lima; Grillo, 2008, p. 27). We realized, aligned with the authors' thinking, that teaching memes is to debate the present, and debating the present is, above all, to value the diversities present in the classroom. The relationship between student, teacher, and the object of knowledge, elevated in the authors' speech, better illustrates a stance on contemporary classrooms. And, according to the authors, recognizing such a conception is the fundamental condition "for the teacher to organize teaching practice in order to achieve the main objective [among students] [...] learning" (Lima; Grillo, 2008, p. 30).

So, starting from this reflection, with the resumption of the questions delimited by Veiga (2014) to guide the teaching and work process of the content among students, we continued with the execution of our conscious challenge of posture and methodology: classes on memes in the Microcontent Production class.

#### 4 CLASS DEVELOPMENT – QUESTIONS, CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, AND ACTIVITIES

Reflecting on "Why teach memes?", we focus on justifying memes from the perspective of Media Education, as outlined in the guide developed on the Educamídia Portal by authors Ferrari, Machado, and Ochs (2020). This guide generally leads us to understand that memes are units or pieces of content that synthesize information and have the ability to spread and go viral, ranging from broader contexts to more specific ones. We prioritize contextualizing how internet memes can disseminate all kinds of messages and content, whether good or bad, positive or offensive. This reality often goes unnoticed due to the immersion of these elements in our daily lives and digital communication.

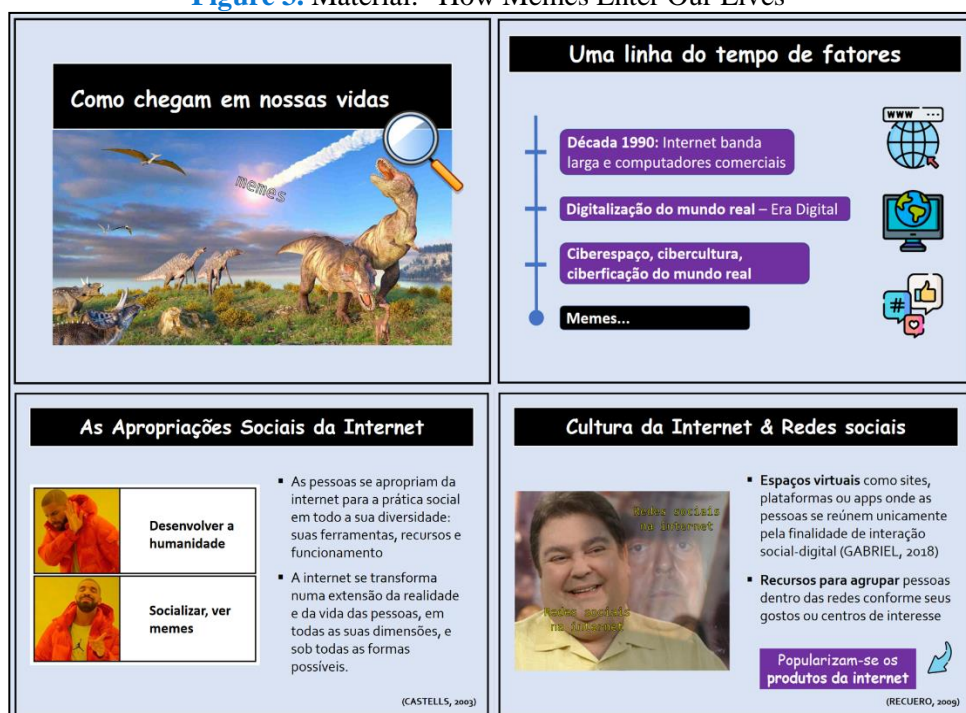
The answer to "What are these memes?" comes next. We work with students to understand the concept of memes, which existed long before the internet. The word "meme," so closely associated with digital culture, has older roots. It originated in the field of genetics

in 1976 when researcher Richard Dawkins coined it in his work "The Selfish Gene." In this book, Dawkins explores evolutionary theory from the perspective that genes play a fundamental role in the process. He introduced the word "meme" from the Greek term "mimeme," meaning "imitation." Since then, this word has come to designate the internet memes we know: pieces of humor of various types that synthesize messages, explore intertextuality, present multimodal combinations, and quickly become viral, spreading rapidly through digital social environments (Barreto, 2021).

Thinking about "How to teach the importance of memes," we focus on introducing students to the process by which memes have become part of our lives. We explore different forms of content consumption, from the process of cyberspaceization of the real world, as defined by Pierre Lévy (2001), to our complete immersion in the world of the Digital Era, characterized by constant connectivity, hypermediation, and immediacy. In this context, information spreads exponentially, and we highlight the works of communicator Martha Gabriel (2018) to illustrate this phenomenon. We emphasize how the internet has become a space of social appropriation, as described by Manuel Castells (2003), and how it has turned into fertile ground for the dissemination of content of interest to its own producers. Additionally, we address the research of Professor Raquel Recuero (2009), which emphasizes that this dynamic gains prominence on social networks, becoming part of the culture, language, and communication modes specific to the digital era.

Finally, we highlight memes as products of internet culture, pieces of deep influence in our lives through digital communication. In Figure 3, you will find the material developed based on the mentioned authors.

Figure 3. Material: "How Memes Enter Our Lives"



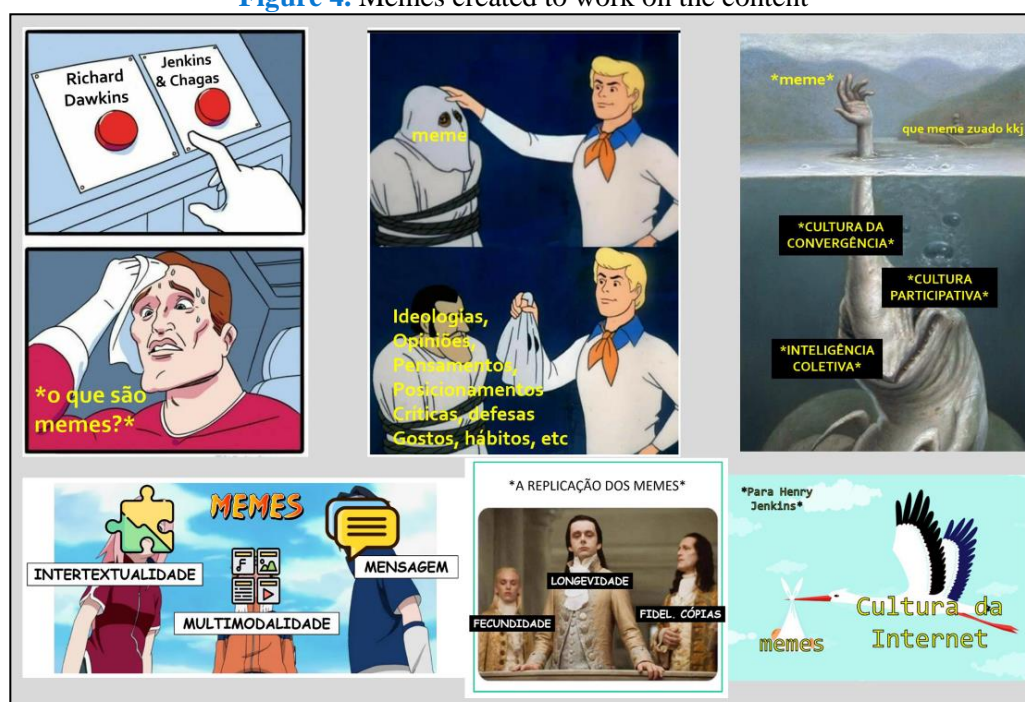
Font: Original creation.

As for the response to "How to teach memes to students," it likely illustrates a shift in teaching approach compared to older teaching paradigms, making room for innovation in terms of methodologies and resources used to address the content. As Masetto (2011, p. 3) observes regarding the pursuit of innovation in higher education:

There is a desire for innovations in almost all sectors of society, including education. Its motivating agents are represented by advocating the novelties of the information and communication technological era, the new conditions for knowledge, the interest in overcoming fragmentation in various fields of knowledge, the pursuit of interdisciplinary knowledge, recent revisions of careers and professional profiles, and the demands that the 21st century places on education in its various aspects.

So, what innovation is this? What resources do we employ to work with memes? Let's observe that, according to Barreto (2021), the conceptualization of memes, their implications in society and communication, as well as the factors that shape their environment and guide us towards a Culture of Memefication on the internet, can be complex, theoretical, and even dense issues. So, how do we work with memes? The answer is simple: with memes themselves. Just as we appropriate authors and concepts and present them in texts or PowerPoint presentations, we did the same but presented these concepts within memes. Following this path, we noticed the enthusiastic participation of students in studying and "translating" the memes presented based on the content, and especially in understanding this information in a relaxed manner. This promoted a more gradual and effective learning process. In Figure 4, you will find a compilation of memes that we created for the classes based on the concepts worked on.

**Figure 4.** Memes created to work on the content



Font: Original creation.

Finally, arriving at "How to assess this learning about memes?" the same dynamic as "What to teach them with" proved more effective: once again, through memes. As mentioned earlier, the study and teaching of memes in the Microcontent Production discipline were conducted from the perspective of Media Education. Authors Ferrari, Machado, and Ochs (2020), in their guide, highlight three main axes of skills and competencies that support this process: 1) Reading, 2) Writing, and 3) Participation. Reading involves the abilities of critical analysis, understanding, and legal appropriation of digital/media content that permeates cyberspace; writing is related to the capacities of self-expression, use, and understanding of digital/media tools and resources to produce information; and participation, finally, concerns the ability to use this knowledge positively to exercise citizenship in the Digital Era: participating in the digital and media environment in a respectful, conscious, and democratic manner.

Therefore, considering the meme as a media and digital language, as well as their contextualized broad influence in our lives, teaching and studying memes are essentially exercises in Media Education, encompassing each of these axes. Thus, after the exposure of each content, an evaluative activity aligned with one of the three axes of Media Education was introduced to the students. See Table 2 for more details on this organization.

**Frame 2.** Organization of evaluative activities

[1] EIXO ESCRITA	[2] EIXO LEITURA	[3] EIXO PARTICIPAÇÃO
<b>ACTIVITY I:</b> "FREE MEME"	<b>ACTIVITY II:</b> "DISSECTING WEB MEME"	<b>ACTIVITY III:</b> "[ME] MICROCONTENT FOR TEACHING"
<b>OBJECTIVE</b> Promote the creation of a free meme to familiarize students with the process of meme creation and production, based on the theory explained in the explanatory talks.	<b>OBJECTIVE</b> Promote the group-based "dissection" of memes previously collected from the web by students according to their preferences, aiming to familiarize them with the process of reading and interpreting memes, based on the theory presented in the explanatory talks.	<b>OBJECTIVE</b> Promote the creation of a meme synthesizing a content learned by the students, aiming to familiarize them, through mastery of reading/interpretation-writing/production of memes, with a useful and positive use of this resource in societal contexts.
<b>TOTAL RESULTS</b> 29 memes produced individually by the students	<b>TOTAL RESULTS</b> 8 internet memes dissected under critical analysis, in groups with a mix of courses, by the students	<b>TOTAL RESULTS</b> 28 teaching memes produced individually by the students

Font: Original creation.

Considering that memes are a type of digital microcontent and having sought and built this association throughout the development of the classes, we revisit the objective of Unit 2 in the Microcontent Production discipline, as outlined in our methodological aspects topic, still in Table 1: "Develop educational microcontent suitable for the audience profile based on the theoretical assumptions worked on." Thus, during the classes, all the theoretical presentations

and activities developed under the axes of Media Education led the students to Activity III, which consisted of producing educational microcontent in the form of memes. Therefore, as Ferrari, Machado, and Ochs (2020) define, the third axis was developed based on the appropriation of the competencies and skills of the other two, worked on in Activities I and II. In Table 3, you will find the organization of these presentations and activities throughout the 4 meetings, as mentioned in the introduction.

**Frame 3.** Organization of speeches and activities by meeting

<b>M E E T I N G 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO MEMES</b>
	<p><b>Class Organization:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What are memes? Concept   Internet memes   Examples   Memes as microcontent</li> <li>2) Memes in our Lives Internet culture   Internet history   Social appropriations of the internet</li> <li>3) Study of Memes Structure of memes: intertextuality, multimodality, and message</li> <li>4) Space for Discussion Throughout, there was an opportunity for the class to discuss and engage in dialogue</li> <li>5) Proposal for Activity I - Free Meme</li> </ol>
<b>M E E T I N G 2</b>	<b>ADVANCED STUDIES IN MEMES pt. 1</b>
	<p><b>Class Organization:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Introduction to Activity I: Free Meme</li> <li>2) Recapitulating the Previous Class Memes, units of cultural transmission   structure   examples</li> <li>3) The Replication of Memes Worldwide (Dawkins &amp; Recuero) Longevity: persistent and volatile   Fecundity: epidemic and fecund   Copy fidelity: replicators, mimetics, and metamorphics   examples</li> <li>4) Space for Discussion</li> </ol>
<b>M E E T I N G 3</b>	<b>ADVANCED STUDIES IN MEMES pt. 2</b>
	<p><b>Class Organization:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Why do we meme on the internet? Convergence culture   Participatory culture   Collective intelligence culture   Transmedia culture</li> <li>2) The intentionality of memes Cyberactivism: memes in politics, memes of collective action, expression memes, public discussion memes, advertising memes, etc.</li> <li>3) Proposal for Activity II: Dissecting web memes</li> </ol>
<b>M E E T I N G 4</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND CLOSURE ON MEMES</b>
	<p><b>Class Organization:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Recapitulating previous classes All content was quickly and succinctly recapitulated through memes to allocate the majority of the class period for the activity.</li> <li>2) Proposal for Activity III: [ME] Teaching Microcontent</li> <li>3) Development and presentation of the activity in class</li> </ol>

Font: Original creation.

Therefore, we conclude the challenge of working with memes in higher education, in an elective course on Microcontent Production. We approached memes in association with the

microcontent format, anchoring their study in the three axes of Media Education. We integrated the study of memes into the proposed bibliography of the course, connecting them with the proposed course bibliography, which specifically addressed microcontent, complementing it with information about memes, digital culture, and their influence on our lives. Additionally, we reflected on our teaching stance based on Veiga (2014) and Lima and Grillo (2008) and undertook this endeavor from the perspective of a teaching approach centered on the constructivist relationship between student, teacher, and the object of knowledge.

Drawing on Morin (2000, p. 20), "knowledge is not a mirror of things in the external world. All perceptions are, at the same time, brain translations and reconstructions resulting from the various ways the subject relates and experiences the world." In this sense, Morin identifies three types of errors related to the possession (or illusion of possession) of knowledge, which we can immediately relate to common sense about teaching mentioned by Lima and Grillo (2008): Mental Errors, Intellectual Errors, and Errors of Reason.

To the first, we see that "each mind is also endowed with the potential for self-deception [...], which is the permanent source of errors and illusions" (Morin, 2000, p. 21). To the second, we see that "our systems of ideas (theories, doctrines, and ideologies) are not only subject to error but also protect the errors and illusions inscribed in them" (MORIN, 2000, p. 22). And to the third, we see that "true rationality, open by nature, dialogues with the reality that resists it," and does not isolate it (MORIN, 2000, p. 23). Rationality, therefore, for Morin, is not cold, deterministic, calculative, and mathematical, for that is rationalism – when virtue becomes vice. And this rationalism, this vicious state, "rationalism that ignores beings, subjectivity, affectivity, and life is irrational. Rationality must recognize the part of affection, love, and repentance" (Morin, 2000, p. 23).

Therefore, as we transpose these errors, these illusions of knowledge possession, we can see them materialized in the common sense of teaching in the perspective of the teacher as a transmitter of ready and immutable knowledge: [1] we can easily consider our past and mechanized learning as a permanent source of knowledge, clear of errors and flaws; [2] we can easily fall into the temptation of elevating ourselves, from our long training career, to the position of knowledge possessors and the illusion that, in the classroom, we are the only ones with something to offer to students, without watering or cultivating the object of knowledge jointly; which ultimately, [3] can easily lead us to the rationalism of a teaching centered on content, deterministic, isolating the roles of teacher and learner and completely ignoring each of the subjectivities present in the classroom – an environment that well illustrates the plurality of a world.

Consequently, in the end, we achieved four classes of a dialogical process, abandoning the mechanized and purposeless replication of content. We witnessed with enthusiasm the students' participation and the results achieved: they successfully appropriated the reading, interpretation, writing, and criticism of memes, as well as the social-digital-media participation in the contemporary environment through these memes and their agenda of interest. They then

continued in the course with the professors in the next microcontent activities, building on the acquired knowledge.

The way we approached knowledge transmission, the relationship between teacher, student, and the object of knowledge according to Lima and Grillo (2008), combined with the reflective questioning outlined by Veiga (2014), is what we consider to have sustained the success of this endeavor. This approach included a teaching stance based on dialogue with students, valuing subjectivities, using memes, digital languages, visual resources, and activities. Furthermore, we emphasized the importance of debating the purpose of each of these choices to support our teaching method, in order to address the plural reality of the contemporary classroom.

## 5 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In the conclusion of this account, we initially highlight positions on teaching practices based on different formats of relationships among academic actors and objects of knowledge, as well as the different roles assigned to each, according to the perspective ranging from common sense to the appreciation of horizontal dynamics in the classroom, as proposed by Lima and Grillo (2008).

As we delve into the teaching and learning process about (and with) memes in the Microcontent Production course, we report on the organization and development of classes and activities, aligning teaching practices with the questions "Why?", "What?", "How?", "With what?", and "How to assess?", which underpin the purpose of each lesson, according to Veiga (2014).

Furthermore, we reflect on the importance of adopting perspectives that value the subjectivities of contemporary classrooms – such as the relationship between teacher, student, and the object of knowledge – with direct attention to Morin's (2000) considerations on contemporary conceptions of knowledge possession.

By considering these aspects, we hope that this article contributes to the improvement of teaching practices, providing insights and reflections on lesson development, from defining questions to organizing content and selecting appropriate activities. Valuing student perspectives and adopting flexible and inclusive pedagogical approaches can enrich the teaching and learning process, allowing for a more meaningful and engaging experience for everyone involved in the classroom.



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