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EDUC (7110) – Master of Arts Research Report

'Meme-orising' visual literacy in the classroom: Investigating the role of meme in literacy development

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Languages and Literacies in Education by coursework and research report at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Irene Stephanie Clayton

Student Number: 321236

Protocol Number: 2017ECE029M

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Supervisors: Dr Jean Reid and Dr Dominic Griffiths

Declaration of original work:

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Abstract

As educators, it is our responsibility to be conscious of new resources that become available to the learners that we teach. As a result of an exponential technological development within society, new forms of visual and digital texts have emerged, and are employed as part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices. Among the most prominent forms of learners' visual literacy are memes. Memes are an engaging and effective visual text that constantly develop so as to appeal to their viewers and target audiences. In order to provide a fair and comprehensive overview of visual literacy resources to the learners that we teach, educators must include memes in their teachings. Memes are valuable resources that can activate learners' reading, viewing and writing skills. They also success at varying degrees, which enables all learners to be able to produce their own. On the basis that learners willingly engage with memes as part of their out-of-school literacy practices, it is essential that these learners critically appreciate the composition, purpose and relevance behind the memes with which they engage. Learners' out-of-school literacy practices inform their interrogation of content in the classroom because these develop their ways of 'reading'. Thus, as with the technology that has adapted to account for new devices, educators must 'meme-orise' visual literacy education, by adapting as well.

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CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy	9
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Chapter One: Introduction

In the introduction to Janks' *Doing critical literacy*, she writes "it is important to make everyday texts an object of enquiry in critical literacy because they seem so unimportant. They come and go…we barely notice them. Yet, these are the texts that present our world to us" (2013: 113). This position is central to the claim of this research report, that a meme has become, in our contemporary digital world, an everyday text which connects and presents ideas to us. While memes may seem frivolous they are, in fact, a central part of our digital literacy.

Coined by Richard Dawkins (1976: 92), the term meme is "an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture". Memes often become viral, which means that they spread rapidly because they are shared

> from one person to another via the internet. [Memes can] be anything from an image to an email or video file; however, the most common meme is an image of a person or animal with a funny or witty caption. The proliferation of social media has led to internet memes spreading very quickly and reaching more people (Beal, 2017).

Because they are seen and shared by people, it is easy to overlook memes as authentic visual literacy, but this is precisely why they should be considered as beneficial to literacy development. Their everyday label validates their substance and influence on literacy practices. While memes may not seem as 'everyday' as a milk carton or food packaging, they are a frequent use of visual literacy that is often overlooked when in fact it is among the most widely accessed forms of visual literacy (Fortune, 2016). For this reason, this research report will argue whether memes can improve and enhance critical and reflective thinking in the classroom space. It is interesting to consider whether memes enhance learners' understanding of material such as their literature setworks or the humourous devices that are examined in the classroom. Furthermore, memes are central to learners' out-of-school literacy practices. Learners communicate through social media; they engage with each other online through words but also through images, including memes (Quintero, 2016). It is interesting to consider the varying

degrees to which memes can be interpreted. For instance, multimodality considers "how people communicate and interact with each other, not just through writing [words and language] (which is one mode) but also through speaking, gesture, [touch], gaze, [movement] and visual forms (which are many modes)" (Kress, 2010: 182). Memes often serve as a catalyst for a discussion, humour or social and political commentary. It is thus that the basis of this research seeks to explore the extent to which memes have influenced learners' literacy practices outside the classroom and, in doing so, should adjust the literacy practices within it. Memes are not currently directly addressed as visual literacy in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) document, which means that their effects and relevance have not been assessed officially in the classroom. However, the CAPS document does refer to multimodal and visual texts, and states that "the computer screen [is] a rich source of material" (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 23). This suggests that memes have the potential to be examined in the classroom at the discretion of the educator. It is important to incorporate all forms of visual literacy in assessment in order fully to encompass multiliteracies, which is "the proliferation of diverse modes of communication through new communications technologies such as the internet, multimedia, and digital media, and the existence of growing linguistic and cultural diversity due to increased transnational migration" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 3). Multiliteracies include many visual texts that provoke thought and interrogation. As Moje, Chiechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo and Callazzo (2004: 39) write, "learning in any context involves … drawing from multiple funds [that] relate to youths' identity development." Understanding often extends from other sources. "Building bridges simply connects people from one kind of knowledge or discourse to other kinds" (Moje, Chiechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo and Callazzo: 2004: 47), which suggests that there is potential in memes as forms of literacy.

Background to the study:

The idea for my research was based on a question posed to me by a learner during my first year of teaching. He asked, "Ma'am, why isn't there such a thing as English Lit.?" I happened to have papers in my hands so I said, "of course there is, here's your next poem!". He didn't find me to be humourous, but I knew what he was asking. He questioned why there was not an alternative to English Home Language in the same way as Mathematical Literacy exists as an alternative to Mathematics. The problem is that this learner is one of many at the school in which I teach who

misunderstands the meaning of 'literacy,' to mean 'simpler,' when in fact it relates to the very everyday texts and popular culture that learners prioritise over the school work that they hope to simplify. These learners think that doing subjects that test 'literacy' means that the work is simpler. The concept of 'literacy' has been expanded to include the "ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture" (UNESCO, 2006: 1). This means that a concern of our educational system is that there are learners who interact with visual texts on a daily basis without recognising their potential as texts because they do not equate 'literacy' with visual texts or as part of their out-of-school literacy practices. English literacy is the ability to "interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy, which commonly signifies interpretation of a written or printed text" (MESH Guide, 2017). Moreover, Heick (2015) argues that "literacy can be reduced to the ability to make sense of ideas, [which] often means reading, but also viewing, observing, writing, creating, designing–each a kind of literacy, and each with nuanced fluencies of their own." It is for this reason that the argument for multimodal texts to be incorporated into the classroom exists; all learners must realise that literacy engages multiple skills that develop critical and analytical thinking. Educators should be encouraged to be creative in their teaching of content and assessment methods because learners' out-of-school practices have changed.

Learners consult their social media applications in the same way as their parents consult the morning newspapers (*Forbes*, 2016). In the same way as the medium from which information has been received has adapted over time, so too must the texts on which learners are examined. Learners in the school in which I teach are so familiar with social media that they are visually literate. They engage in communication through text messaging, emoticons, picture messaging and the sharing of videos. I have found that if there is an accompanying visual, few words are necessary in order for meaning to be made; this is a direct result of learners' digital practices. Moreover, Jewitt (2011: 194) asserts that "the visual is no longer an adjunct illustration to writing; rather, image is presented as a first step in accessing the effect of language, with image often coming first." A characteristic of a meme is that memes are visual images with very few words, thus meaning and understanding can be achieved. However, with memes being image-reliant, it is possible for viewers to be confused because they have few words or no contexts on which to base their interpretations. Thus, context or further information might be the necessary

second step to which Jewitt (2011) alludes. I often resort to visual imagery in the worksheets that I create, or to attempted drawings on the white board just to create understanding because many of the learners in the school in which I work cannot conceptualise the principles being discussed in class. The fact that my learners require a visual to create meaning suggests that once learners see, they understand. This is not to say that written text is superfluous or that words and digits have become unnecessary, but rather it suggests that learners' ways of reading have developed, not diminished. Thus, it is important to consider the possibility that memes as a cultural phenomenon can provoke insight and encourage the natural application of humourous devices such as irony and parody, to be taught in the classroom. Moreover, "to read a visual text critically implies an understanding of the way in which the text has been constructed in order to communicate" (Elkins, 2009: 196). However, viewers who lack understanding of a visual construction are unable to approach these texts critically. The ability to 'read' visual material forms part of learners' 'cultural capital'. Cultural capital is what Bourdieu (1986) explained as "cultural knowledge that serves as the currency that helps us navigate a culture and alters our experiences and the opportunities available to us" (*Sociology Live*, 2015). This means that the same visual can be understood in different ways because the viewers of the visual have varying skills and literacy levels. Thus, with the prominence of memes on social media, memes have potential to be addressed in the classroom because while many learners may have the skills to 'read' them, others may not.

A purpose of this research report is to consider how learners' out-of-school literacy practices can benefit their understanding of visual literacy in the classroom. Memes allow for this as they extend beyond traditional modes of visual literacy, thus educators must attempt a collaboration between learners' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices. Marchetti and Cullen (2016: 41) argue that through the use of multimodality in the classroom, educators can attempt integrating memes into the classroom, and determine "how [they] correlate not only to contemporary society but to specific cognitive processes." Such versatility in text selection and teaching methods is possible as there are educators who source multiliteracies to create materials to which learners can relate. This is because text selection extends to the "new communication technologies such as the internet, multimedia, social media and digital media" (Walsh, 2010: 2) that learners use. This research thus considers whether memes provide the ability to gauge real-world problems

from the various meme representations on different platforms to generate multimodal understanding.

I think of memes and other online texts as what I have called 'the digital literacy lifestyle,' because digital literacy is an increasingly prominent practice. Heick (2015: 1) classifies digital literacy as "the ability to interpret and design nuanced communication across fluid digital forms." Thus, while conventional literacy skills are applied to digital literacy practices, there is an inherent overlap between these skills and their integration with print, media and technology. Memes circulate through these platforms. There is a meme for almost everything, and they extend towards multiple branches of what is already taught in English language classes in schools, namely humour, language, intertextuality and social issues. Moreover, there are numerous memes based on many of the setworks that are currently being taught in schools. In addition to reviewing whether learners' out-of-school literacy practices can benefit their in-school literacy development, this research report also undertakes to see whether learners' visual literacy skills can help enhance their understandings of their literature setworks. The learner who asked about 'English Lit.' did not want to focus on different aspects of the subject, he just wanted to reduce the content being taught, believing that the work would become simpler.

Visual Literacy need not be limited to advertisements and cartoons. Especially since many learners being assessed in schools have access to social media and its contents, visual literacy in schools should incorporate texts that extend towards learners' out-of-school literacy practices so as to enhance learners' value of the literacy skill. The principles of new literacy studies (NLS) argue that

> literacy [is] something that people [do] in the world and in society, not just in their heads, and should be studied as such. [NLS sees] literacy as a sociocultural phenomenon, rather than a mental phenomenon. Literacy [is] a social and cultural achievement centred in social and cultural practices (Gee, 2015: 47).

Even the habit of "digital communication has transformed literacy practices and assumed great importance in the functioning of workplace, recreational, and community contexts" (Mills, 2011: 246), which validates alternative forms of text selection, social practices and skills. Learners' use

of social media is important because it facilitates the spreading of memes, by way of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Whatsapp. Learners' exposure to and use of social media allows for this research because it forms part of their out-of-school literacy practices. Memes as visual literacy promote modern texts that address topical issues that promote critical thinking. In addition, "the emergence of hybrid digital texts…calls for new understandings of genre and textual features, [and] new technical proficiencies with computers and other communication devices must be constantly learned for the rapid production, processing and transmission of electronic texts" (Mills, 2011: 248). It thus an objective of this research report to consider whether memes can inform educators' own teaching practices as well as the resources that they use to enforce them.

Problem Statement:

There are many new forms of literacy practices that have arisen with the advancement of technology. The same learners who engage in these literacy practices out-of-school are the ones being assessed for their literacy abilities in the classroom. However, these literacy practices are not always recognised in the traditional classroom setting, even though memes are among the most prominent literacy practices among learners (Fortune, 2016). Memes can illustrate key academic concepts visually. Learners are familiar with social media and its contents, specifically the memes that appear online. I will argue that since memes form part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices, that they are instrumental in developing learners' literacy appreciation.

I believe that memes can establish the critical appreciation and application of key academic concepts taught in the classroom. I currently teach learners who actively use social media sites and make verbal reference to popular memes in conversation. Learners who make these meme references employ an active understanding of the humour and grammar inherent to the relevant memes. The learners that I teach also demonstrate that they are visual learners, whereby they understand better when they are able to visualise. Images and films help reinforce concepts more clearly, thus I believe that there is a direct correlation between learners' visual literacy habits and their use of social media.

Upon assessing that memes enhance learners' cognitive understanding of work in the classroom, my intentions are to draw an obvious connection for learners to realise that the 'visuals' and 'literacy' taught in school, are practiced out-of-school. Memes make critical commentaries on

social and cultural issues. It would be interesting to examine how it is that learners find meaning in the subject matter of memes. There may be various reasons that could prompt learners to share memes. As Heick (2015: 1) argues, "technology improves literacy only insofar as it improves a learner's ability to identify, analyse, evaluate and create media." In other words, it is not merely enough for learners to engage with visual content on media platforms, they should be able to make sense of them as well. It is for this reason that assessing learners' out-of-school literacy practices is crucial as it evaluates how they interpret the media with which they engage. Memes are capable of intense analysis and provide different anchors for meaning, and "increasingly [visual images] provide the starting point for subject English, and [highlight] the new role of the visual…with respect to how visual resources feature in the classroom and the discursive spaces these are employed to create" (Jewitt, 2011: 199).

Aims and Objectives:

- To determine what role memes can play in improving visual literacy comprehension in learners on the classroom space.
- To bridge the gap between in-school and out-of-school practices to generate effective understanding of visual literacy.
- To determine whether learners understand the message behind the content that they share online.
- To identify if the content that learners share online lends itself to the application of work taught in the classroom.
- To determine what makes memes an effective tool in enhancing learners' visual literacy skills.
- To evaluate the extent to which memes can be used to enhance the understanding of literature read in schools.

Rationale:

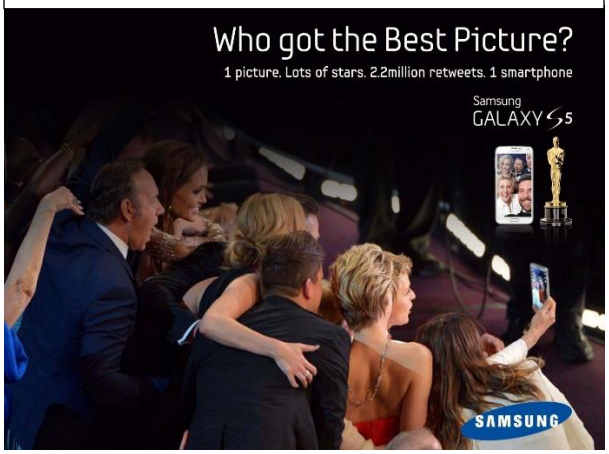
The rationale for this research report is to attempt to show that memes are significant enough digital texts to encapsulate all the necessary literacy skills required to interpret and understand memes as other forms of visual literacy. Learners are already examined on visual content, thus it is worth considering whether memes offer value to visual literacy development. This research is

important because it seeks to determine whether memes provoke thought and discussion of visual content based on socially and academically relevant concepts that are taught in schools. It further aims to consider whether learners' out-of-school practices can promote understanding and application of the visual literacy skills that are practiced in the classroom.

The potential of this research report is to appeal to educators' approaches to teaching key sections of work. For instance, there may be value in exploring whether memes enhance learners' understanding of key elements of their literature setworks. Currently, learner-participants only respond to short-based and essay-based questions on any given setwork. If a meme can conceive understanding of the material beyond these existing forms of assessment, then educators can be presented with additional methodologies on which to apply their teachings. Moreover, this research report considers that value of 'meme-orising' visual literacy to promote the teaching of literature setworks because they extend to making intertextual references. Knobel and Lankshear (2005: 9) note that most memes make or allude to intertextual references within society or popular culture. They add that "these cross-references to popular movies and [society] clearly tap into an affinity space that recognises this intertextuality" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2005: 9). These cross-references are used to develop humour and social commentaries. Modern memes that make reference to current incidences often go viral, suggesting that societal or popular culture awareness exists within the viewers of memes. Popular memes are often developed or updated to address how opinion or perception of the meme's content has evolved. By implication, this suggests that many memes are understood by their viewers and that a skilled analysis of these memes is possible. To provide a contemporary depiction of popular memes that promote understanding and critical literacy, or that can be evolved to develop commentaries, consider a few examples:

Text A is an image from the 86th Academy Awards in 2014 and was, at the time, the most retweeted image in history (*The Guardian*, 2014). It shows eleven celebrities posing for a selfie that was taken by a Samsung Galaxy S smartphone. While it seemed spontaneous, it emerged that Text A was an advertisement engineered by Samsung, who had anticipated the popularity of the image, which was retweeted so rapidly that it went viral. The image's popularity was due to the fact that the selfie that had been shared was of many famous celebrities together. With a multitude of press at the Academy awards, the selfie pose was captured by photographers.

However, Text A is designed to appear natural; the celebrities are laughing and posing together. Text B, on the other hand, demonstrates the intention behind the Oscar selfie more clearly, which was to promote the smartphone that captured it. It indicates the initial reception of the selfie as well as its purpose. While neither text is a meme, the incident subsequently resulted in memes inspired by its original selfie photograph, suggesting that memes are valuable because they provoke discussion and generate critical thinking and understanding. Moreover, this demonstrates how memes work: they acknowledge a social or cultural phenomenon, and imitate them so as to elicit humour or perpetuate a social commentary.

Text A	Text B
	

Text A "Ellen DeGeneres' Oscar selfie part of Samsung phone product placement: Report" (*Us Magazine*, 2014)

Text B "Samsung Galaxy Oscar selfie advert"

Source: https://cloudpix.co/sansung-galaxy-oscar--advert-selfie-1498318.html

Memes often make intertextual references, which means they can relate to other known texts. Subtle, obscure references can result in unsuccessful memes, thus the humour or concept of successful memes should be clear to the viewer. By 2014, Leonardo DiCaprio had still not secured an Academy Award, even though he had earned his fourth Oscar nomination that year (IMDB, 2018). When he did not win the Academy Award, it made for many humourous memes. Text C modifies Text A, an existing image, to show a point-of-view shot of the participants of the viral Oscar selfie laughing and 'looking at' a sad DiCaprio on the screen of the smartphone. This event occurred in the same year that the Oscar selfie went viral, thus Text C was humourous at

the time of its release because it referred to two cultural incidents at the same event that both received vast media coverage. The endearing element of memes is that they are versatile and constantly adapt to account for the new and relevant contexts to which they relate. Thus, when DiCaprio walked the yellow-bricked, Oscar aisle in 2016, memes adapted to address the contextual change, as shown in Text D, which opts for a scene from one of DiCaprio's best-known films, *Titanic*, and a line spoken by one of the characters to account for his prolonged speech as well as the prolonged period it took in order for him to give it (*Business Insider*, 2016).

Text C



Text D



Text C "Ellen DeGeneres Oscar selfie - Leo gets snubbed while they watch laughing" (*Know Your Meme*, 2014)

Text D "It's been 84 years" (9gag, 2017)

Notice how these four texts all relate to each other and communicate effective messages. The latter two texts imitate the original image and simultaneously provide a cultural commentary. This suggests that memes offer sufficient substance with which learners can engage in the classroom, and educators also have a vast selection of memes at their disposal. While this means that educators will have to modify their materials regularly in order to remain socially relevant, it

also means that learners will become culturally aware of the various references from which they work.

Images have the capacity to trigger memory and can help learners visualise concepts. Text E represents a poster of the Correction Man meme saying "You're". His name is Kurt because during a listening comprehension, a learner used him as a visual mnemonic to recall the name 'Kurt Silver' as an answer to one of the questions. The idea that learners can be influenced by an image suggests that their interpretative skills may be well-developed enough to consider memes effectively. They may be able to recall the events to the memes relate and thoroughly interpret the humour or commentary that the memes offer.

Text E



Text E "Correction Guy" (*Know Your Meme*, 2015)

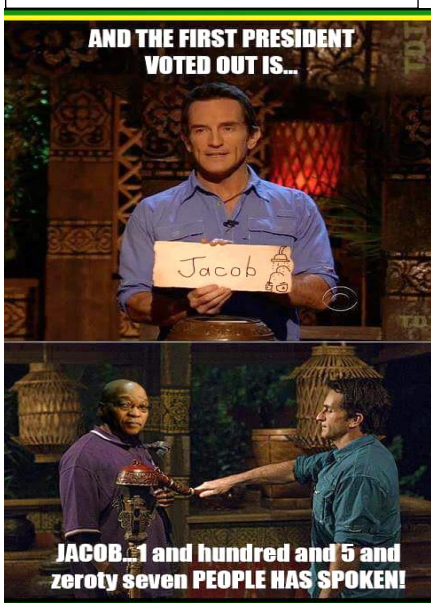
Learners' interpretive skills can be explored through various memes that they can use to relate to intertextually. Text F is a meme of the *Survivor* television host, Jeff Probst, holding up a vote card on which the name, 'Zuma' is written. He is also shown to be uttering his famous catchphrase, "the tribe has spoken." The reality television show *Survivor* appears locally on SABC 3. *Survivor* contestants are progressively eliminated from the game upon receiving a plurality of votes that are revealed to them, as demonstrated in Text F (CBS, 2018). The premise of Text F is simple for its viewers to comprehend; 70% of South Africans called for Zuma's resignation in 2016 (*News 24*, 2017). While he remained in office, the meme was released to

address this statistic humourously, suggesting that if the nation's calls for resignation were translated to votes that eliminated the President from his position, they would be successful.

Text F



Text G

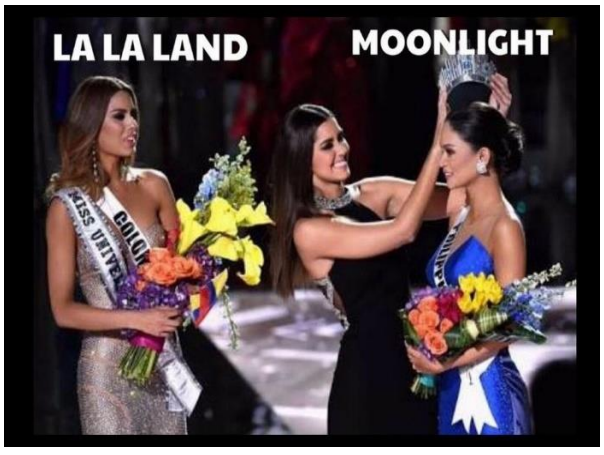


Text F "70% of South Africans want Zuma to resign – survey" (*News 24*, 2017)
Text G "South Africa: Survivor" – (*Reddit*, 2018).

In February 2018, Zuma resigned as president of South Africa (Fisher, 2018), and within an hour of his resignation, an adaption of Text F emerged. Although Zuma resigned as opposed to being voted out, Text G perpetuates the *Survivor* reference to reflect the fact that the majority of the South African public supported Zuma's removal from office as "widely welcomed" (Fisher, 2018). Moreover, Text G also makes reference to another Zuma-related incident that went viral, namely an instance during which the then-President humourously fumbled over the reading out of incomprehensible figures (eNCA, 2015). Text G imitates and draws upon the incorrectly announced figures to reflect the number of people who were relieved by his resignation.

With the significant volume of available memes, educators are able to tailor worksheets that begin with simpler memes and then progress to more complicated ones. This creates a stimulating opportunity for educators to remain culturally aware of materials and content. It also means that revised worksheets that address contemporary and socially relevant issues are able to be addressed. The film *La La Land* was named as 'Best Picture' at the 89th Academy Awards in

2017 (Oscars, 2017). However, during the recipients' address, a producer of the Academy went on to the stage and announced that there had been a mistake, that *Moonlight* was the actual winner (Oscars, 2017). Multiple memes emerged as a result, to account for the immediate reallocation of the actual winner. Among the numerous memes that emerged as a result of this incident, appeared Text H. Text H makes reference to comedian Steve Harvey confusing the winners of the Miss Universe pageant, where he mistakenly named the runner-up as the winner only to remove her of her title minutes later, and name another contestant as the eventual winner (*Associated Press*, 2015). Text H clearly reveals that popular culture associates Steve Harvey with naming incorrect winners, which is why even though he was not the one who named the wrong winner, his name is synonymous with the act within popular culture. This incident is further parodied in Text I while simultaneously referencing the more current incident of the incorrectly announced Oscar winner. These incidents occurred two months apart, thus they were socially relevant at the time. Both incidents refer the announcement of a winner that was suddenly corrected to name another recipient. While these memes were simple to understand at the time of their release due to the fact that these incidents were newsworthy, there were others that were more complicated to understand, such as Text J. Text J also made reference to the Oscars' sudden reallocation of a winner by way of a humourous recurring feature in *Harry Potter* where Headmaster Dumbledore manipulates the house points to enable Harry's house to win, even though another winner had already been announced. This is a classic intertextual reference that could be used in worksheets that accompany any of the novels or films of the series. However, Text J's meme relies on cultural capital and can create confusion among its viewers.

Text H	Text I
	

Text H "9 hilarious memes of the epic '*La La Land/ Moonlight*' Oscars fail" (*Observer*, 2017)

Text I Source: 'Personal legends' http://personalitycafe.com/infj-forum-protectors/148906-personal-legends-73.html. (Personality Café, 2017)

Text J



Text J "How to ruin a party – Level: Dumbledore"

Source: https://me.me/i/la-la-land-wins-best-picture-however-recent-events-must-10649542

There will be four formative assessments for the participants of this research report to engage, all of which will relate to work required on the current classroom curriculum. The participants of the research report are Grade 11 learners who have read *Macbeth* and *Tsotsi* respectively. These are prescribed setworks and there are many existing intertextual memes that relate to both texts. This

is another instance that can help inform educators' teaching of content because it challenges learners with different materials.

Research Questions

I have focused my questions to gauge clearly whether memes can effectively enhance learners' comprehension of what is taught in the classroom.

The main questions that I will focus on ask:

1. How can memes be used in the classroom to develop critical visual literacy skills?
2. Do memes enhances learners' understanding of literature setworks taught in schools?

My Sub-Questions ask:

1. Why is it important to incorporate learners' out-of-school literacy practices in the classroom?
2. To what extent do learners understand the memes that they share on social media.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This research report uses the research of Black and William (2004), Cope and Kalantzis (2009), Dawkins (1976); Gee (2015) Huntington (2014), Janks (2010), Mills (2009), Moje, Chiechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo and Callazzo (2004), Rushkoff (1994), and Serafini (2015). The works of these authors often favour contemporary and digital resources that provoke thought and a superior interaction with the work. These readings interrogate the value and potential of multimodal literacy practices and question how incorporating alternative texts in the classroom can encourage cognitive progress. Moreover, authors such Hull (2002) and Moje, Chiechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo and Callazzo (2004) argue that learners' digital practices outside of the classroom should be relevant within it. Contemporary approaches to visual literacy education recognise the "emerging knowledge economy [that] is characterised by the accelerated transnational flows of people, information, ideology and materials, and communicational contexts where knowledge is highly situated, visual and multimodal, rapidly changing and more diverse than ever before" (Jewitt, 2011: 186). Consequently, this literature review is divided into sections that consider memes and their role in visual literacy, the idea of bridging out-of-school literacy practices with learners' literacy practices in the classroom and multiliteracies respectively.

Memes and their role in visual literacy:

The meme as a visual text is a contemporary device that activates language skills upon observation. Adcock (2012: 6) argues that "the ability to interpret the images and shapes around us is just as important as verbal competency". Adcock adds that images can be read purely because viewing them requires "more than recognising what we see…it involves thinking about the meanings of texts". By virtue of the fact that memes are visuals that appear online in various forms and are shared or encountered, people who view memes 'read' them and make meaning from them. This is why memes form part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices, because they are a form of visual literacy that is applied beyond the walls of the classroom. Dawkins (1976) and Rushkoff (1994) argue that images that are shared at a rapid pace are worth attention because of how quickly they are viewed. These authors are responsible for coining the phrases "meme" and "viral" respectively. These phrases often work concurrently and there are already several studies that focus on the academic study of memes, that have been carried out by Adcock

(2012) and Huntington (2014) respectively, who both place value on the meme as a contemporary visual text. Understanding the intertextuality of memes, their socio-cultural contexts as well as their relevance, is important. Rushkoff (1994) writes about how the trends in popular culture become areas of interest in digital society. This is because memes make social and cultural commentaries that reflect popular opinion by way of criticism or a form of support. The idea of memes as potential visual texts that can provoke understanding and create meaning in the classroom is not as simple as it sounds. Educators need to understand how to manage and integrate memes critically so as to effectively 'meme-orise' visual literacy in the classroom. Suggestions on how this can be achieved are discussed by Serafini (2015) who, along with Kress and Van Leeuven (1996) explores how visuals create meaning, using various examples. Moreover, Scheibe and Rogow (2011) discuss innovative ways to encourage learners' critical and reflective thinking when managing visual texts. These readings are thus relevant to this research report as they provide insight into how to incorporate diverse visual literacy into the classroom, as well as how to teach it. I can use these as guidelines in my teaching of each meme-related lesson and reflect on how effective they in conducting the lesson and, more specifically, how constructive it is to 'meme-orise' literacy development.

The fact that memes are images that contain few words presents them as suitable visual texts because they challenge the way in which materials are interpreted. They require analysis and interpretation beyond what has been literally spelled out in words, and "the lack of interplay between image and text may challenge…readers as they read…to consider [the] meaning potentials" of visual texts (Serafini, 2013: 111). Moreover, the fact that few words are present implies that the reading of texts may be open to interpretation. This means that viewers try to make sense of the texts to which they are exposed, because "all images are constructed" (Serafini, 2013: 35). Thus, visual images can be scrutinised and deconstructed for meaning and viewers are able to take apart elements of the visuals so as to make sense of them. Visual literacy is a central component of the English curriculum in secondary schools; it assesses learners' abilities to understand and interpret humour, symbols and their intention. Visual literacy communicates pictorial messages that are interpreted by their recipients using few words, often posing a social commentary or addressing a current topic. Memes encompass all of these elements. Because they are spread online, they constitute a form of social media that depends on their messages being understood by their viewers in order to be considered successful (Serafini,

2015). Memes typically appear online, which means that they are connected to networks such as the internet, Whatsapp, text messaging and forms of social media. As a genre that predominately appears online, it is important to note that social media provides a platform that enables meaning to be created. Because of this, Messaris (1997: 347) observes that "[visual] literacy involves the processes by which individuals take up cultural texts differently depending on their interests and positioning in various social and historical contexts". Consequently, memes are a diverse medium because they adapt and draw from different techniques and approaches to convey meaning and understanding. Establishing the contexts of memes may be an important element of the genre, however with exposure, the ability to create meaning occurs more easily. The more familiar learners are to memes as a genre, the more easily they will be able to interrogate them. Gee (2015: 22) states that "comprehension is a general ability. One's ability to comprehend oral language, written language, and events in the world all correlate with each other." Visual images that encapsulate these components are understood because their various compositions trigger a consciousness within their viewers. "The visual images we encounter are most often experienced as multimodal ensembles, a type of text that combines written images, design elements and visual images" (Serafini, 2015: 2).

The prominence of visual literacy texts allows for multiliteracies to extend across a range of categories, namely "(a) multiple practices using print literacy, (b) practices around multimodal texts that incorporate both images and languages and (c) practices around new digital and social media" (Gee: 2015: 55). In the more than twenty years since the 'multiliteracies' term was coined, it is important to develop not only materials but pedagogies and memes are a contemporary form of visual literacy. They appear online and adapt accordingly to circumstance and content, spreading throughout social media and reaching audiences who become aware of their contexts. It is for this reason that learners' out-of-school literacy practices on social media play a significant role in their literacy development. Those who actively engage with media literacy have a greater insight into its conventions, yet this skill is not always assessed in schools. Moreover, it is possible that the same learners who actively engage with media literacy out-of-school, do not always engage with conventional forms of literacy beyond the classroom. This does not negate their literacy abilities, yet the assessment of their literacy fluency does not encompass all aspects of literacy development. This requires attention, and "researchers from a range of disciplines have documented the considerable intellectual accomplishments of children,

youth and adults in out-of-school settings, accomplishments that often contrast with their poor school-based performance and suggest a different view of their potential as capable learners and doers of the world" (Hull and Schultz, 2002: 1). This suggests that it is important to accommodate the interpretive skills of all learners by acknowledging all types of visual texts rather than simply restricting the assessment of visual literacy to only the few that are standard practice of academia, such as advertising and cartoons. The fact that memes appear and spread online through social media is precisely the reason that they should be taken more seriously as a form of visual literacy. It is possible to overlook online texts such as memes because they seem so non-academic, when in fact they appeal to many skills that are examined within the English subject in secondary schools. This is similar to what Janks (2013: 113) says about everyday texts, namely that they are a viable "object of enquiry in critical literacy because they seem so unimportant." It is thus possible to "ignore important conceptual dimensions that more readily account for successful learning or its absence [and] fail to see the presence of school-like practice [beyond the classroom]" (Hull and Schultz, 2002: 12). The apparent simplicity of such non-academic texts creates stimulating materials that are able to be analysed wholly. Online texts are created for the purpose of viewing and sharing, and the fact that many memes go viral suggests that they have achieved their purpose. Moreover, Janks (2013: 14) further argues that everyday texts have sufficient substance to render study and analysis, commenting that "anything that has been constructed can be deconstructed". Memes therefore, as an everyday, online text, qualify as an important form of visual literacy.

This is not to suggest that all learners engage with exactly the same texts in their out-of-school literacy practices. There is a diversity that comes with availability and preference, but this is why education must incorporate a variety of texts not only as a form of assessment but also of classroom material. It is a progressive and inclusive approach that exposes learners to new content and develops their ability to 'read' texts in their entirety. The application of visual literacy is intensified by the reader's conscious desire to make sense of that to which they have been exposed. Cope and Kalantzis (2008: 203) claim that literacy is

> not only about rules and their correct application. It is about being faced with an unfamiliar kind of text and being able to search for clues about its meaning without immediately feeling alienated and excluded from it. It is also about

> understanding how this text works in order to participate in its meanings (its own particular 'rules'), and about working out the particular context and purposes of the text.

The participants of this research report were presented with information extracts that accompanied each meme, however this was also to counteract the fact that memes had not been taught in the classroom previously. Further exposure to memes in a structured setting would promote understanding more ably and more often, since learners who engage with texts frequently absorb information more competently. As Kress and Van Leeuwan note, "interactive participants are…real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions which, to different degrees and in different ways, regulate what may be 'said' with images, how it should be said, and how it should be interpreted" (2006: 114). For this reason, educators need to adapt to changes in literacy education and develop their own abilities so as to enhance those of their learners. Furthermore,

> the role of progressive literacy practices is to open up the interpretive spaces teachers `provide through the expectations they set, the responses they endorse, the texts they select, and the strategies they demonstrate. To expand students' interpretive repertoires, teachers need to extend their own understanding of a variety of perspectives, theories, and practices used to comprehend visual images, graphic design, and multimodal texts (Serafini, 2011: 349).

This depends strongly on educators recognising that media literacy is a viable form of educational, visual literacy. In fact, "viewing media literacy as literacy makes it easier to see it as a part of everything we do as educators and to find a multitude of ways…to incorporate it into our daily teaching" (Scheibe and Rogow, 2012: 101).

Bridging out-of-school literacy practices

In what Moje et al (2004: 44) have called the 'third space', the essential disposition of appealing to learners' out-of-school literacy practices is recognised. These stating that by the

> bringing together of discourses and knowledges in [the] third space as a productive scaffold for young people to learn the literacy practices that are framed by the discourses and knowledges privileged in the content areas, [this

> scaffold can enable] students …to better access and negotiate the privileged texts, [and] that explicit engagements with the texts of competing discourse communities will help youth learn to navigate multiple texts and communities successfully.

Based on the results of the data collection, learners were able to respond to the formative assessments on memes to varying degrees, which shows that they have different levels of understanding of visual texts. Research that initially sought to incorporate learners' out-of-school literacy practices into the classroom emerged "from the desire to contrast the schooled, and their presumed literacy-enhanced cognitive capabilities, with the non-schooled, who were suspected of thinking differently" (Hull and Schultz, 2002: 20). Education's purpose cannot be to disadvantage some learners while catering entirely to others, thus only assessing the same generic material, it causes learners' complacency, which causes them to take their literacy levels for granted. It also diminishes their capacity to interrogate materials wholly. With the plurality of visual content available, the notion of developing materials is paramount to developing visual literacy levels. As Luke (1992: 8) writes, "literacy comprises malleable practices, and we can shape it in various ways". Hagood (2009: 12) calls the combination of educational practice and popular culture 'edutainment', in which "supplemental curricular packages [that] couch academic content in curricular formats". This concept essentially encompasses the "connection between conventional and new literacies as well as socially relevant teaching and traditional teaching standards." In addition, 'meme-orising' visual literacy in the classroom, develops a consciousness of the text that can be 'read' at school while also practicing the skill at home as part of learners' independent, out-of-school literacy practices. Memes are unconventional visual texts in the classroom, but by encouraging educators to develop materials, the curriculum promotes creative and more stimulating approaches towards literacy instruction. Moreover,

> creative learning and basic skills acquisition are not mutually exclusive. Engaging children in new literacy practices can be the very motivation for instilling the conventional literacy skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking for our educational standards espouse as the cornerstones of communication (Hagood, 2009: 20).

Understanding research that explores the impact that out-of-school literacy practices have on learners is crucial towards this research. By placing value on learners' digital practices and recognising that memes in particular are a legitimate digital genre that activates and furthers linguistic cues, learners' out-of-school practices can be incorporated into the classroom. Hull (2002), Moje et al (2004) and Shultz (2002) argue that the consideration of learners' out-of-school literacy application and learning will help educators to "think again and anew about literacy teaching and learning in the classroom" (Shultz, 2002: 3). This research report can draw on their research because it conceptualises how the texts with which learners engage daily affect their understanding of literacy. The literature of these researchers acknowledges learners' literacy practices outside the classroom to be crucial contributors to visual literacy development and pedagogies. Upon reviewing their research, this research report can offer the notion that memes are not only legitimate texts of substance outside the classroom, but that they allow for the application of literacy practices inside it as well. In addition to these, Gee (2015) navigates through beliefs or practices that exist through sociocultural means of literacy development that validate the learning and reading of texts and inside and outside the classroom environment with influential consequences. Viewers of visual texts project their own identities and perspectives towards the texts that they 'read'; Moje and Luke (2009: 416) assert that there is a correlation between "identity's relationship to literacy and literacy's relationship to identity, [stating that there have been] calls for attention to people's new media and popular cultural textual practices that people may demonstrate when they engage with new media and popular cultural texts".

Multiliteracies:

With out-of-school literacy practices given value, it is relevant to review readings about the media through which learners' out-of-school literacies are applied. 'Multiliteracies' is term "coined in response to two significant changes in globalised environments: the proliferation of diverse modes of communication through new communications technologies such as the internet, multimedia, and digital media, and the existence of growing linguistic and cultural diversity" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009: 1). It is for this purpose that literature on multiliteracies is imperative to include in this report. The New London Group has written many articles about "what constitutes appropriate literacy pedagogy for our times" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009: 1), before offering some ideas for multiliteracy practices to incorporate within education. Their questioning

of what serves as a beneficial basis from which to channel literacy application is paramount as it validates the suggestion that memes in the classroom can be appropriated by the language curriculum to teach literacy skills. This is because the ways in which learners communicate have changed. The learners in my classroom send each other messages and images through their smartphones and also communicate on different social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. The ways in which technology and digital literacy are viewed have changed, because as UNESCO (2011) explains, they are no longer limited to the ability to use a computer. Digital literacy is defined as "socially situated practices supported by skills, strategies, and stances that enable the representation and understanding of ideas using a range of modalities enabled by digital tools" (O'Brian and Sharber, 2008: 66). An element of multiliteracies, digital literacies are interactive, they are purposeful, and they employ various language skills simultaneously. Moreover, digital literacy can be viewed as "shorthand for the myriad social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning making mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged etc., via digital codification (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006: 17). Digital literacy is a life skill that "works as a catalyst because it enables the acquisition of other important life skills" (UNESCO, 2011: 1), which means that when visual literacy experts such as Cope and Kalantzis (2009), Gee (2015), Mills (2009), and Serafini (2015) call for its inclusion into the classroom, there is merit in the meme. Mills (2009) corroborates this because, in the same way as digital literacy has developed beyond the use of a computer, literacy has expanded from being simply the ability to read and write. This is why Mills writes that educators across the globe are reconsidering their pedagogical approaches to literacy development. Educators are professionally and socially aware of cultural phenomena that informs their teaching. Visual images are forms of communication; they transfer ideas, humour and opinions. Memes encompass this because of the rate are which they are created and shared. Growing opinions about their central issues become known because they have the potential to go viral. This is because "digital technologies have effected a communication revolution, enabling permanent records of embodied oral texts, instant reproduction and transmission of both verbal and visual texts and the production of multimodal texts" like memes (Janks, 2010: 4).

These readings all expand on the concept of memes, as well as to my ultimate goal of trying to 'meme-orise' visual literacy in the classroom. Readings that validate alternative forms of visual literacy also validate the use of memes in the classroom. Thus, the literature used to write this

research report is necessary as it offers perspectives on approaching visual literacy differently and how to teach it. It is for this reason that the meme-related readings are relevant. Memes are an element of popular culture, which is why readings that comment on the effects and influence that digital texts have on viewers are necessary as they provide an overview of the relevance of alternative texts. Moreover, memes are not a medium on their own. They are a text type or genre that is spread through different media. They extend towards digital technologies which is why literature concerning multiliteracies is relevant to this report. The platforms on which I have noticed memes are social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp. These different platforms create access and exposure to various kinds of texts. All the literature of the of Multiliteracies is relevant to this research report as it provides social commentary on the implementation and use of alternative texts and digital literacy levels and practices, with reference to specific case studies.

Furthermore, digital literacies have developed beyond the technical aspects of various programmes. If the learners in the school in which I teach interact with each other using memes and can make meaning from them, then the multiliteracy readings not only relate clearly to the readings on memes and visual literacy in the classroom, but they also corroborate the readings on learners' literacy practices outside the classroom as well. These readings correlate to how memes and visual literacy that assume humour and social commentary, or that make reference to popular culture are accessed by learners in their private time. Readings that either call for the induction of learners' out-of-school literacy practices into the classroom, or that recognise that learners' independent literacy practices have merit or can influence their means of reading texts, are crucial to this research provide an initial understanding of the researcher to explore how memes support the learning process and that there is merit in incorporating memes into visual literacy lessons. Thus, while readings can be divided into three respective categories, namely memes, Multiliteracies and learners' out-of-school literacy practices, these aspects all influence the ultimate objective of 'meme-orising', and the readings that accompany them support this objective.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Research approach and design:

This research report used qualitative research to investigate memes as visual literacy. By way of participant observation, assessments had been created to gather data in response to the overall objective of whether memes could develop visual literacy in the classroom. A five-question questionnaire gathered data on participants' meme-based habits; dominant responses to the questionnaire informed their common uses of memes. Four formative assessments were designed to reflect the focus of the four different lessons to which the participants were subjected. Each worksheet featured several memes and had been designed to teach parody and to analyse elements the plot outlines of *Macbeth* and *Tsotsi* respectively. This research report used formative assessments as a tool from which to collect the participants' written responses because their analyses could be committed to writing. "Formative assessment is a process that provides feedback and support during instruction, such that teachers and students can adjust ongoing instruction and learning to improve students 'achievements of planned instructional outcomes" (Black and William, 1998: 2). Feedback was possible for the purposes of data collection since each lesson introduced a new theme that accompanied each formative assessment. Upon the submission of each assessment, participants' results remained confidential. Participants remained anonymous in the research report and were not required to include a name on their work. Participants received general feedback on each formative assessment by way of a general class feedback session that offered notes and commentaries on each task. These feedback sessions were important as they allowed learners to recognise and process their own understanding and application of concepts while still allowing them to maintain full anonymity.

Once learners had completed the various worksheets that had been designed to examine whether memes had enhanced their understanding of concepts covered in class, I assessed the memes' success overall. The participants' responses were crucial to establishing whether memes could be incorporated into the classroom because the introductory lesson and the questionnaire indicated that these learners claimed to make active use of memes on a personal level. This means that memes had already formed part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices prior to the analysis of their responses.

Since formative assessments are a pedagogical tool that informs learners' understanding of work taught in the classroom, these were deemed a suitable tool for data collection because they reflected an ongoing understanding of memes. As part of the methodological framework of the research report, each formative assessment revealed areas of what the participants understood or what it was that confused them. The formative assessments called for detailed analyses of each meme. With participants confined to the same assessments, it was possible to compile a diagnostic analysis that indicated the varying levels of each assessments' success. These results influenced the findings of this research report because they explored the role of memes in literacy development. The four formative assessment worksheets that were designed focused on a specific aspect of the curriculum. The first formative assessment used South African memes that made local social commentaries. The selected texts humourously stereotyped local living conditions and taxi drivers, which were topics to which many learners were able to relate. I currently teach at a formal Model C school in Johannesburg; these are government schools that are administered by a school governing body of parents or alumni. Many learners of these institutions come from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority of whom arrive at the school using public transportation. For these reasons, the texts that had been selected were appropriate because many learners already had experiences with or opinions about public transportation. The purpose was to determine whether memes could develop learners' understanding of social commentaries on local public transportation in context.

The second formative assessment worksheet focused on memes using parody. Parody is the deliberate and humourously exaggerated imitation of something. It often makes use of irony or satire for comedic effect. Thus, it was important to emphasise the application of parody through memes since many memes are on based on it. The formative assessment on parody extended learners' interpretative skills and assessed whether the humourous devices that are examined at Grade 12-level, are fully understood.

It was possible to identify the value of 'meme-orising' visual literacy in the classroom because a third formative assessment was designed on the prescribed readers that are currently read in Grade 11, namely *Tsotsi* and *Macbeth*. There is great merit in relating memes to the literature that the learners read because learners' only other source of relatability is the film version of the setwork texts. The film version of texts has the potential to influence learners' cognitive

engagement with the setworks because film stimulates its viewers visually. However, memes concentrate on a specific reference or incident, thus they had the potential to develop their viewers' understanding of these references.

The final formative required learners to design a meme of their own that related to any of the three previous lessons. This was important as it required them to draw on ideas discussed in class and use them to create a meme of their own. Learners were not be assessed on illustrations, but rather the contexts through which they could articulate the concept they had chosen to 'meme-orise'.

Research site

All research was conducted on the grounds of the school in which I teach. The individual lessons introduced the themes that centred around each formative assessment, namely South African stereotypes, parody in society and intertextual references using literature. Upon completing these, the final formative assessment required learners to design a meme of their own inspired by an idea based on any of the previous three meme-related lessons. All of these lessons took place at school during teaching time, while the analysis and assessment of each task took place after school. This ensured learners' anonymity as well as the confidentiality of their results.

Research participants

The most suitable participants for this research report were Grade 11 learners because they were the most senior group available at the time of the data collection. It was believed that learners in the lower grades were still fine-honing their visual literacy skills and navigating through rudimentary formative assessments in the classroom. Moreover, with the restricted limited teaching time available to Grade 12 educators to complete the curriculum, there would have been insufficient time to tackle these formative assessment tasks in addition to those required of Grade 12 portfolio work. Thus, the Grade 11 group was the ideal focus of this research report since those learners had a full academic year available to develop their critical thinking and visual literacy skills. The purpose of 'meme-orising' visual literacy in the classroom is to promote literacy development, which in the penultimate year of their secondary schooling can only benefit learners. In order in assess whether this is possible, the participants of this research report needed to be presented with a fair platform in which to respond to the memes in question. Thus,

having the necessary time available to engage with the work and respond to the questions was a crucial element of the research findings.

Upon securing the written consent of the school governing body, the school principal, the parents and the Grade 11 learners, some teaching time was devoted to teaching memes in the classroom to introduce how they related to parody, and themes in *Macbeth* and *Tsotsi* respectively. At the time of the date collection, I taught three Grade 11 classes amounting to 88 learners with varying academic abilities. Each meme-based lesson was taught to all three Grade 11 classes to ensure that the findings of the research report extended across their varying levels of understanding. The data collection process only took place once the learners had completed the prescribed reading and analyses of *Tsotsi* and *Macbeth*, respectively. Since one of the formative assessments related to the participants' setworks, this was crucial to ensure accurate feedback of the data. Including all 88 Grade 11 learners as participants to this research report ensured learners' anonymity because of the large number of responses that were collected. Individual learners were less likely to be identified by their handwriting because of the total number of anonymous participants to each formative assessment. It was important for the participants of this research report to be learners who were also being taught by me at the time because I was already aware of their overall visual literacy abilities. This meant that the general success of the participants' understanding of memes could be more ably understood.

Methods of data collection – overview of tools:

This research report was based on data that was collected through various carefully designed materials, the results of which were assessed in order to review the effects of memes in teaching visual literacy. Learners were issued a five-question questionnaire that investigated their use of and interaction with memes. A basic introduction to memes took place prior to learners being issued with the questionnaire. The questionnaire was limited to five questions so as to avoid repetitive or unspecific responses as to learner-participants' out-of-school literacy practices. The questionnaire presented learners with "polar questions" (Grimes, 1975), which means that answers could either be in the affirmative or the negative. Thereafter, the meme-based lessons were introduced with their accompanying formative assessments.

Formative assessments inform learner's ongoing level of understanding based on a section of work. The first formative assessment was entitled 'South African memes – a local perspective' which used memes to explore social and cultural stereotypes in South Africa. The second formative assessment was entitled 'Parody using memes,' which provided humourous memes that employed and assessed parody as a concept. The third formative assessment was entitled 'Memes in literature,' which assessed learners' understanding of key themes in their setworks of *Macbeth* and *Tsotsi*. The final formative assessment was entitled 'Meme imitation: Make-a-meme' extending to any one of the previous formative tasks (i.e. social commentaries, parody or literature). This assessed how well participants understood the concepts that had been taught to them.

Data analysis

The questionnaire that had been issued to the participants generated simple responses that were easy to tabulate, since the questions only required a 'yes' or 'no' response. These results indicated whether learners' out-of-school literacy practices were clearly defined by a majority, or whether learners' out-of-school literacy practices were divided.

Three of the four formative assessments were based on meme-related lessons that had been taught in the classroom. These worksheets were completed and submitted by the participants for assessment. I had designed a suggested memorandum that guided my assessment of each formative assessment, while still observing whether participants offered alternative responses to the memorandum. This was important because memes are open to interpretation, thus participants' views may have been correct, but contrary to the suggested memorandum. The final formative assessment encouraged visual literacy application and creativity, thus while there was be no suggested memorandum, criteria was provided as a guideline. Participants were required to make a humourous or social comment about a topic of their choice. Since memes often involve imitation, participants were able to modify the spirit of an existing meme while still creating their own. It was necessary for the subject of the participants' "meme imitations" to be clear to me since I served as the viewer to whom they were 'sharing'.

Limitations:

While a great number of the Grade 11 learner-participants claimed to view and share memes, the extent of this had yet to be determined prior to the data collection. The memes that learners had previously viewed or shared may have been limited to a particular type or theme. This would present a limitation to their understanding of memes because the contexts and visual elements of memes belonging to a particular type or theme would not provide enough scope for thorough analysis.

Memes are a form of digital media, thus another limitation to the notion of memes in visual literacy development was that it assumed that learners had access to digital technologies. All of the Grade 11 learners who served as participants to the research report were in possession of a smartphone. However, several of the participants had previously mentioned that they reduce the amount of time that they spend on social media sites to conserve mobile data. This suggests the possibility that some participants' exposure to memes as out-of-school visual literacy may have previously been restricted.

The final restriction to this research report was that none of the assessments were returned to the participants after they had been marked. This was due to the guarantee of participants' full anonymity. Participants only received general feedback and commentary on each of the formative assessments that they had completed. Participants therefore did not physically receive back their respective assessments. Thus, they remain unaware of how they specifically performed, although the general feedback may have addressed some of their concerns.

Ethical Considerations:

The research participants were the Grade 11 learners whom I was teaching at the time of data collection. On the basis that most Grade 11 learners are minors, I had an obligation to protect their identities in the compilation of this research report. Learners completed the questionnaire and the formative assessments anonymously, being instructed not to include their names on any of these documents. This was important to ensure the utmost confidentiality of their responses and also to ensure that learners remained anonymous in my research findings. This assurance provided them the opportunity to engage with the work critically without fear of being named in the research report. While the handwriting of some learners is distinctly recognisable, these learners were still not named in the research report. Even in the event that the identity of any of

the participants became apparent to me upon assessing their responses, their anonymity was never comprised. In addition to which, where learners' specific responses could be recognised as being of particular relevance to this research report, those learners were only addressed by pronouns. All the results were recorded and filed in my personal records, and all paperwork was filed in a private home office. All research materials were scanned and stored to personal desktop, to ensure a duplicated digital file of all paperwork. These files were also password protected, to ensure the utmost confidentiality of the results and the protection of the learners involved in the research.

Proposed Timeline:

The proposed time in which to complete the data collection was initially ten days, which were ultimately halved and reduced to five days' worth due to time constraints. Lessons at the school of the research site are one-hour long. There were also few enough questions to be able to complete the assessment of each worksheet on the same day as the assessment had been issued. I intended to devote one day to the introduction of memes, and two days to each of the assessments being completed. This provided one day for the teaching and assessing of the work and one day for the feedback session and for participants to ask questions. Although less time was devoted to the collection of data process than originally intended, this did not compromise the research findings as they reflected the role of memes in literacy development.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

All 88 learners consented to serving as participants to the research report, which involved completing one questionnaire and four formative assessment tasks. Participants were introduced to the concept of memes and involved in meme-related discussions which called for them to account for whether and how memes formed part of their out-of-school literacy practices. Participants were required to complete meme-related formative assessments and then submit their responses, which were assessed according to suggested memoranda. All responses were only conducted in the classroom t ensure that all 88 participants were able to submit. The responses were scored according to a mark allocation and subsequently noted for how successfully each response was tackled. This was achieved by calculating the total of each assessment, attributing an academic grade-symbol to each submission and then tallying the number of symbols scored across the board by all the participants. On the basis that the submissions were made anonymously, several overview sessions were included to ensure that learners received general feedback on how they had performed on each submission.

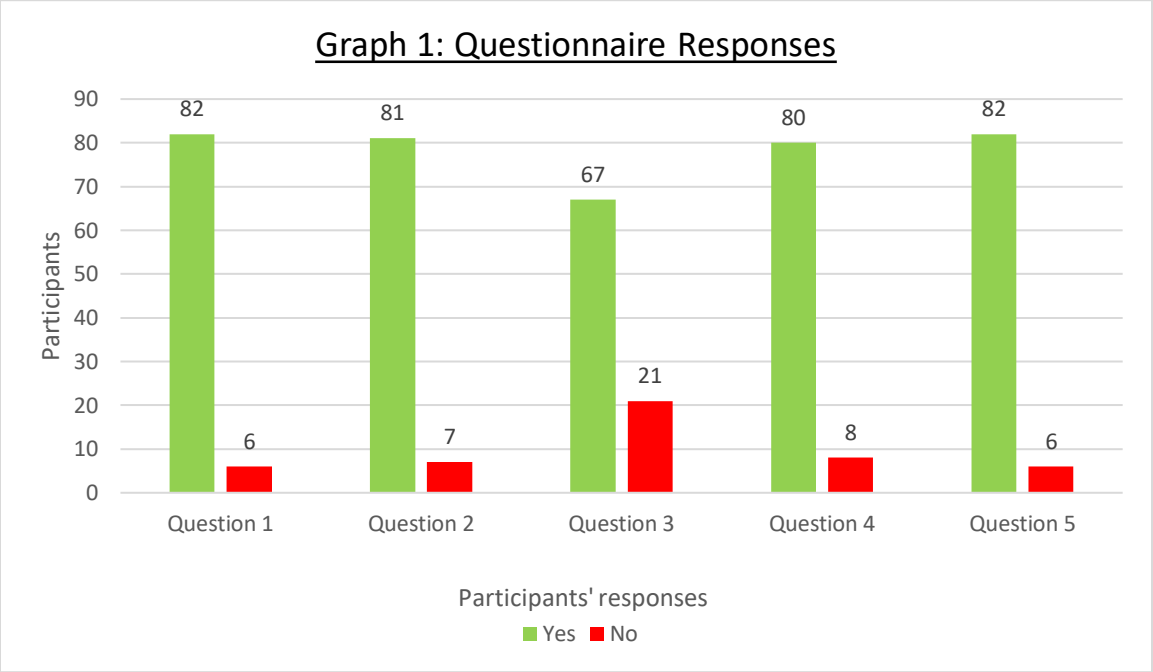
The introductory lesson on memes to the Grade 11 participants was very successful. The participants were shown and asked about several memes that had been displayed on the whiteboard. The purpose was to determine whether the learners were familiar with the particular memes on display, what they understood a meme to be and whether they engaged with memes as part of their out-of-school literacy practices. This final question proved to be the most interactive as learners began discussing the memes that they had found to be humourous or interesting. They even surreptitiously defied the school's 'no cell phone' policy to reveal the memes that they had stored on their own smartphones. This was an important component of the introductory lesson on memes because it revealed an appreciation for and a familiarity with this specific form of visual literacy. Moreover, given that learners were in possession of a variety of memes, even though the school prohibits the use of cell phones during lesson time, it suggested that their out-of-school literacy practices were crucial to their interpretative skills. Participants were made aware that they were contributing towards important literacy research on their literacy and digital technology practices. The objective was to "provide them with opportunities to reflect critically on these practices and to gain a deeper understanding of the way in which literacy continues to change due to developments in new technologies" (Larson and Marsh, 2015: 69). This is

important because it extends to the suggestion that literacy is a commonly practiced skill that is implemented beyond the confines of the classroom.

Learners' use of memes on social media and text messaging platforms suggests that they practice their reading and viewing skills through interacting with memes online, in addition to applying their writing skills through responding to memes online. The participants immediately associated the memes on display with those on their smartphones, which indicates familiarity with the genre. Two learners ably noted that memes sometimes adapt the written text to reflect a current event while still maintaining an unrelated image. This shrewd and insightful observation came from the discussion that generated from various memes that either addressed the same topic or a single meme that addressed multiple topics. Learners were able to identify and differentiate between the current event and each meme that addressed it. Interestingly, while all the learners had heard of the term 'meme', not all of them understood what a meme entailed. For instance, one learner asked whether a meme was a form of advertising since the Nando's franchise frequently relates humour and current events to promote its products. While he posed a valid question, memes and advertisements are two distinct materials. It is true that memes and Nando's advertisements often make reference to current events and that both often go viral. However, their purpose is different, as indicated through Text B in Chapter One. The fact that an image goes viral does not qualify it as a meme. A meme makes a humourous or social commentary, while Nando's advertisements simply make humourous social reference to an incident that can help promote its products for consumption. Additionally, a meme can develop from its original form, thus a meme can sustain itself, whereas Nando's advertisements only last for as long as the social reference to which they refer remain relevant or newsworthy.

The introductory lesson was concluded by distributing the questionnaire to the 88 learner-participants, which proved to be easy since learners were pleased with the choice of material and topic of the research report. They were excited to engage with memes critically and to explore the social commentaries that memes make. The questionnaire proved useful since all of the responses presented an affirmative majority in favour of each question. Thus, participants mostly answered 'yes' to the questions on their questionnaires, which investigated participants' meme-based habits as part of their out-of-school literacy practices. Learners were reminded of the anonymity assured to them through this research; I appealed to learners to be honest in their

responses. Calculating their responses to the questionnaire was simple as the questions could be only be answered in the affirmative or the negative. Graph 1 on the following page depicts the Grade 11 learners' responses to the questionnaire:



Question 1 of the questionnaire simply asked whether learners had ever sent a meme to another person or had shared memes online. 82 learners answered in the affirmative and 6 answered in the negative. While not noted on the questionnaires themselves, I gathered some supporting data during the discussion component of the introductory lesson. It had been indicated that some learners at the school in which the research was conducted do not have the technology required for social media usage. This would explain why as many as six learners had never actively shared a meme but were still aware of what constitutes one. In fact, a consideration for these participants neither having sent nor shared a meme before was the expense of the data required in sharing one rather than a lack interest in sharing the content of one. During the introductory lesson, participants also noted that they occasionally viewed memes on each other's phones in addition to their own when a meme's relevance pertained to the conversation. This act involves learners showing memes rather than sending them, even though they were still essentially 'shared'. Referencing or showing memes contextually suggests that if learners can ably resort to using memes as a frame of reference, that memes have great promise as a prominent form of learners' out-of-school literacy practices. This also extends to a primary question of this research

report, which examines how memes can be used in the classroom to enhance learners' critical visual literacy skills. If learners already have some capacity to draw connections between a topic of conversation and a particular meme, it avers that memes have the potential to generate positive critical thinking in the classroom. This also relates to both sub-questions of this research report, namely answering why it is important to included learners' out-of-school literacy practices in the classroom and whether learners understand the memes that they share. The importance of incorporating memes in the classroom is that it actively engages a genre with which learners are familiar. Their familiarity with certain memes is why 82 participants claimed to having viewed or shared memes online, and why others had mentioned in the introductory lesson that they had previously shown memes to each other in person rather than sending them. The fact that learners are able to select these visual texts for themselves and engage with them at their own discretion suggests that memes are crucial to the learning process.

Question 2 asked whether participants had ever sent a meme without any accompanying text, meaning that their messages would have had to rely solely on the content of the meme itself. 81 participants responded to this question with 'yes'. This implies that the relevant memes either contained enough substance to be rendered understood by their visuals alone, or that these 81 participants assumed that the relevant memes would be understood by their recipients since they were shared without additional context or commentary. This suggests that learners engage with memes frequently enough to assume understanding on the part of the people with whom they communicate. It also implies that their out-of-school literacy practices develop their interpretative skills. Sending memes without accompanying text further addresses the notion that exposure to memes breeds familiarity and the ability to deconstruct such texts in order to create meaning. Thus, viewers who are regularly exposed to memes engage with them as a literacy practice, suggesting an understanding of how they work. Furthermore, "selective traditions are tied to a differential distribution of texts, genres and practices. That is, through schooling, not all children get access to powerful texts and genres and powerful ways of using texts" (Luke, 1992: 12). However, with exposure to alternative texts in the classroom, learners' critical literacy skills develop and thus are able to compensate their lack of familiarity with an enhanced literacy ability. Thus, this response strongly addresses a main question of this research report, namely how memes can be used to develop critical visual literacy skills. Relying solely on a meme to relay a message rather than including context to it requires viewers to interrogate memes as

viable texts. This promotes critical thinking and a strong analysis of the viewed materials, hence its value.

The most unusual statistics that emerged from the data collection were presented in the responses to Question 3. Here, learners were asked whether or not they sent memes knowing that they would provoke a response from their recipients. While the other four questions generated statistics with an overwhelming majority, Question 3 produced a three-quarter majority. While still high, there is a notable discrepancy between the distribution of the responses to the other four questions when compared to that of Question 3; 67 learners claimed to be aware that sending a meme would elicit a response from the recipient while 21 claimed that generating a response was not the intention. This question may have been read ambiguously. During the introductory discussion on memes, some learners who had previously shared memes on their phones mentioned that they had sent memes to friends in anticipation of a particular response. The memes would either be found to be humourous, upsetting or noteworthy, and would often result in recipients sending a written response or a retaliatory meme. For instance, participants who were football fans referred to team rivalries and the banter that exists between football supporters. However, many learners noted that they send memes under the assumption that the humour would appeal to the recipient. It is possible that this discussion may have influenced leaners' responses to Question 3 because they may have related 'response' with 'reaction'. A person need not respond to a topic in order to react to it. A meme with no context need not generate a reply thus the senders' intention need not be a response, whereas a specific meme that directly addresses a topic, such as in the example of football rivalry, can.

The findings of Question 3's responses relate to a main question of this research report as well as to both sub-questions. It is possible that the memes had not been responded to because they had not been understood by the recipients. If this is the case, then memes should be incorporated into the classroom because they are a form of critical visual literacy that is actively being shared, thus it is essential that learners understand the intention behind them. Moreover, if memes that extend to non-school related material are being sent by learners, this reveals a need to develop their critical visual literacy skills in the classroom. This was the case with the aforementioned football banter example. Football related memes

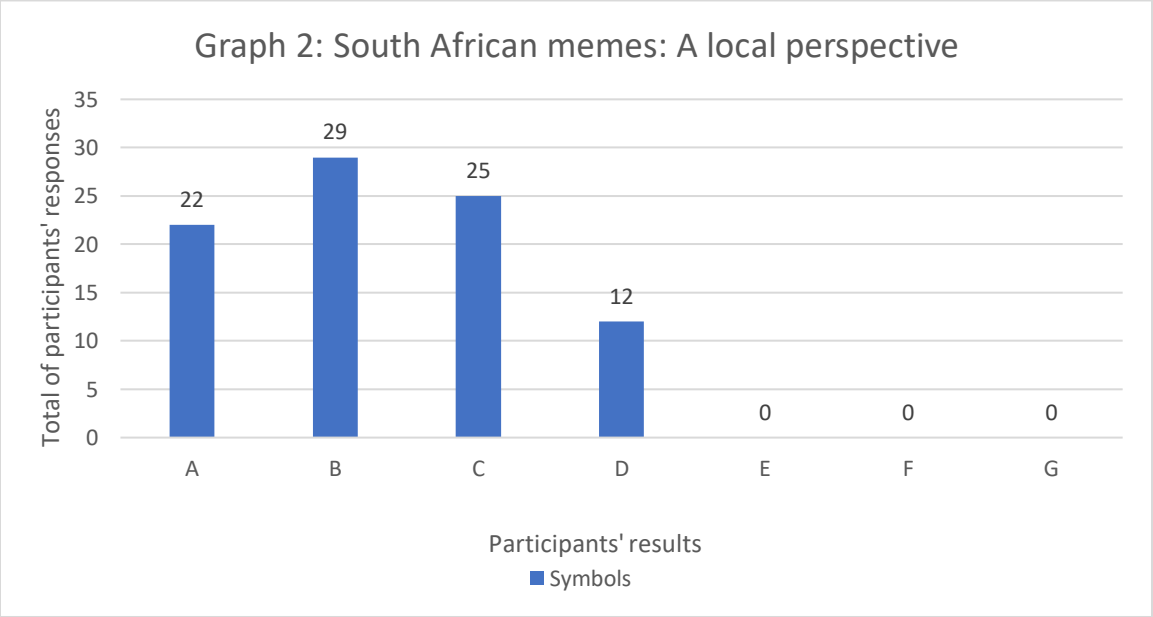
Question 4 asked whether participants had ever viewed or shared 'viral' content online, to which a total of 80 learners answered in the affirmative. This result is crucial to the premise of memes as a form of critical visual literacy as it relates directly to Dawkins' (1976) notion of rapidly sharing materials. Furthermore, 'viral' content usually refers to current socio-economic or political issues (Qureshi, 2014). Thus, the 82 participants who admitted to having viewed or shared 'viral' content did so beyond the confines of the classroom because such material is alternative to the traditional school-based visuals (such as cartoons) that usually relate to the socio-economic or political topics under analysis. While the 'viral' content in question might relate to school-based lessons and materials, it is likely that it had been viewed on participants' own accord as part of their out-of-school literacy practices. These findings extend towards Question 5, which asked whether a discussion had ever resulted from the 'viral' content shared or viewed online. 82 participants admitted to having held discussions based on the viral content that they viewed online. The process and rate by which cultural information spreads is what Dawkins (1976) classifies as a meme. Since the majority of the learners who participated in this research have either viewed or shared memes online and held discussions based on the content within those memes, it suggests that learners' out-of-school literacy practices result in some level of interpretation. While the extent to how successfully the participants interrogate memes in their discussions has not been investigated, the fact that they engage in discussions about memes at all is important. It shows that memes have substance enough to warrant interpretation, thus suggesting that learners' out-of-school literacy practices should be incorporated into the classroom.

The results of the questionnaire indicated that an overwhelming majority of the participants engaged with memes beyond a superficial level. This, coupled with the passion with which the learners participated in the introductory lesson on memes, suggests that including the out-of-school literacy practices of learners in the classroom is imperative to ensure a comprehensive critical visual literacy education. This point will be further discussed using the data collected from the formative assessments completed by the learners.

The introduction of the formative assessment tasks to the learners was met with positive responses, but one particular learner's comment highlighted a pivotal purpose that this research undertakes to find. This particular learner has previously commented on an inability to answer

the visual literacy questions of an examination accurately. However, upon initially circulating the formative assessments, this learner asked why examiners had rarely used memes to assess visual literacy analysis because she felt that she could answer all the relevant questions that had been posed. This remark was interesting because this particular learner never responds to humour-related questions in examinations on the basis that the learner simply does not find the texts to be funny. Thus, when a question asks for learners to discuss the humour, it is simply overlooked. While this might imply this learner's lack of understanding of humourous devices in their entirety, it also suggests that other materials should considered to examine them. This learner's statement presented the only downside to maintaining the anonymity of the participants' responses. It would have been interesting to identify her results in order to determine whether she had actually understood the memes and answered their questions properly. Her comment, however, suggests that her out-of-school literacy practices relate to memes, hence her confidence in her ability to answer the questions on them.

The first formative assessment was issued upon the tabulation of the results of the questionnaire. Its results appear under 'Graph 2: South African memes: A local perspective'. This formative assessment was very well answered and produced the highest results of the four assessments, according to the mark allocation afforded to each question. The results of Graph 2 also indicate that all learners passed the first formative assessment.



Text K



Text L



Text K and Text L Source:

Pinterest. (2017). "Best African memes'.

Context clearly plays a pivotal role in establishing understanding; the majority of the participants of the questionnaire utilise public transportation and most have experienced township and city surroundings, thus is was simpler for the humour of these memes to be understood. Participants' responses indicated parallels between what they are familiar with and what they interpreted through the memes. Questions that called for learners' opinions contained subjective substance, with several participants having noted that since the formative piece included the word 'perspective' in the title, the humour of the memes depended on whether people recognised numerous perspectives. The meme that centres on South African public transportation is humourous to those who have experienced such `an ordeal, in the same way as the meme that addresses South African accommodation is humourous to people who recognise that local people can live beyond the rural stereotype of a shack. Many of these learners also noted that the meme concerning the local accommodation reflected foreign stereotypes, thus confirming the notion that context is key. Notice that learners' context helped shape their analyses of the memes,

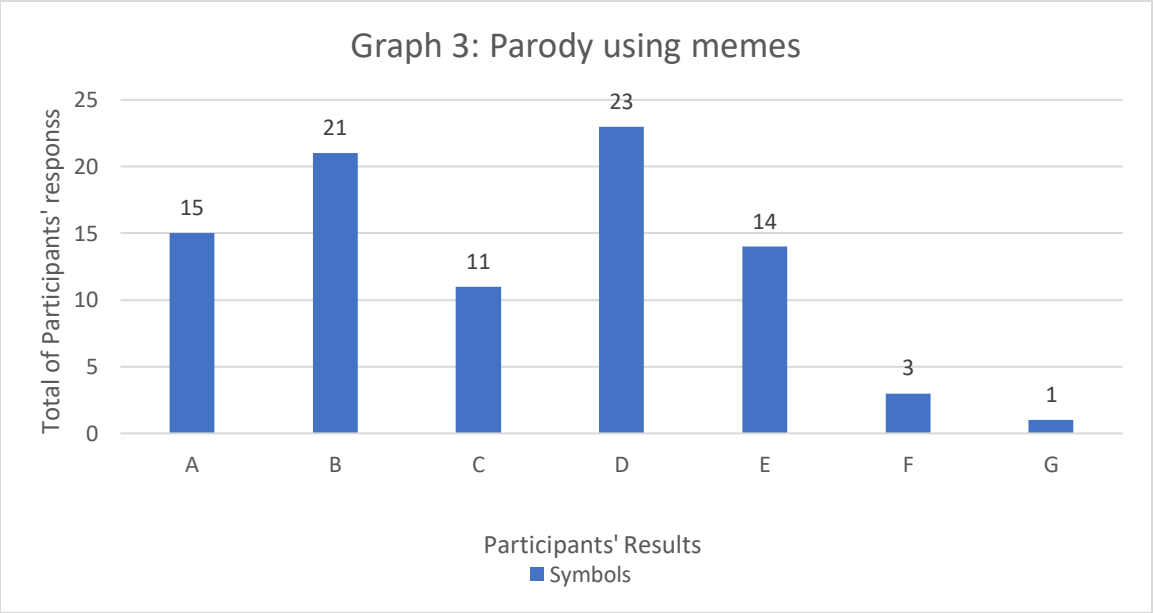
extending towards the question of whether learners understand the memes with which they engage. This relates to a sub-question of whether learners understand the memes that they use privately as the memes to which they responded represent popular South African memes to which they may have been exposed.

Because digital resources are constantly evolving, creating formative assessment worksheets allows for educators to remain stimulated and conscious of any new materials that become available. As such, "developing quality units of study requires building an extensive set of resources over time as teachers encounter more and more possible texts and experiences to draw upon [and] combining digital and print-based resources of varying levels of complexity [encourages] exploration on the part of the teacher" (Serafini, 2013: 98). This means that both educators and learners alike can remain interested in the materials used in the classroom, which was the sentiment in creating these pieces of assessment.

'Graph 3: Parody using memes' reflects the results of the second formative assessment, of which I was disappointed since this series was my favourite but was not well interpreted by the participants. The memes used in these worksheets are labelled as Text M and Text N. Since the suggestion is that context is key, it was certainly useful to provide an introductory excerpt to accompany each meme. However, even though context was provided, 47% of the responses failed to recognise the humour. The 41 learners who scored between D – G grade-symbols scored poorly because their responses simply described the references that had been made or what the visuals depicted, but failed to draw connections between the visuals, the memes' written text and the context that had been provided. The learners who scored Cs were able to relate the excerpt to the visual or the caption, thus the memes' contexts had been understood. However, according to the mark allocation of each question, these learners failed to acknowledge both the visual and the text of the meme, focusing rather on only one of these instead of both. This is an indication that the learners were partially able to interpret memes as visual literacy even though memes may not necessarily be part of their out-of-school literacy practices. Their responses were competently managed and, with practice, have potential for improvement; perspective clearly relies upon exposure.

Upon introducing the worksheet to the learners to ensure understanding, a large number of them recalled the incident having taken place. The learners who scored between A – B grade-symbols

were well able to recognise the humour as it pertained to the visual, the caption and the information excerpt of each. Their responses revealed an appreciation for the incident behind the memes' creation, as well as a strong appreciation of the memes in their entirety. Their responses were lengthy and correlated to the mark allocations provided. One particular learner noted that the essence of a powerful meme is timing. The meme he created closely after the event takes place, to maintain hype and effectiveness. The way in which he achieved this will be discussed further under 'Graph 5: Meme imitation – Make-a-meme' below.

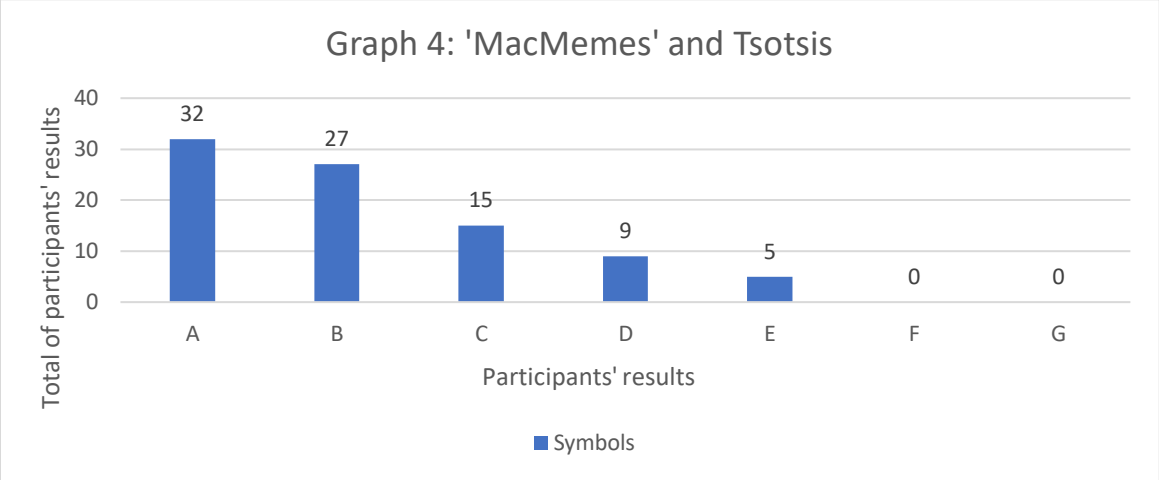


Text M	Text N
	

Text M and **Text N**: Pinterest (2015).

It is not simply conjecture at this point that context is a crucial component of understanding memes. The Grade 11 participants had completed the reading and analyses of the *Macbeth* and *Tsotsi* setworks by the time this research had been conducted, thus their interpretation of the memes in the third formative assessment was strong, as indicated through the results of 'Graph 4: 'MacMemes' and Tsotsis'. While there were a few participants who scored between D – E grade-symbols, notice that all learners passed this assessment, which indicates that they had sufficient understanding to tackle the questions. They scored poorly because, as with the results in the second formative assessment labelled 'Graph 3: Parody using memes', these learners merely described what they saw in the memes and retold what the caption or humour told them. They did not draw the connection between the two. Of the two setworks, predominantly *Macbeth* questions were asked as this setwork is the more complex one. It should be noted that each of the three classes of Grade 11 participants had learners who responded strongly to the *Tsotsi* meme shown in Text Q, commenting on how humourous it was.

The *Tsotsi*-related meme drew strong responses from the participants. While teaching this text, relevant commentary and questions came from a more diverse cross-section of learners, rather than merely the top academics. This corresponds with the earlier notion that these learners have a firm familiarity with urban and rural mindsets, thus they had a greater framework through which to read the *Tsotsi* questions. It also extends to the sub-question of whether learners understand the memes with which they engage which, in this case, they did. This is why the *Tsotsi* responses were so strong. The majority of the participants ably responded to the *Macbeth* meme-related questions because they understood the setting of each meme, however, the same pattern of describing rather than analysing occurred with the more complex memes. For instance, learners understood the social dichotomies of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth respectively, thus the first two *Macbeth* memes were well interpreted. These memes are labelled as Text O and P, respectively. However, the more obscure subtext of the final *Macbeth* meme, labelled as Text R, was either overlooked or misunderstood by most of the participants. Text R's humour extends from its tone and because participants may have not understood this, their perspectives were contained.



(From left – right) Text O, Text P, Text Q (Bottom) Text R



Text O Pinterest. (2016).

Text P Pinterest. (2016).

Text Q Pinterest. (2016).

Text R: Quick Meme. (2017).

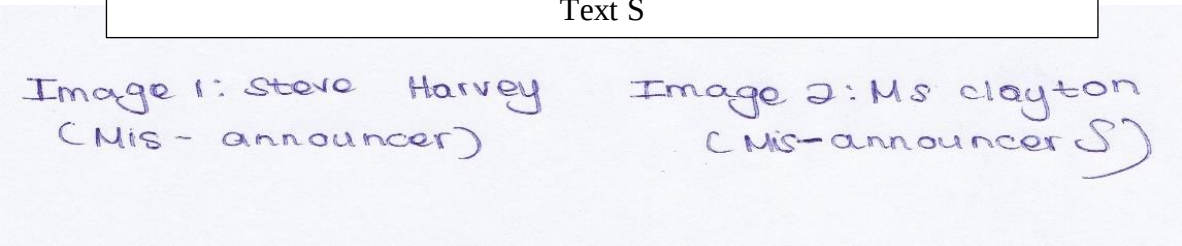
The instructions for the final formative assessment were clear: participants needed to create a meme of their own that followed the same pattern of any of the memes that had been previously assessed. While visuals were encouraged in this task, I did not want learners to be restricted by the creative process. Rather, I wanted them to design a relevant text that related to something

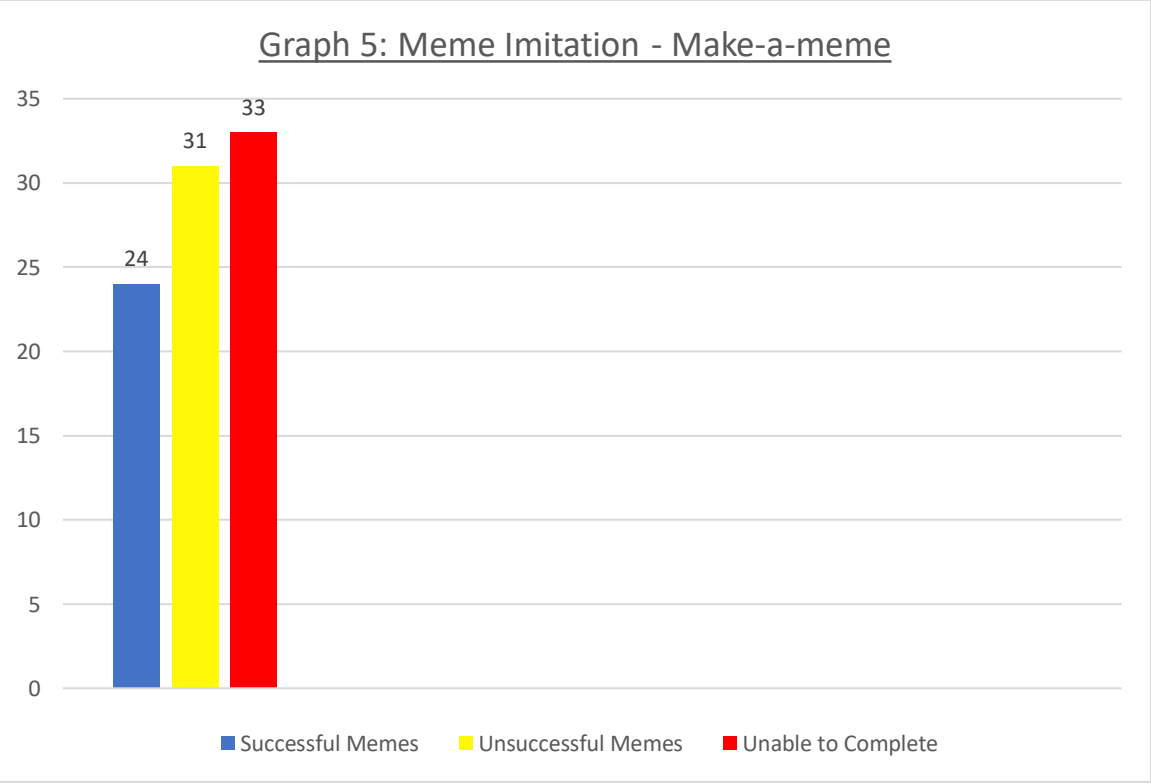
humourously or critically. Admittedly, this task was overly difficult and, upon reflection, was not properly scaffolded. The earlier formative assessments were simpler in terms of expectation and execution, while this task seemingly demanded more from the participants and assumed an advanced understanding of memes. The initial intention was to "[provide] opportunities for learners to engage creatively in [this activity to enhance] their digital literacy skills and knowledge and [enable] them to participate in meaningful and authentic tasks" (Larson and Marsh, 2015: 66). However, it emerged that a shortfall of this formative assessment was that I should have provided the participants with blank templates of popular, existing memes, of which there are many available online, rather than require them to create their own. These templates are of photographs that are reproduced to create memes. This would have allowed for more able responses from the participants, who would have been better equipped to have completed this task. Moreover, a crucial shortcoming that emerged from not providing existing templates of memes is that this task removed the visual component of the activity from which participants were expected to 'read' and elaborate. Thus, this assessment could not determine whether memes help learners develop their visual literacy skills. The activity assumed fluency in participants' readings of visual literacy, while this research report is still only investigating the role of memes in developing visual literacy. Thus, while potentially a useful activity, its expectations were premature and overreaching. Disappointingly, a total of 33 participants claimed to be unable to create an original meme, however this is not to say that failure to produce one reflects learners' understanding of memes. Some of the successful memes were not original in premise or execution, but what made them successful was their concept of humourous or satirical commentary. The most successful meme was designed by a learner who was referred to earlier in the analysis of Graph 3; this participant aptly noted that timing creates for effective memes. I am aware of this learner's identity because he showed the meme to me prior to submission so as to ensure that I would not take offence to the final product. He took this precautionary measure because his well-timed, successfully produced meme humourously made an intertextual reference to me.

As it happens, the formative assessments for this research report were issued during the same week as a rather embarrassing awards evening in which I had named the wrong twin as the recipient of an award. The participant had been present at the prizegiving and used the incident towards his submission. The participant simply wrote a few words, as reflected through Text S.

He wrote 'Image 1: Steve Harvey' and 'Image 2: Ms Clayton', and under 'Image 1' he wrote 'Mis-announcer' and under 'Image 2' he wrote 'Mis-announcer S'. I was thrilled by the submission because it revealed that he recognised the humour could be perpetuated throughout multiple instances. Furthermore, his submission adapted the content of the meme labelled as Text M. As several learners noted in the introductory lesson on memes, memes can be adapted from existing memes, thus he clearly applied this concept to his work. While simple, it masterfully addresses various components of a meme, which suggests that memes can be used as valid forms of visual literacy assessment. Moreover, this shows how memes can enhance critical visual literacy skills because the participant in question was able to demonstrate understanding while maintaining the spirit of a humourous social commentary.

Text S





A concern of this task is that this participant's success does not negate the fact that only 24 out of the 88 participants were able to complete this task successfully. The 31 participants whose memes were rendered unsuccessful were a result of their submissions lacking humourous or social commentary. Rather, the submissions were merely drawings or sentences that accounted for the participants' feelings or interests without offering any substance to them. Text U will depict a prime example of this.

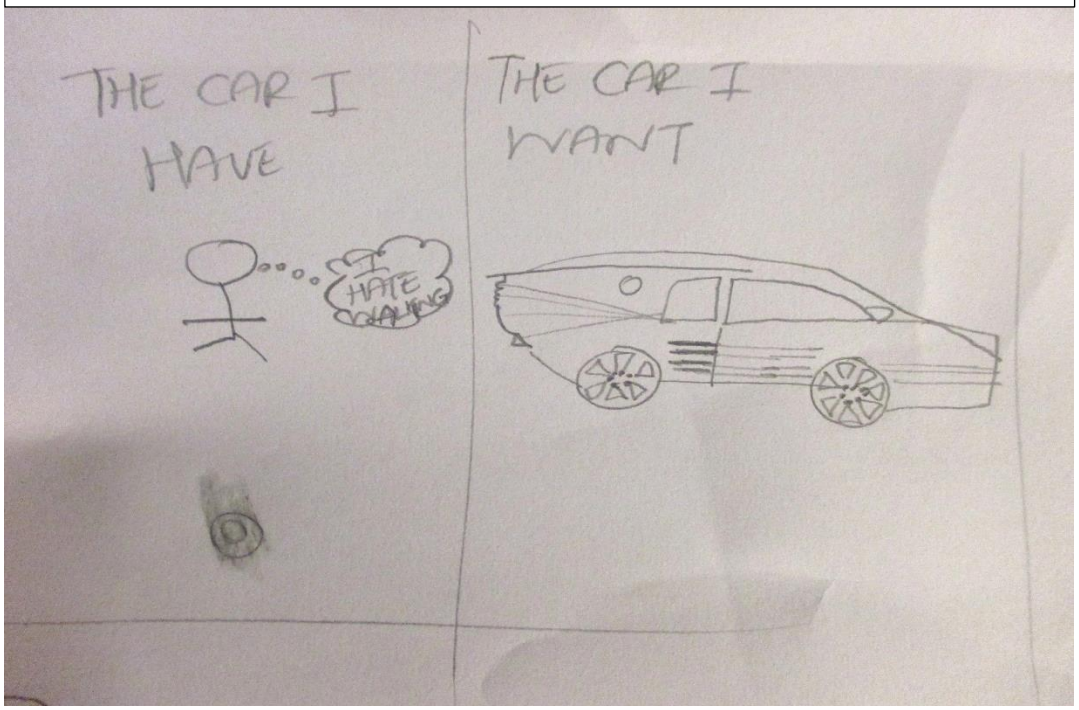
There are many memes in circulation that contrast expectation with reality. In such memes, the sequence of images or text usually ranges from an idealised expectation which is then contrasted with a humourous (and sometimes anticlimactic) reality, as shown in Text T. While simple in subject matter, its shift from expectation to reality might appeal to some viewers.

Text T



Text T: We know memes. (2013)

Text U



Notice Text U, which is an example of one of the unsuccessfully submitted memes. The premise of the expectation-reality meme was evident but it appeared in reverse. The participant's submission served more as an aspiration towards a better means of transport than it did a humourous commentary of his current one. Had the participant inversed the images, the work would have been more successful. Text U is promising, because the sentiment towards creating a proper meme was evident but its execution lacked polish. This shows how learners' critical visual literacy skills require further attention in the classroom. This participant has clearly been exposed to expectation-reality memes but may not fully have understood their construction. This problem was a common element of most of the unsuccessfully submitted memes. There was a level of understanding that required further instruction which may have benefitted participants' final products. It is thus necessary to 'meme-orise' visual literacy in the classroom because memes can appeal to and developed learners' critical thinking abilities.

The results of this formative assessment are useful because they extend to the question of whether learners understand the memes that they use on social media. 31 learners failed in their execution of creating an existing meme, but this was largely due to their failed compositions.

The sentiment behind their attempts was evident. Thus, with enough emphasis placed on the composition and intention of memes, more of these participants could better understand them in future attempts. It is possible that with guidance, learners' potential to understand existing memes and create memes of their own can develop. These results support the proposal to 'meme-orise' visual literacy in the classroom because educators and learners can approach visual texts from a different perspective. This activity relates to both the sub-questions of this research report. While the findings revealed that only 24 participants achieved success, the fact that as many as 31 learners produced ideas that simply require polish presents great promise.

Chapter 5: Findings, recommendations, conclusion

The data of this research report was collected by way of formative assessments in order to assess whether memes are viable forms of visual literacy. "Formative assessment is a process that provides feedback and support during instruction, such that teachers and students can adjust ongoing instruction and learning to improve students' achievement of planned instructional outcomes" (Black and William, 1998: 27). As Black and William (1998) assert, formative assessment better monitors the success of what learners are comprehending in the classroom. While memes had not been taught extensively and were instead merely introduced as a type of text, passionate educators employ various resources to determine the success of learners' understanding while teaching new material that culminates in summative assessment. Based on this, it is possible that creating more pieces of formative assessment on memes would only better examine the learners' visual literacy abilities. Formative assessment is a crucial informant towards bridging the gap between what learners currently know and the intended knowledge for the end of a section of work. It is also "the first priority in its design and practice to serve the purpose of promoting learners' learning" (Black and William, 2007: 10).

Findings

Continuous assessment is both useful and necessary for educators because the purpose of assessment is to determine whether learning is taking place. While the actual teaching of memes was confined to the introductory lesson on them, these participants' familiarity with memes beyond the classroom compensated for the lack of formal instruction within it. 93% of the participants claimed to have actively engaged with memes as part of their out-of-school literacy practices. Many other investigations have contrasted "the schooled, and their presumed literacy-enhanced cognitive capabilities, with the non-schooled, who were suspected of thinking differently" (Hull and Schultz, 2002: 20). If learners' personal literacy practices no longer reflect the selection of texts that assess their visual literacy skills in the classroom, then educators need to foster learners' personal visual literacy practices so as to ensure that learners engage properly with texts.

Visual literacy engages its participants. Its overall design and features enables its viewers to read the material on display, consider its meaning and interpret its intention. There are participants

who are visually literate and are better able than others to interpret texts, however the research analysis that was conducted on the Grade 11 participants also indicated that text type and text selection contributed to text interaction. Visual texts that do not form part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices result in responses that are not as actively or thoroughly engaged by their viewers. Rather, their analyses seem disconnected from the text in question. Authentic and informative feedback from examinations can be determined through the washback principle, which is a system that is essential to the education system as it informs educators, examiners and curriculum bodies of how thoroughly and accurately work has been taught and understood in the classroom. It "refers to the impact that a test has on the teaching and learning done in preparation for it" (Alderson and Wall, 1993: 3). Ultimately, learners all score differently because "tests are a 'differentiating ritual' for students" since learners possess different abilities as well as different cognitive levels (Wall, 2000 293). These differing results are important because they offer insight into how much work is being covered by educators. The most important aspect of washback is that it provides feedback to examiners irrespective of the state of the results, and therefore "tests which are helpful to decision-makers...are not necessarily helpful to teachers and students" (Wall, 2000: 287). This was not the case with the assessments on memes because many of the results proved successful, with three out of four of the assessments showing positive washback and only one of them showed negative washback.

It was confirmed during the process of research collection that memes do form part of learners' out-of-school literacy practices, with the aforementioned 93% of the participants claiming to engage with memes. The participants were also all familiar with the term 'meme', and an overwhelming majority were already in possession of memes on their personal smartphone devices, before any of the lessons on memes took place. Memes rely on subtle humour that addresses a theme or particular subject. However, what is noteworthy about memes is that they do not require artistic skill to create. Unlike cartoons that require the ability to draw, memes simply require cognitive awareness and application rather than artistic creation. It is this element of a meme that constructs its appeal to its participants. They are able to interact with memes as texts to which they can respond. Memes go viral, memes adapt from existing images and they may acknowledge contemporary socio-economic topics. Moreover, visual literacy avers the ability to 'read' picture-based content. Thus its "interactive participants are therefore real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions which…regulate

what may be 'said' with images, how it should be said, and how it should be interpreted" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 114). This is where the shortfall of the fourth formative assessment arose, whereby participants were required to design a meme of their own without downloading an existing image to accompany their creations. The fourth formative assessment was a difficult task. While the previous three formative assessments provided memes for analysis, the final assessment required memes to be 'original' content. Made more difficult by the instruction that any images should be hand-drawn, this formative assessment actually disadvantaged the participants due to its level of complexity and the fact that it was not properly scaffolded from the previous three formative assessments. The demand made of the participants advanced dramatically, well beyond the level of the previous three assessments.

Recommendations

Ultimately, while this research report calls for the integration of learners' in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, it is necessary for that distinction to become blurred. Education requires the incorporation of what Moje et al (2004) call the 'third space.' Moreover, "rather than locating digital practices as an in-and-out-of-school dichotomy…the discontinuities between practices in various sites [are] an intergenerational struggle over literacy norms" (Mills, 2009: 253). The digital media and literacy habits are not limited to a few sites, rather they are as diverse as the content that is shared on them. Digital texts are ever-evolving,

> because there are so many examples of digital media available, selecting a single resource to examine over all the other possible resources would be limiting. To begin, teachers need to avail themselves to the wide number of digital resources available (Serafini, 2013: 162).

This means that in order to provide a well-rounded approach to teaching literacy, the use of a variety of resources that range across a multitude of media platforms is imperative. Ultimately, the extent to which memes can be read depends on their visual clues being understood. The visual rhetoric approach that memes undertake

> combines elements of the semiotic and discursive approaches to analyse the persuasive elements of visual texts. Visual rhetoric

> understands visual texts as created to construct meaning. Rhetoric is also considered to be persuasive [and] visual arguments have a unique ability to draw viewers into the argument's construction via the viewer's cognitive role in completing "visual enthymemes" to fill in the unstated premise (Huntington, 2013).

Thus, viewers of memes can be expected to interpret their meanings upon exposure due to the signs that reveal them. It is the role of the educator to craft an appreciation and understanding for materials that are used to teach language. By engaging with contemporary texts in the classroom, educators have the potential to develop learners' appreciation and understanding. Lessons and materials are more likely to stimulate learners because their interests have been appealed to in the lessons that teach content to them. This is entirely in the hands of the educator. It is our responsibility to inform learners of contemporary materials and to teach them how to approach them.

While the final formative assessment proved to be too challenging, the other three formative assessments were properly scaffolded and better executed. The data collection made on these formative assessments indicated that a range of results was achieved by participants whose interrogations of the texts varied. Furthermore, it showed that even participants who scored poorly in some formative assessments on memes managed to interpret the memes of others. It was suggested through the data collection process that context was lacking for some of the participants, while those who understood the context were able to read the texts and interpret them for meaning. Context is essential to understanding memes. Even a meme that has been created simply out of humour would lack comedic effect if context has no bearing. Context can be provided by way of general discussion, through worksheets, captions and comprehensions, or through the screening of video clips. The way in which

> images bring about relations between represented participants and the viewer [is through] perspective. Producing an image involves not only the choice between 'offer' and 'demand' and the selection of a certain size of frame, but also…a selection of the angle, the 'point-of-view', and this implies the possibility of expressing 'subjective attitudes' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 129).

It should be noted that information excerpts accompanied a few of the memes on the formative assessment worksheets so as to assist learners' understanding, however this is not the case with conventional online memes. Many memes that spread online in response to a cultural phenomenon are not accompanied with an explanation. They are often produced and shared by people who are aware of the event or subject to which they relate. It is likely that many participants many not have been aware of the memes' contexts because some related to incidents that occurred three years before the data collection took place, when the participants were younger and possibly less conscious popular culture. There are numerous factors that account for limited context; a long-standing consideration towards literacy practices within schools stems from socio-economic conditions. Context requires consideration because forms of literacy are open to interpretation, thus "perception plays a central role in our understanding of the world. In our engagements with the world around us, our perceptual system…allows us to gather information that allows us to understand" the visuals with which we engage (Serafini, 2013: 31). The participants of this research report are familiar with memes despite coming from different backgrounds. They also understand the premise and intention behind memes, thus is important to recognise visual images in the classroom that feature prominently outside of it. Cope and Kalantzis (2000: 8) both maintain that accounting for diversity is crucial in today's culture, and that "critical framing within a pedagogy of multiliteracies involves the development of alternative reading positions and practices for questioning and critiquing texts, with their affiliated social formations and culturally specific assumptions."

Memes make for a refreshing and interactive approach to visual literacy education. They appeal to learners' out-of-school literacy practices and overcome outdated materials and the limitations that accompany them. This by no means diminishes the value and substance of traditional forms of visual literacy education such as advertisements and cartoons. However, it does suggest that the inclusion of alternative visual texts promotes a necessary opportunity to connect to all the learners of the classroom in different schools across the curriculum. In doing so, learners' interpretative skills develop alongside the exponential changes in technology. A modern perspective benefits from modern texts; memes embody this. In addition to their being modern, memes have the added advantage of being produced by any person who wishes to create them as opposed to a professional cartoonist or advertiser. Memes are more accessible texts that generate discussions and employ a multitude of linguistic techniques. It is thus of profound importance to acknowledge

memes as a viable text that teaches and develops visual literacy skills. Moreover, a "key emphasis of multiliteracies is the need for literacy curricula to incorporate a widening range of digital text types with their associated boundaries of generic structure that are less visible than those of time-honoured, written forms" (Mills, 2009: 105). Thus, while prescribed novels, plays, short stories and poetry are all taught in schools, we incorporate an assortment of visual literacy texts into the curriculum as well. Furthermore, "rather than using texts in the reproduction of the dominant cultural values of the West, critical framing in multiliteracies pedagogy stimulates students' thinking about how textual practices work in the construction of subjectivity and production of culture" (Mills, 2009: 105).

The third formative assessment involved using memes to examine participants' understanding of the prescribed setworks that had been read in class. The purpose of this assessment was to determine whether memes could enhance learners' interrogations and understandings of core themes and characters within their prescribed coursework, and to ascertain whether

> the use of visual aids [could] act as 'vehicles' that can be used to enrich and enhance the act of reading. Similarly, in research related to the use of multimedia applications for language teaching and learning literature, it has been stated that the insertion of visual aids in teaching enables authentic communication between students and literary texts (Yumus, Salehi and John, 2013: 115).

Many of the participants of this research report claimed only to understand once they are able to visualise a concept. Memes and other unconventional images that have been created in response to works of literature are currently in existence. Thus, incorporating intertextual memes into the classroom is a simple process that merely requires the active sifting through of available resources. Therefore, a matter of consideration in terms of overlooking the use of such texts to teach or examine the understanding of literature is that learners' literacy skills remain underdeveloped if these skills are not challenged in a structured setting. Moreover, the 'visual learners' who require pictures so as to understand are not accommodated in the learning process because their literacy skills remain unchallenged in the classroom. Graph 4's results reveal a successful interrogation with and understanding of the memes that were provided. The fact that the all participants passed this formative assessment worksheet and that the majority of learners

achieved high results indicated positive washback that reveals that most of the participants understood the memes that challenged their critical thinking and understanding of the prescribed setworks. This claim can be justified through the fact that memes contain very few words and thus rely on the visuals to enhance perspective. While the number of words that appear on a meme can vary greatly depending on its subject, "the basic fact remains that the text will not employ many of the basic conventions of the [original source, such as literature setworks] and therefore meaning must be made by other methods. The [memes] then become active agents in the process of transmitting meaning" (Duncan, 2013: 137). In addition, because memes project ideas or humour and are not simply visual representations of their subject matter but rather effective commentaries on them, memes further the understanding of content. Memes would also extend to the critical thinking that is applied to the materials that are taught. Duncan (2013: 137) adds that "visual reading skills include being able to read individual images metaphorically and to identify how abstract concepts such as tone and character might be transmitted through…study." Thus, memes have the potential to enhance the understanding of content rather than simply reinforce it.

Conclusion

The integration of memes as part of visual literacy allows for diverse materials and socially relevant content because memes and their subject matter constantly change. Contemporary memes can become outdated, because what was topical or relevant at the time of its creation can lose its popularity or relevance after prolonged periods in circulation. The subject matter of the memes can develop further or it can no longer be of relevance. Moreover, memes that go viral have done so because the subjects to which they relate have become newsworthy. What makes this an imperative component of memes is that it enables educators to update and modify their teaching resources, meaning the educators do not become complacent in the classroom. Materials and memes must adapt accordingly, meaning that visual literacy education would remain current, relevant and engaging while still imparting the skills necessary to read them. Once learners' visual literacy skills are developed, they can be applied to any meme as easily and accessibly as any other visual text. The reading of visual images is a strong component of viewers' identities because it gauges viewers' appreciation for analysis. As Gennrich and Janks write,

> the role of participant is linked to the role of text user because it is easier to be a participant if one understands the social uses of

> different kinds of texts. As text users, readers engage with a wide range of different types of texts and understand the relationship between the content, form and social function of a text (2013: 459).

The roles of the participant and the text user connect in what becomes the role of the analyst, thus text viewers do not simply read texts, but they also interrogate them. They attempt to make sense of what they see in order to interpret what they understand. Developing resource materials to accommodate not only learners' interests but also their knowledge and application of contemporary culture is vital in teaching and examining visual and critical literacy. This is where multiliteracies plays an important role in the work that we do as educators, as it "aims to move literacy education forward from antiquated pedagogies of an exclusively formal, standard, monomodal and national language to those that are inclusive of informal, open-ended, multimodal forms of communication, which cross national boundaries and support productive diversity" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000: 22). In a pluralist environment such as the school in which this research was conducted, participants' socio-economic issues vary and thus exposure to multiple forms of digital texts will also vary. Janks (2010: 24) explores this precise issue by saying that "dominance and access come together in a…question that confronts teachers of language and literacy." She asserts that "if we provide students with access to dominant forms, this contributes to maintaining the dominance of these forms. If, on the other hand, we deny students access, we perpetuate their marginalisation in a society that continues to recognise the value and importance of these forms" (Janks, 2010: 24). Thus, educators should explore the variety of texts available to them so as to provide a well-rounded account of texts that can develop literacy skills.

With the increasing popularity of different forms of multimodal texts,

> it has long been accepted that literacy is not a simple act of decoding, comprehending or reproducing printed word on the page. Rather literacy has been shown to be founded in social practices so that becoming literate is a complex interaction between the learner's

> background and language and the context, purpose and discourse of the text (Walsh, 2010: 214).

Memes are in fact a part of learners' social practices, which is why they were the only images that were featured in each formative assessment. The fact that the respondents received different levels of exposure prior to any kind of assessment reveals that there is an analytical connection between contexts and texts infers that the ability to

> critically [analyse] and transform texts by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral -- that they represent particular points of views while silencing others and influence people's ideas -- and that their designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned in novel and hybrid ways (Freebody and Luke, 1999).

Huntington (2013: 1) asserts that "memes are more than internet humor; research shows them to function by appropriation and resistance to dominant media messages. By examining how memes can operate in subversive and representational ways, [they provide] a framework for the study of memes as symbolic, persuasive texts." This indicates that while they create a platform through which humour and socio-political commentary may take place, they also enable insightful conclusions to be drawn because memes contain substance. They depend on their encoded messages to 'speak' to their viewers, they assume that their viewers will be able to 'read' their content. As popular contemporary types of visual literacy, memes are already actively engaged by many users of digital media. Viewers of memes engage with memes through choice; memes go viral because they are seen and shared. As such, since they form part of the out-of-school literacy practices of most of the participants to this research report, it confirms that memes are an imperative feature of visual literacy, because memes enhance understanding and interpretative skills. Ultimately, there should not be such a vast distinction between in-and-out-of-school literacy practices. If such a distinction exists, it exposes a shortfall within the education system which is that text type and text selection in schools are outdated forms of testing, appealing more to educators' visual preferences and overlooking an entire category of visual text that appeals to the respondents of visual literacy in the classroom.

Appendices

Appendix 1

LETTER TO THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY DATE: 07 JUNE 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

Letter to the School Governing Body Requesting to Conduct Academic Research in the Grade 11 English Home Language Classroom

I, Irene Stephanie Clayton, am reading for a Master of Arts degree in Applied Languages and Literacies in Education in the Wits School of Education. In order to fulfil the requirements towards the completion of my degree, I must conduct academic research for which I produce a written research report. It is thus that I respectfully appeal for your permission and support in conducting this research with the three Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I teach.

I am doing research that is focused on the use of the meme in promoting learners' literacy skills and application of literature and language devices. The title of my research report is "'Meme'-orising Visual Literacy in the Classroom: Investigating the role of memes in literacy development". I intend to investigate how learners' out-of-school visual literacy practices influence their in-school interrogation of visual texts by using memes.

A meme is a picture that includes a caption either for humourous or satirical purposes. Memes predominantly appear on social media and are often seen and shared rapidly. I have chosen the meme as the basis of my research because of its prominence and relevance to new literacies. My data collection methods include the results of four formative assessment pieces, one summative assessment piece, and one five-question questionnaire.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study, and will not bring the school, the educators or learners into disrepute. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

I will appreciate your permission and support towards the completion of my research and, ultimately, my degree. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

_____

IRENE STEPHANIE CLAYTON

Appendix 2

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL DATE: 07 June 2017

Dear Principal of the school

Letter to the Principal Requesting to Conduct Academic Research in the Grade 11 English Home Language Classroom

I, Irene Stephanie Clayton, am reading for a Master of Arts degree in Applied Languages and Literacies in Education in the Wits School of Education. In order to fulfil the requirements towards the completion of my degree, I must conduct academic research for which I produce a written research report. It is thus that I respectfully appeal for your permission and support in conducting this research with the three Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I teach at the school.

I am doing research that is focused on the use of the meme in promoting learners' literacy skills and application of literature and language devices. The title of my research report is "'Meme'-orising visual literacy in the classroom: Investigating the role of memes in literacy development". I intend to investigate how learners' out-of-school visual literacy practices influence their in-school interrogation of visual texts by using memes.

A meme is a picture that includes a caption either for humourous or satirical purposes. Memes predominantly appear on social media and are often seen and shared rapidly. I have chosen the meme as the basis of my research because of its prominence and relevance to new literacies. My data collection methods include the results of four formative assessment pieces, one summative assessment piece, and one five-question questionnaire.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study, and will not bring the school, the educators or learners into disrepute. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

I will appreciate your permission and support towards the completion of my research and, ultimately, my degree. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

_____

IRENE STEPHANIE CLAYTON

Appendix 3

LETTER TO THE PARENTS DATE: 07 June 2017

Dear Parents

Letter to the parents of Grade 11 learners requesting to Conduct Academic Research in the Grade 11 English Home Language Classroom

I, Irene Stephanie Clayton, am reading for a Master of Arts degree in Applied Languages and Literacies in Education in the Wits School of Education. In order to fulfil the requirements towards the completion of my degree, I must conduct academic research for which I produce a written research report. It is thus that I respectfully appeal for your permission and support in conducting this research with your child in the Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I teach at the school.

I am doing research that is focused on the use of the meme in promoting learners' literacy skills and application of literature and language devices. The title of my research report is "'Meme'-orising Visual Literacy in the Classroom: Investigating the role of memes in literacy development". I intend to investigate how learners' out-of-school visual literacy practices influence their in-school interrogation of visual texts by using memes.

A meme is a picture that includes a caption either for humourous or satirical purposes. Memes predominantly appear on social media and are often seen and shared rapidly. I have chosen the meme as the basis of my research because of its prominence and relevance to new literacies. My data collection methods include the results of four formative assessment pieces, one summative assessment piece, and one five-question questionnaire.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study, and will not bring the school, the educators or learners into disrepute. Your child's individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

I will appreciate your permission and support towards the completion of my research and, ultimately, my degree. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

_____

IRENE STEPHANIE CLAYTON

Appendix 4

LETTER TO THE LEARNERS DATE: 6 June 2017

Dear Learner

Letter Requesting Learner Participation in Academic Research

I, Irene Stephanie Clayton, am reading for a Master of Arts degree in Applied Languages and Literacies in Education at the Wits School of Education. In order to fulfil the requirements towards the completion of my degree, I must conduct academic research for which I produce a written research report. It is thus that I respectfully appeal for your participation in the research as you are the Grade 11 learners that I currently teach.

I am doing research on memes, which are pictures that include a caption either for humourous or satirical purposes. I have chosen the meme as the basis of my research because of its prominence and relevance to new literacies. I want to undertake research about how relevant memes are in the classroom and whether learners' engagement with such texts should be considered in the materials and the assessments that are designed for them; I intend to investigate whether your out-of-school visual literacy practices can be applied to the classroom.

My investigation requires learner participation in a total of four classroom worksheets, one mock-test, and one five-question questionnaire. The work does not count for marks and will not detract from any of the prescribed work that needs to be taught. It will simply assist in the providing data for me to analyse towards my research report.

I request for participation in this research. I need your permission to teach you four lessons about memes as forms of visual literacy, and require your written response to the worksheets presented to you. I also request your consent in completing a five-question questionnaire based on your own visual literacy practices.

Remember, this is not a test, it is not for marks and it is voluntary, which means that you don't have to do it. You will be in no way disadvantaged by participating in the research. Also, if you decide halfway through that you prefer to stop, this is completely your choice and will not affect you negatively in any way.

I will not be using your own name but I will make up one (a pseudonym), so that no one can identify you. All information about you will be kept confidential in all my writing about the study. Also, all collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project.

Your parents have also been given an information sheet and consent form, but at the end of the day it is your decision to join us in the study.

I look forward to working with you!

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you.

_____

IRENE STEPHANIE CLAYTON

Appendix 5 – Participant Questionnaire

Questionnaire:

1	Have you ever sent a meme to another person or shared a meme online?	Y	N
2	Have you ever sent or shared a meme without any accompanying text?	Y	N
3	Would you send a meme knowing that it would provoke a response from the recipient?	Y	N
4	Have you ever shared or viewed 'viral' content online?	Y	N
5	Have you ever had a discussion with someone based on the viral content in question?	Y	N

Appendix 6 – Formative Assessment 1

Formative Assessment – South African memes – a local perspective

Text A



1. What suggestion does Text A make about South African taxi drivers?
2. Comment on the facial expression of the woman in Text A.
3. Does Text A empower drivers of regular vehicles or drivers of taxis? Discuss.
4. With reference to Text A's visual, do you think the meme's caption portrays a cultural perspective?
5. Do you think that Text A's view is held by all South African road-users? Discuss with reference to the visual in relation to the text.
6. Do you think Text A is a typical social commentary about the driving habits of South African taxi drivers? Justify your response.

Text B



7. Relate the text 'The tribe has spoken' to a South African context.
8. What is the purpose of the voting card being held up by the man in Text B?
9. In what way does the voting process in Text B relate to South Africa?
10. Do you think the man in the visual accurately reflects the 'tribe' to which the text in Text B relates? Discuss.
11. What connotations does the word 'tribe' possess and is this accurate in a local context?
12. Do you think the word 'tribe' has been used accurately in a South African context?

Text C



Look at the top half of Text C:

13. What kind of dwelling is depicted?
14. Do you think that this perspective represents a local or an international opinion? Give a reason for your answer.
15. Is this an example of stereotype or prejudice?
16. How would you depict a local rural dwelling more accurately than this one?

Look at the bottom half of Text C:

17. What type of settlement is depicted?
18. Do you think this half accurately depicts the living conditions of most South Africans? Discuss.

Look at Text B overall:

19. How does the bottom half of Text C dispel the opinion of the top half?
20. Discuss the humour of Text C.
21. Would you accept this meme as a depiction of where you live? Explain with reference to the visuals and the text.

Text A and Text C Source: https://za.pinterest.com/explore/africa-meme/?lp=true

Text B Source: http://www.sapeople.com/2015/12/14/yet-another-finance-minister-and-south-african-humour-takes-off/

Appendix 7 – Formative Assessment 2

Formative Assessment – Parody Using Memes

In 2015, Comedian Steve Harvey hosted the 2015 Miss Universe pageant and made a huge blunder. "When announcing the winner, Harvey announced Ariadna Gutierrez, Miss Colombia, as the winner. As she was being crowned, Harvey stepped in and said he had to apologise. He continued on to say that Miss Colombia was instead the first runner up and Miss Philippines was the actual winner of 2015's Miss Universe" (Associated Press, 2015).

Parody is a humourous device that imitates or makes fun of something.

Text A



Have you ever noticed that as soon as the latest smartphone been released that a newer, a slightly different version of it is introduced to the market shortly afterwards? Usually, these similar upgrades are named after the previous model followed by the letter 'S' to distinguish it as the

1. Relate the meme to the incident on which Text A is based.
2. In what ways is Text A an example of parody?
3. What is the relevance of the 'S' at the end of 'Miss Universo 2015?
4. Do you find Text A to be effective? Substantiate your response.

YOU get a car! And YOU get a car!

In September 2004, "talk show host Oprah Winfrey uttered those words to a studio audience. Moments later, amid the shrieks, 276 members of Winfrey's studio audience each found themselves with a new Pontiac G-6 sedan" (Erb, 2016)

Text B



5. Instead of crowns, what did Oprah actually give her audience members?
6. To which incident does Text B refer?
7. How does Text B parody the aforementioned incident?

The image below is of Steve Harvey; it circulated shortly before the announcement of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America. Trump's rival was Hillary Clinton.

Text C



8. Why do you think the maker of this meme used Steve Harvey as the announcer of the election, (Text C)?
9. What do you think is the intention of Text C?
10. Do you think that Text C is an effective form of parody?

Text A Source: https://za.pinterest.com/Buizness/miss-universe-2015/?lp=true

Text B Source: https://za.pinterest.com/Buizness/miss-universe-2015/?lp=true

Text C Source: https://imgflip.com/i/w5ls8

Appendix 8 – Formative Assessment 3

Formative Assessment – 'MacMemes' and Tsotsis

Text A



Text B



1. To which incident in *Macbeth* does Text A refer?

2. Relate the intention of the meme to Lady Macbeth's "out, damned spot" line.

3. In what ways has Lady Macbeth's line been parodied?

4. How does Text A reinforce the gender stereotypes of the 11th century period in which Macbeth is set?

5. Text A is presented as an advertisement.

   5.1 Who is Text A's target market?
   5.2 How does Text A persuade its viewer?

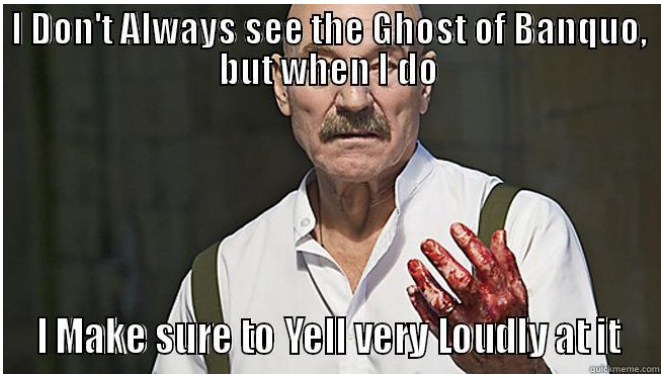
6. With reference to the character Macbeth, discuss how the humour of Text B works.

7. In what way does Text B go against traditional gender stereotypes of Macbeth's time?

8. Which meme is a better representation of Lady Macbeth, Text A or Text B? Justify your response.

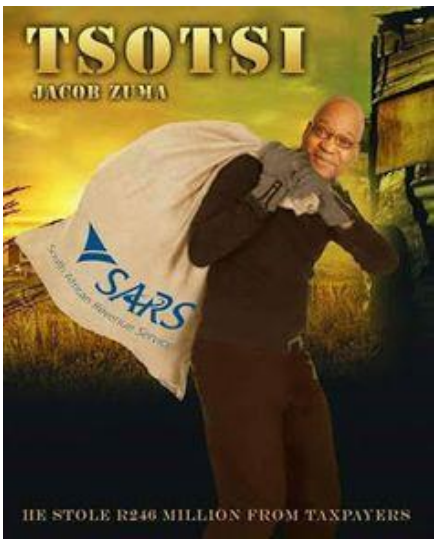
9. How are Text A and Text B different? Discuss by comparing their composition, images and text.

Text C



10. How do the words of Text C reveal the reaction of the guests at the Banquet to Macbeth?
11. Does Text C effectively highlight Macbeth's guilt?

Text D



12. What commentary does Text D make about Jacob Zuma?
13. Do you think that Text D is a fair depiction of him? Validate your response.
14. Does Text C relate to the novel and do you think that it needs to in order to be culturally relevant?

Text A Source: https://za.pinterest.com/pin/442197257133154230/

Text B Source: https://za.pinterest.com/pin/377598749997117081/

Text C Source: http://www.quickmeme.com/p/3vnp1b

Text D Source:
https://www.google.co.za/search?q=miss+universo+2015+miss+universe+2015s+meme&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjxuKi6iInVAhXBLMAKHYbDDrEQsAQIHw&biw=1366&bih=652#tbm=isch&q=tsotsi+jacob+zuma+meme&imgrc=0_5u3ZFXHQkwfM:&spf=1500045417457

Appendix 9 – Formative Assessment 4

Formative Assessment – Meme Imitation: Make-A-Meme

Oh, please tell me how you can do better?



Make a Meme! Your task is to create a meme of your own applying any of the principles used in any of the previous three worksheets.

You may use any existing image – or draw on of your own – and 'meme-orise' any topic of your choice. Be as creative as possible.

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