*Proposed study:* “Do Filipino netizens actually read: The implications of Memes and News Headlines on Filipino’s reading comprehension.”

Among 79 participating countries and economies, the Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This is alarming as “Reading proficiency is essential for a wide variety of human activities - from following instructions in a manual; to finding out the who, what, when, where, and why of an event; to communicating with others for a specific purpose or transaction,” the summary of the PISA 2018 results reads. To comprehend a text, one must read. Throughout the history of mass communication, researchers have studied the impact of media on academic achievement. Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, and Wright (2001, p. 1 as cited in Lin, et.al., 2011) noted that a new medium is often blamed for “capturing excessive time and interest of youth, for corrupting their values, for wasting time that would otherwise have been spent more constructively.” However, there are several media of teaching and learning available in the formal, non-formal, and informal types of education (Kumar, 2009). The media introduces students to a new world inquiry approach rather than relying solely on textbooks and teachers for information (Kumar, 2009). Memes and news headlines have become the main determinant of this study as 1) in our modern media environment characterized by participatory media culture, memes have become a tool for citizens seeking to participate actively and discursively in a digital public sphere, and 2) in the height of the political season in the Philippines, headlines of newspaper articles on the internet have also become the subject of Filipino’s topic in discourse. These two create a considerable amount of noise on the internet. Memes prevail as it is a media that is easily “circulated, imitated, and transformed by individual Internet users, creating a shared cultural experience in the process” (Shifman, 2013: 367 as cited in Brockmann, et.al. 2017). Meanwhile, short forms like news headlines also stand out on social media as they are usually presented in a click-baiting format.

There are studies that use media, particularly memes, as a means to let students learn effectively or think critically in a classroom. For instance, Hartman, et.al. (2021) have found that students often make meaning of texts by connecting them to other texts from the popular culture they know and value. Research has shown that artistic response helps students form meaningful relationships with texts, thus, the study developed and implemented an artistic response strategy called the *Perspective Meme activity* as a way for students to explore character development through artistic response. The perspective meme strategy can benefit students by giving them an entry point into the text and enabling them to look more closely at how different perspectives might add to, contradict, or challenge each other. The strategy also pushes students to consider their own perspectives and how they experience the text. In addition, the strategy teaches students the value of activating and utilizing their prior knowledge to help them transact with and comprehend the text, and it can help them retain what they have read.

Beucher, et.al., (2020) analyzes students’ spoken and multimodal responses to a curriculum that purposefully foregrounded Native perspectives and digital media. The participants demonstrated nuanced understandings of rhetoric, argumentation, and multimodal redesign. Students found an avenue to critically analyze and remix media imagery (i.e. memes) relating to social contemporary and connected issues. By providing media texts showing multiple perspectives, students were invited to arrive at their own conclusions. Rather than being explicitly taught to critique (con)texts, Campano et al. (2013, as cited in Beucher, et.al., 2020) take an organic view of critical literacy, explaining that critical consciousness is activated when students “are afforded the curricular space to mobilize cultural and epistemic resources in their transactions with texts and with their worlds”.

There is a study (Purnama, 2017) that seeks an opportunity to gain a wider yet meaningful engagement of technology and language learning, especially by incorporating images, written text, and specialized topics into a social media application posting (memes and Instagram). The result, as it is expected, students prefer this kind of activity better than previous activities they have encountered inside the classroom. There are advantages in utilizing memes in order to be creative and innovative in language teaching, one of which, is that memes creation proposes an eye-catching learning process that will be easily adopted by students. However, in spite of the results presented, further observation and research will be needed to see whether creating memes has a significant contribution to students’ proficiency level of English.

Another study performed two experiments that attempted to analyze the effects of newspaper article headlines and summaries on final comprehension and recall (Leon, 1997). The study began with the aim of comparing two headlines and two initial summaries from the same article in terms of their influence on the comprehension and retention of the information read by the chosen subjects. According to the results obtained, the modified version brought about an improvement in the comprehension and retention of the news article. On the other hand, the headline and the summary of the original version did not produce the desired effect. The second experiment complements the first in the sense that it offers a possible explanation for the absence of significant differences among the conditions presented in the first. In general, the accessibility of a text depends heavily on the degree to which certain statements are integrated into the other contents. The study confirmed that the aims and criteria of journalists differ from those held by the authors of scientific texts and question whether the reading strategies applied are the same in both cases. The study then argues that, as journalists do not necessarily apply macrostructural criteria, what, then is the role of the headline and the summary in newspaper articles? The headline and the summary allow the reader to take in the most prominent information while scanning the article. Once the reader has ascertained the main ideas present in the article, the reading and comprehension of the article will become easier because he will not have to build the macrostructure himself.

With how the studies above investigate the benefits—or the lack thereof—of integrating memes in the classroom learning and how some analyze the effects of news headlines on final comprehension, they do not seek the implications of memes and news headlines on reading comprehension as the main interest of the study. Research of this nature has little to no evidence from the existing literature, hence, there is a need to fill this gap in specifically identifying the implications of memes and news headlines on reading comprehension.

The proliferation of short forms like memes and news headlines led to this study aiming to identify whether memes and news headlines have a significant effect on Filipino netizens’ already low reading comprehension and how these implications relate to Filipino’s attitudes toward reading.

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