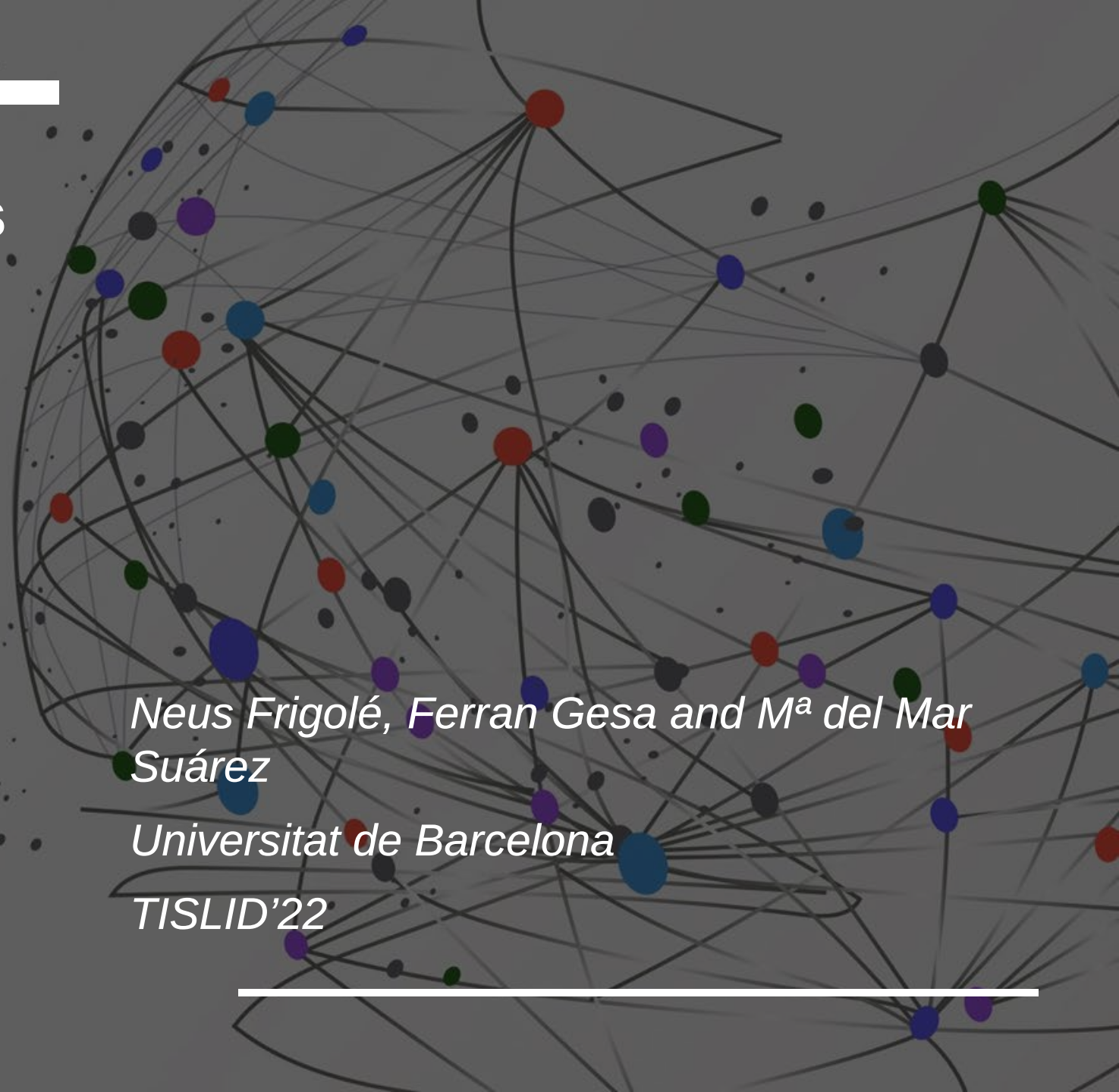
Using MALL and memes to consolidate grammar knowledge. A gamified experience in the English as a foreign language classroom



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TISLID'22

GRAMMAR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- One of the most **difficult areas** to acquire (DeKeyser, 2005).
- Seen as necessary but **boring** by FL learners (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratman, 2011; Andrews, 2003; Jean & Simard, 2011).
- Can even be the cause of withdrawal from FL classes (Vakili & Mohammed, 2020).

HOWEVER…

- **Essential** to succeed (Thu, 2009) and **helpful** in FL learning (Schulz, 1996, 2001).
- Perceived more positively at **advanced** rather than beginner levels (Etherington, 2006).

- Better grammar learning if **contextualised** (Morelli, 2003) and more **innovative** ways of teaching grammar should be considered (Pawlak, 2021).
- Current **social media applications** (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp) can be used in combination with other conventional language learning and teaching methods (Kamasak et al., 2020).

MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL)

- MALL has proven to be effective in EFL learning (Kamasak et al., 2020).
- Mobile technology can **enhance** learners' **second language acquisition** (Viberg & Grönlund, 2012) and **improve** L2 **language performance** (Kamasak et al., 2020).
- Shows better results in terms of **language proficiency** (Cheng et al., 2010; Oberg & Daniels, 2011; Petersen & Markiewicz, 2008; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007).
- The use of mobile phones in the classroom can help develop **critical thinking**, increase **learning** outcomes (Poláková & Klimova, 2019) and acquire **learning autonomy** (Kamasak et al., 2020).
- Can help improve not only receptive and productive skills, but also **grammar and vocabulary** learning and retention (Gael & Elmiana, 2021).
- **Promising results** on vocabulary recall (Kayali & Altuntas, 2021), listening and speaking skills (Viberg & Grönlund, 2012).

MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL)

- MALL (Burston, 2014) and gaming mechanics (Marczewski, 2013) have proven to encourage **positive attitude** in students.
- Mobile phones can be used to increase students' **motivation** in learning English (Alamer & Al Khateeb, 2021) and fun for studying a language (Kamasak et al., 2020)
- They enhance students' **internal motivation** because they enjoy using them while learning (Gael & Elmiana, 2021).
- **Flexible**: learners can use it when and where they want (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).
- Possibility to associate classroom work with a digital medium to provide **FL social practice** (Jones & Hafner, 2012).

MEMES

- Informal multimodal genre with visual and written input and a humorous intent which spreads rapidly (Dawkins, 1976).

- Tool to develop **multiliteracies** (Procházka, 2014) and promote **digital communicative competence** (Ruan & Medwell, 2020).

- Use of informal images has lead to positive effects on increasing students' **engagement** and **participation** in the classroom (Baysac, 2017; Purnama, 2017; Vasudevan et al., 2010) and intrinsic, integrative and instrumental **motivation** (Purnama et al., 2017).

- Virtually no research available combining memes, gaming mechanics and MALL in the FL classroom.

AIMS AND PARTICIPANTS

Objective

To determine students' perception of MALL and memes as a tool to **consolidate grammar knowledge** in the FL university classroom.

Participants

41 Early Childhood Education students (ECES) attending a compulsory EFL course:

- First-year students, proficiency ranging from A2 to C1, mean level: A2-B1
- Groups of four / five students → 9 groups in total

16 Media Studies students as "expert raters"

- Third-year students, proficiency ranging from B1 to C1, mean level: B2
- Working in pairs → 8 pairs in total

METHODOLOGY

The gamified project was divided into **three rounds**, in each of which:

1. Grammar point taught through **Just-in-time Teaching (JiTT)**

2. ECES **chose a meme** (Rounds 1 and 2) or **created** one (Round 3)

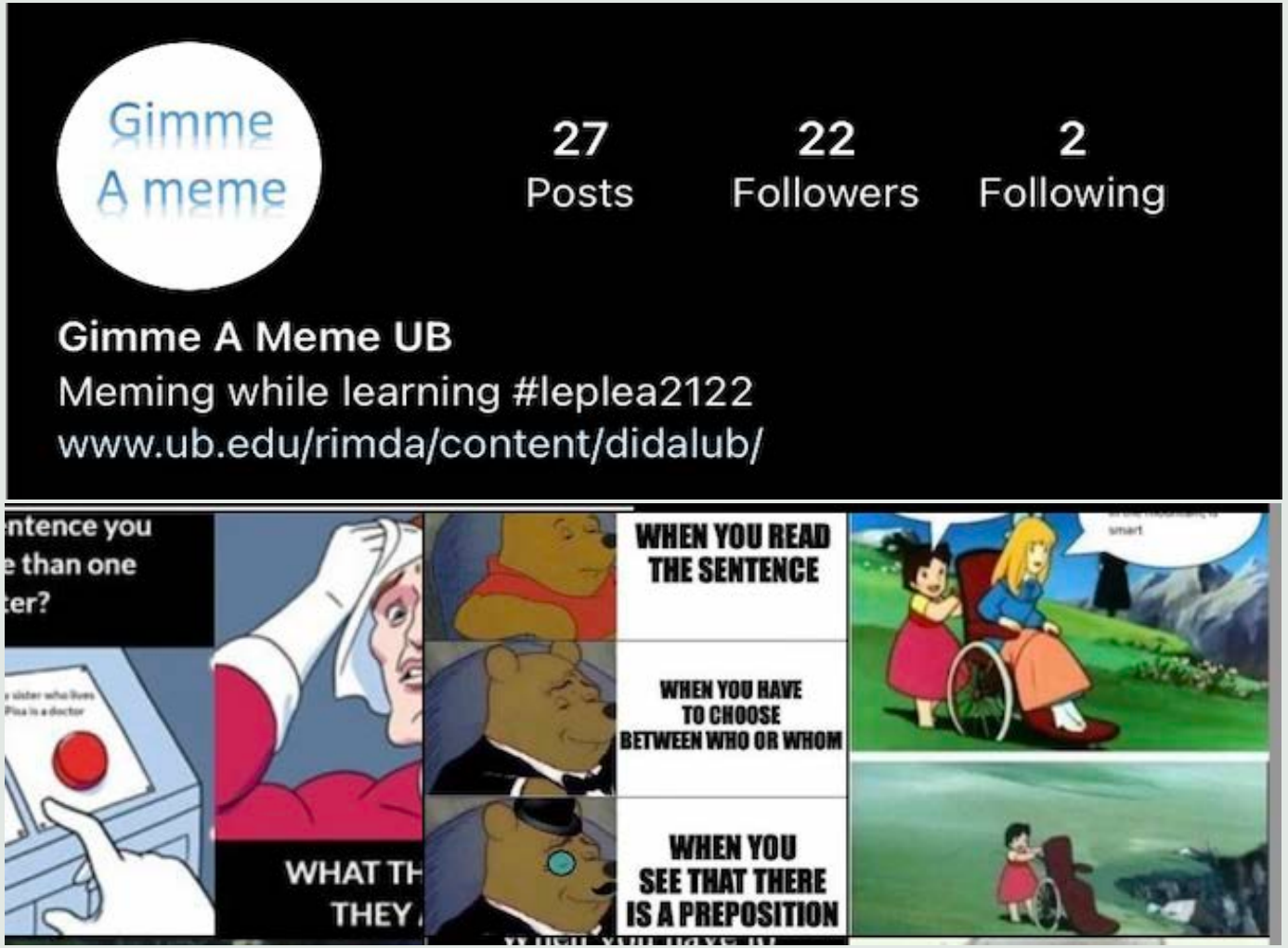
3. ECES provided a **caption**, **hashtags** and **grammatical explanation**

4. Memes displayed on **Instagram**

5. ECES **voted** for the best meme based on four criteria

6. Top three memes **analysed** and **rated** on the same criteria by **Media Studies students**

INSTAGRAM AND MEMES



INSTAGRAM AND MEMES

gimmeamemeub2122 Round 3! Group 7 – Rosalía also loves "that"

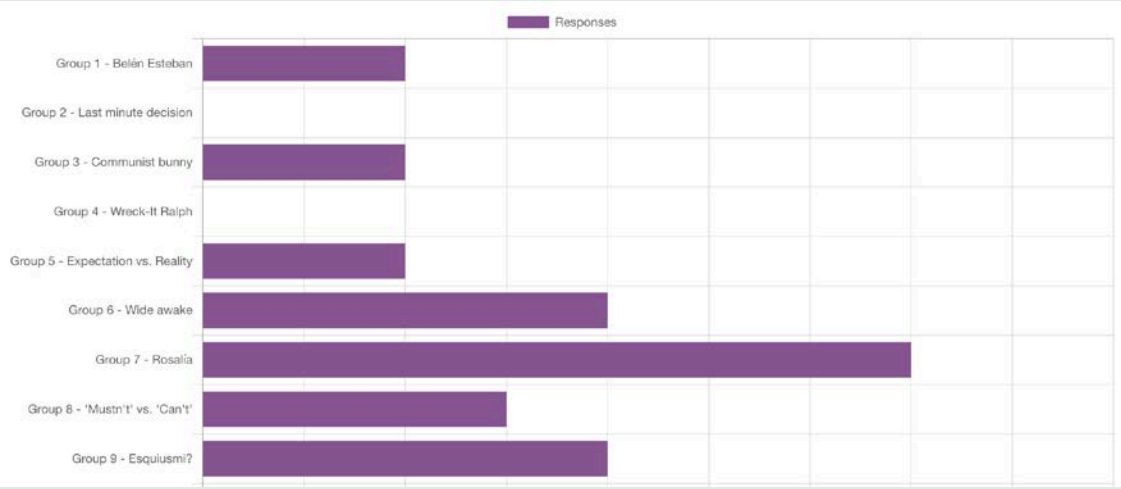
Source: https://www.fmcordoba.com/amp/noticia/fm-cordoba/los-memes-de-ibai-llanos-y-el-beso-entre-rosalia-y-rauw_310259&id=310259

#WeAreRosalia #TeamRosalia #FunnyMeme #RauwAlejaja #RelativeMemes #leplea2122

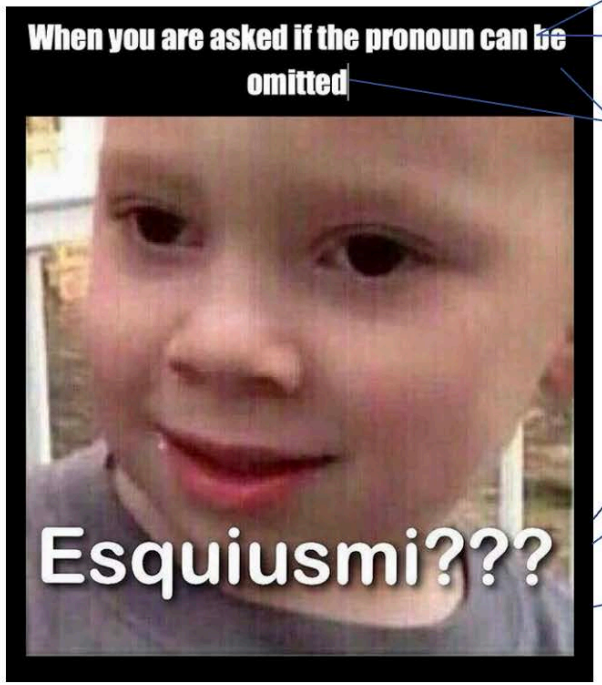
Grammatical explanation: In this situation, we have a famous YouTuber (Ibai) and two celebrities (Rauw Alejandro and Rosalía) showing their love. Ibai represents all the relative pronouns, which we don't know how/when to use. Rauw Alejandro represents "that", which is the option we always choose as the easiest one. And, finally, we can see ourselves (students) reflected in Rosalía when we have to choose an option: we always go for the option we know, the easiest and the one we think sounds best, without thinking much.

VOTING AND ANALYSIS

Voting on Moodle



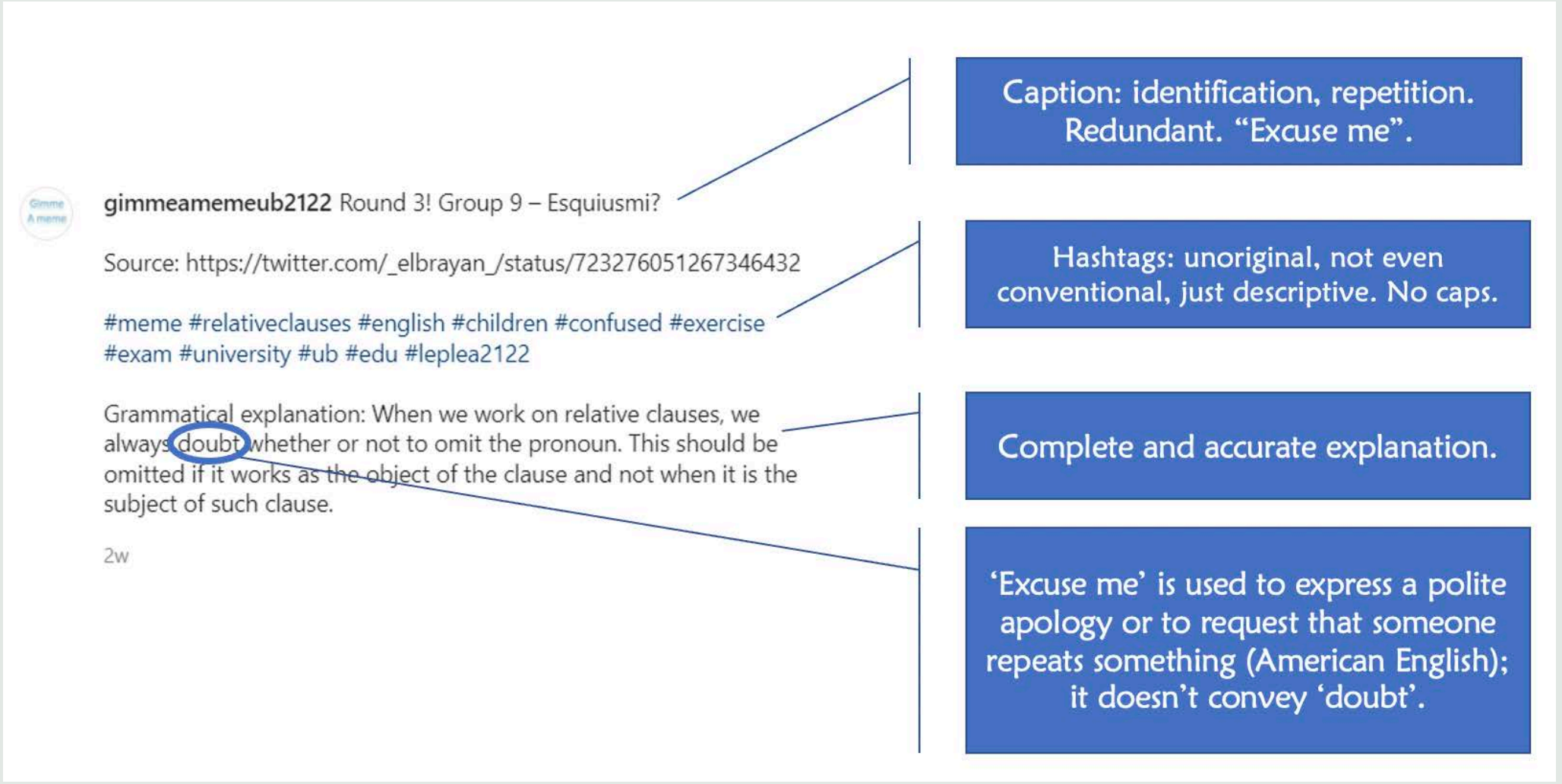
Analysis and feedback by Media Studies students



- Typical meme image (familiarity) + text in a sequential mode (top + on image)
- Relay relation with the image "When..."
- Verb phrase wrongly split (can be – omitted) + cursor → sloppiness
- Font type, size and colour → meme-like on top, not at bottom
- 'Esquiusmi' → anchorage, describing the child's facial expression
- Phonological writing for humorous purposes + 3 question marks → standard for emphasis, but not meme-like

MEDIA STUDIES STUDENTS' ANALYSIS

Analysis and feedback by Media Studies students



QUESTIONNAIRE

After Round 3, ECES answered a **questionnaire** enquiring about how useful they found using memes, Instagram and mobile phones to consolidate English grammar.

Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The meme project helped me to learn / consolidate English grammar.						
The meme project has increased my motivation to learn English grammar.						
The meme project was a fun way to practice English grammar.						
The meme project was an innovative way to practice English grammar.						
Using the mobile and Instagram was an engaging and useful way to learn English grammar						

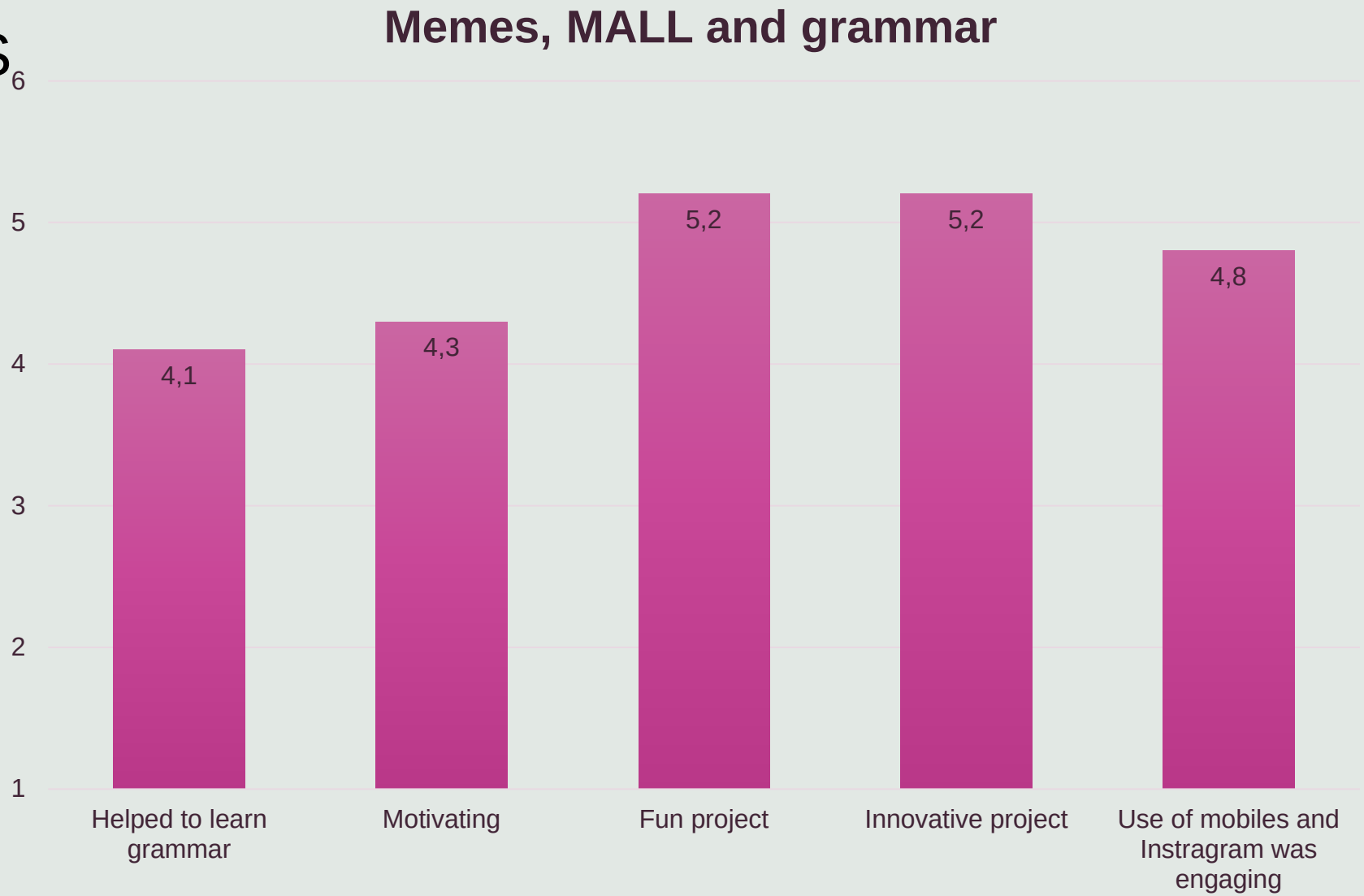
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Working on informal genres (i.e., memes) has helped to improve my communicative competence in English.						
Integrating mobile phones and social media into the classroom was a fun way to be taught English as a foreign language.						
Integrating mobile phones and social media into the classroom was an innovative way to be taught English as a foreign language.						
Integrating mobile phones and social media into the classroom has increased my motivation to learn English as a foreign language.						

Any other comments regarding the use of mobile phones and social media in the classroom?

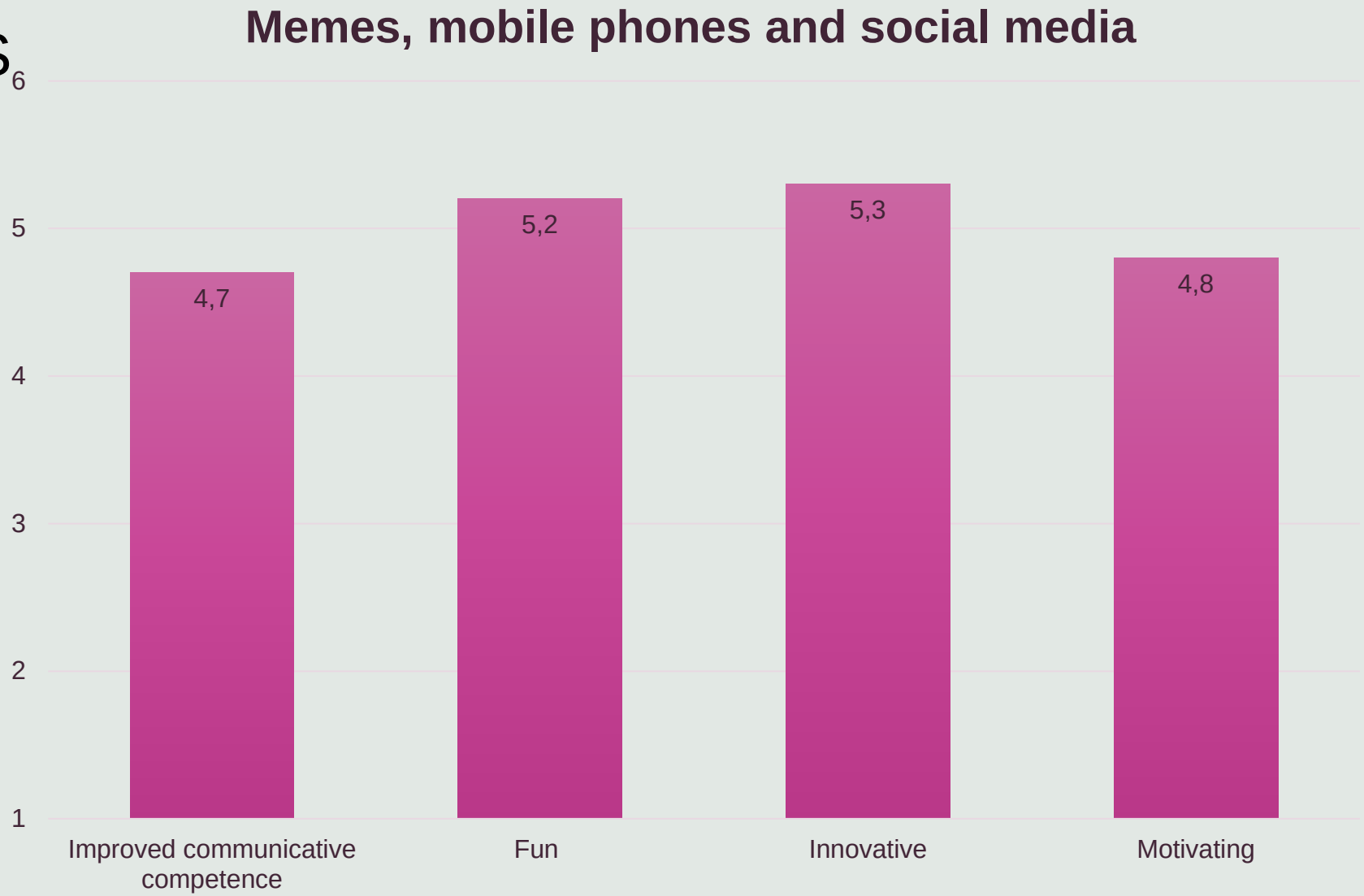
RESULTS
(N=41)



1 = Strongly disagree / 6 = Strongly agree

RESULTS

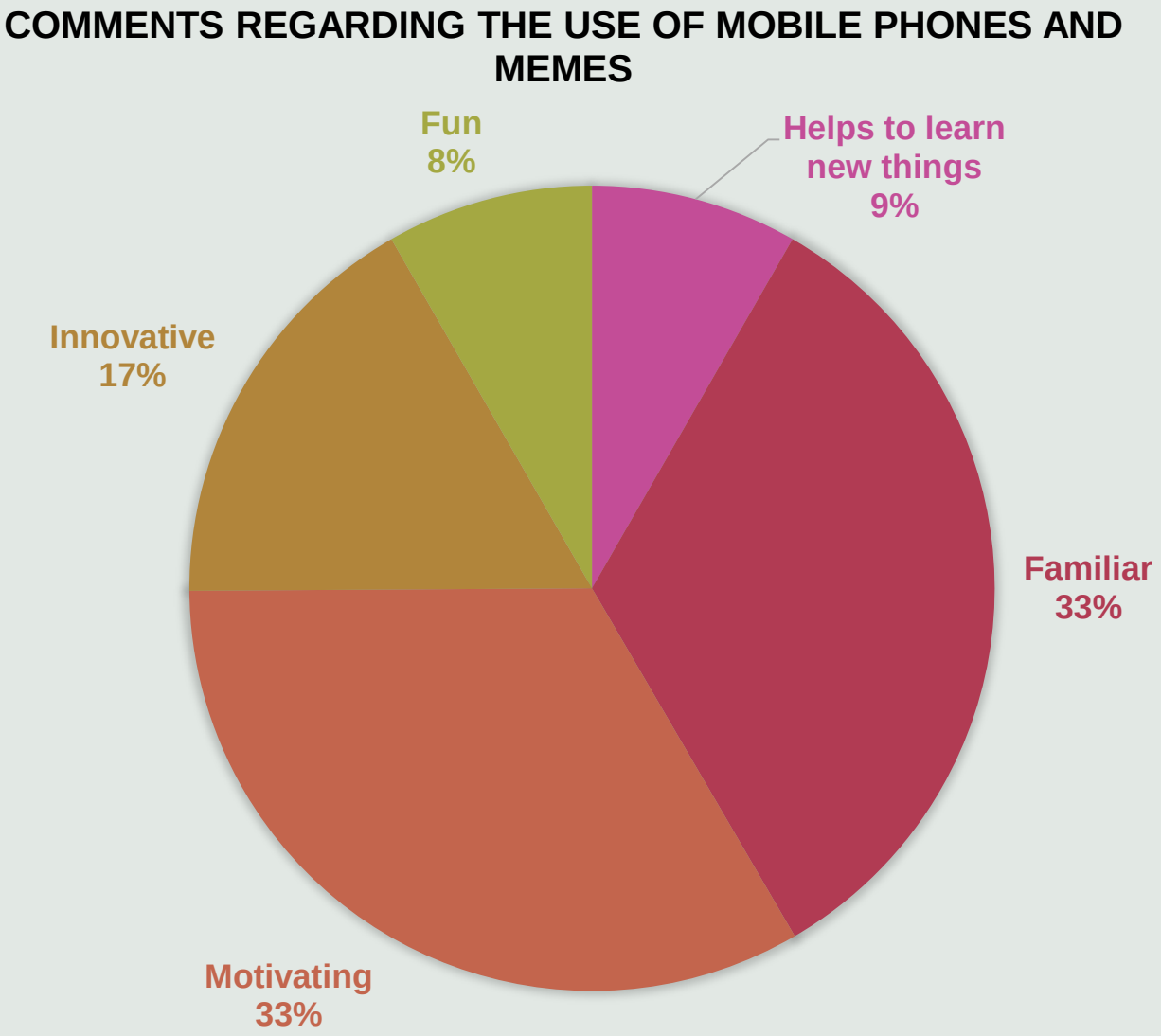
(N=41)



1 = Strongly disagree / 6 = Strongly agre

RESULTS

(N=41)


COMMENTS REGARDING THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND MEMES
Fun
8%
Helps to learn new things
9%
Innovative
17%
Familiar
33%
Motivating
33%

DISCUSSION

- Successful in terms of **engagement and participation**:
  - Familiarity with the genre in both L1 and FL.
  - **Informal genre**, associated to leisure and social networking; not to academic lectures.
  - Bringing out-of-class activities into the university classroom.
  - Provided them with FL social practice.

- **Innovation** in the FL classroom: new forms of teaching grammar (Pawlak, 2021).

- No measure of learning. Further research needed with more empirical approaches.

- Maybe no grammar learning, but students might have learnt about **multimodality** thanks to the feedback received after each of the three rounds.

DISCUSSION

- Students feel MALL and social media brings English closer to them because mobile phones are part of their daily lives. As they are **popular** among students, they have proved to be **motivational tools** to be used in education and various learning activities (Hashim et al., 2017).

- Using mobile phones and social media was **engaging and motivating** because they enjoy using them while learning (Gael & Elmiana, 2021).

- Quite a **motivating experience** for the participants (low-stake situation): increasing intrinsic motivation. **Eye-opener** for more out-of-class practice?

DISCUSSION

- Participants pointed out that implementing **mobile technologies** in the lessons was an innovative way to consolidate grammar and avoid the **Presentation – Practice – Production** (PPP) approach (e.g., understanding the grammar point and practicing it using drills and exercises) often used to teach this skill (Larsen-Freeman, 2009).

- **Innovative** ways of teaching grammar should be considered (Pawlak, 2021).

- Students are aware of the potential of mobile phones for academic purposes such as to consolidate their grammar skills: beneficial for other skills? Many respondents point at its usefulness for **vocabulary learning** (Alemi et al., 2012; Kayali & Altuntas, 2021; Polakova & Klimova, 2019).

- However, most of the participants didn’t have the feeling of **learning** new things. So, was it just useful to **consolidate** knowledge, but not to learn new one?

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

- Results based on students' perceptions and questionnaire; **no factual data collected**:
    - Good teaching innovation approach, but more research on the actual learning potential of the use of mobile phones and memes is needed.

- Students' perception and results may be **biased**: gamified project and prizes, compulsory in-class activity.

- More research is needed:
    - Applied to grammar in this project: **what about other skills**?
    - Any improvement in **digital communicative competence** and **literacy**?
    - Results on participants' perceptions of **gamification.**

THANK YOU!!

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