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THE UTILIZATION OF INTERNET MEMES TOWARDS STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS AT UPTD SMPN 7 KISARAN

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji permasalahan pendekatan pengajaran konvensional yang seringkali kurang mampu melibatkan peserta didik yang melek digital sehingga mengakibatkan ketidaktertarikan dan rasa tidak relevan dalam kegiatan akademik. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi dampak penggunaan meme sebagai media pembelajaran terhadap keterampilan menulis 32 peserta didik kelas tujuh di UPTD SMPN 7 Kisaran, dengan fokus pada penulisan teks deskriptif. Hipotesisnya adalah bahwa memanfaatkan keakraban alami peserta didik dengan meme akan meningkatkan kapasitas mereka untuk menciptakan narasi yang koheren, menumbuhkan pemikiran kritis, dan meningkatkan ekspresi tertulis. Pendekatan penelitian tindakan kelas kuantitatif digunakan selama dua siklus pembelajaran. Pengumpulan data melibatkan penilaian pra dan pasca tes yang menganalisis peningkatan dalam konten, organisasi, tata bahasa, kosakata, dan tanda baca. Penelitian ini menetapkan tolok ukur keberhasilan, dengan target 85% peserta mencapai skor minimum 75. Hasil pra tes menunjukkan kondisi dasar yang menantang, karena tidak ada peserta didik yang memenuhi kriteria kelulusan minimum. Siklus awal, yang mengintegrasikan meme ke dalam tugas menulis, menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan, dengan hampir lima puluh persen peserta didik mencapai nilai kelulusan. Penyempurnaan pendekatan dengan menggabungkan "kotak istilah" kontekstual untuk pemahaman meme pada siklus kedua membuahkan hasil yang luar biasa: tingkat kelulusan 100% di antara 32 peserta didik. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi strategis meme internet secara signifikan meningkatkan keterampilan menulis peserta didik Kelas 7, yang berhasil menghubungkan pengajaran dengan preferensi pelajar digital dan meningkatkan komunikasi, berpikir kritis, dan kesadaran audiens—komponen kunci bagi pelajar abad ke-21.

Kata Kunci: Meme Internet, Keterampilan Menulis Bahasa Inggris, Teks Deskriptif, Peserta Didik Kelas 7, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas.

Abstract: *The study examines the issue of conventional teaching approaches that often lack the ability to engage digitally literate students, resulting in disinterest and a sense of irrelevance in academic activities. The primary objective was to evaluate the impact of using memes as a learning media on the writing skills of 32 seventh-grade students at UPTD SMPN 7 Kisaran, focusing on writing descriptive texts. The hypothesis was that leveraging students' natural familiarity with memes would enhance their capacity to create coherent narratives, foster*

critical thinking, and improve written expression. A quantitative classroom action research approach was used over two learning cycles. Data collection involved pre- and post-test assessments that analyzed improvements in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. The study established a benchmark for success, with a target of 85% of participants achieving a minimum score of 75. Pre-test results indicated a challenging baseline, as no students met the minimum passing criteria. The initial cycle, which integrated memes into writing assignments, demonstrated significant improvement, with nearly fifty percent of students achieving a passing grade. Refining the approach by incorporating contextual "term box" for meme comprehension in the second cycle yielded remarkable results: a 100% pass rate among 32 students. This study demonstrates that the strategic integration of internet memes significantly improved the writing skills of Grade 7 students, which successfully connects teaching with digital learners' preferences and enhances communication, critical thinking, and audience awareness—key components for 21st-century learners.

Keywords: *Ternet Memes, English Writing Skills, Descriptive Text, Grade 7 Students, Classroom Action Research.*

INTRODUCTION

The widespread presence of internet memes in today's digital communication has transformed the way people, especially young people, interact with and understand online content. The emergence of digital culture has significantly transformed students' perceptions and production of written text (Shifman, 2014). The rapid spread and recontextualization of these often humorous and culturally relevant images, videos, or texts across social media platforms has made them a prominent form of expression among junior high school students. Internet memes, which combine humor, visuals, and concise language, serve as an important communication tool among adolescents (Highfield, 2016). This study explores the crucial question of whether incorporating internet memes into the curriculum can effectively improve the writing skills of seventh-grade junior high school students.

Conventional approaches to teaching writing often fail to engage students who are digital natives, resulting in disinterest and a sense of irrelevance in their academic pursuits. Therefore, understanding how relevant and engaging media such as internet memes can bridge this gap and foster more effective writing practices is crucial for educators seeking to develop vital communication skills for the 21st century. This trend requires innovative teaching methods that resonate with students' everyday experiences (Mills, 2016). This study aims to evaluate the impact of using internet memes as a learning resource on the writing skills of seventh-grade junior high school students. Studies show that integrating diverse media increases engagement

and academic achievement (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). The study defines writing as the process of composing descriptive text, with an emphasis on depicting locations. By leveraging students' natural engagement and motivation from their daily interactions with memes, this method is proposed to strengthen their capacity to create coherent narratives, foster critical thinking skills, and improve their overall writing skills. Visual literacy is recognized as a critical competency in the digital age (Serafini, 2014).

This research is crucial because it addresses the pressing demand for creative and engaging teaching methods relevant to today's digital generation. Previous studies on digital literacy and multimodal communication have emphasized the benefits of integrating various media into educational environments. However, there are few focused studies examining the direct use of internet memes to improve formal writing skills, particularly in the junior high school context. Formal investigations of meme-based learning at the middle school level are still rare (Dynel, 2016). This research seeks to address this gap by systematically analyzing the relationship between meme-based activities and student writing outcomes using classroom action research methodology. Research indicates a disparity between digital communication in external environments and the classroom (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007).

The study examines students' writing scores before and after the utilization of memes as the learning media, their level of engagement during meme-based writing tasks, and qualitative evaluations of their creative and critical thinking in response to meme prompts. Students demonstrate higher motivation when educational content is linked to familiar digital formats (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). Both groups will participate in pre- and post-assessments to evaluate changes in their writing skills based on several criteria, such as coherence, cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar. Innovative methods can enhance creativity and critical thinking in writing assignments (Lee, 2020). This research shows that analyzing, interpreting, and constructing responses to memes requires students to engage in concise storytelling, rhetorical analysis, and understanding their audience, skills that can be directly applied to formal writing. For example, creating texts influenced by memes often requires distilling complex concepts into a concise format, which can enhance students' skills in synthesizing information and formulating strong statements.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative methodology, specifically structured as classroom action research. A classroom action research design was used to systematically examine learning innovations (Creswell, 2012). The study focused on improving the writing skills of 32 students from Grade VII-3 at the Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) of State Senior High School (SMPN) Number 7 Kisaran. In this study, writing talent specifically demonstrated the capacity to construct descriptive language, with a focus on describing locations. The research subjects consisted of 32 students from Grade VII-3 at the UPTD of State Senior High School Number 7 Kisaran. During the preparation phase, the researcher developed a collection of educational resources, consisting of lesson plans, student worksheets, learning media (memes), and assessment worksheets. The educational materials, including memes, were sourced from social media networks, including Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Digital memes were selected from relevant social media platforms to maintain cultural relevance (Androutsopoulos, 2014). The lesson plans were created to facilitate data collection.

Data were collected from student worksheets during two classroom action cycles focused on writing activities that used memes as teaching media. These writing assignments primarily required the development of descriptive narratives about place. The results of the pre-test and post-test evaluations were examined quantitatively, using descriptive statistics presented in the form of percentages and descriptions. Descriptive statistics were used in the quantitative analysis to assess performance progress (Field, 2013). The study was considered successful if 85% of students achieved the minimum completion requirement, defined as a score of 75 on their English writing assessment. The teaching approach followed the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) process, which is categorized into three main phases: pre-task (introduction, modeling, and preparation), task cycle (task implementation, planning, and reporting), and language focus (analysis and practice) (Willis, 1996).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section outlines the data and analysis collected on students' writing competencies through several tests. The results are presented objectively, using quantitative data, tables, and figures to illustrate student success. Data were collected from pre-tests and subsequent post-tests over two learning cycles, focusing on the composition of descriptive texts. Specifically, these descriptive passages relate to depictions of locations. The study outlines students' skill

levels and the variations recorded in their results for content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, in addition to the overall score. Interaction with digital media enhances fundamental literacy practices (Serafini, 2014). Tables and figures are numbered sequentially according to their presentation and offer a concise, factual summary of the results. During the initial cycle, particularly at the beginning of the learning cycle, students took a pre-test focusing on written work on descriptive texts.

Pre-Test Assessment

This table presents comprehensive individual student scores for the pre-test. These scores indicate students' success in various writing components, including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, as well as their total score on the pre-test. As can be seen below, the scores are:

Table 1: Pre-test individual scores

No.	Student's initial	Content (1-100)	Organization (1-100)	Grammar (1-100)	Vocabulary (1-100)	Punctuation (1-100)	Pre-test
1.	ADP	55	53	52	53	52	53
2.	ADB	45	44	46	45	45	45
3.	ANA	52	51	52	53	52	52
4.	AAP	53	54	52	53	53	53
5.	AAA	45	45	44	46	45	45
6.	ANZ	40	40	39	41	40	40
7.	AAS	45	45	45	44	46	45
8.	AVP	40	40	41	39	40	40
9.	CAT	53	53	52	54	53	53
10.	DDZ	45	45	45	44	46	45
11.	FA	42	41	42	43	42	42
12.	GBAM	51	51	50	52	51	51
13.	HHH	40	39	40	41	40	40
14.	I	45	45	45	45	45	45
15.	JOAM	45	44	45	46	45	45
16.	JS	60	60	59	61	60	60
17.	MP	51	51	50	52	51	51
18.	MR	53	53	52	53	54	53
19.	MJ	55	55	55	55	55	55
20.	MFGS	42	42	41	43	42	42
21.	MMP	57	57	56	58	57	57
22.	NO	55	55	55	55	55	55

23. NAS	52	52	51	53	52	52
24. NKW	63	63	62	64	63	63
25. NPP	55	55	54	56	55	55
26. RDA	57	57	56	58	57	57
27. RK	62	62	61	63	62	62
28. RA	60	60	60	60	60	60
29. RCA	51	50	51	52	51	51
30. SMR	43	42	43	44	43	43
31. YACB	47	47	46	48	47	47
32. YFS	55	55	54	56	55	55
Average score	50.44	50.19	49.88	50.50	50.19	53.09

Thus, the students' passing status in the pre-test relative to the minimum completion criterion of 75, which categorizes students based on their overall final score and their performance in each aspect of writing, can be summarized as follows:

Table 2: Pre-test passing status

Category	Overall final score (amount / percentage)	Content (amount / percentage)	Organization (amount / percentage)	Grammar (amount / percentage)	Vocabulary (amount / percentage)	Punctuation (amount / percentage)
Passed (≥ 75)	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%		0 / 0%
Not passed (< 75)	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%		32 / 100%

The pre-test results demonstrated students' initial writing abilities relative to the established passing criterion of 75. The final overall scores and individual writing component scores—content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation—indicated that no students met the passing threshold. Thirty-two students (100%) failed any component of the pre-test and did not achieve the final overall passing score. These data established a baseline, indicating that at the beginning of the assessment period, students generally needed substantial improvement in all aspects of writing to meet the criterion. The learning process was conducted according to the lesson plan, and students were given worksheets as formative assessments to collect data on their writing skills improvement through the use of memes.

First Cycle

This table presents each student's score on the post-exam (cycle 1), which reflects their performance in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation after the initial learning cycle. The scores are presented as follows:

Table 3: Post-test (cycle 1) individual scores

No.	Student's initial	Content (1-100)	Organization (1-100)	Grammar (1-100)	Vocabulary (1-100)	Punctuation (1-100)	Post-test (cycle 1)
1.	ADP	65	65	64	66	65	65
2.	ADB	78	77	78	79	78	78
3.	ANA	65	65	65	65	65	65
4.	AAP	65	65	65	65	65	65
5.	AAA	62	62	61	63	62	62
6.	ANZ	65	65	64	66	65	65
7.	AAS	82	82	81	83	82	82
8.	AVP	63	63	62	64	63	63
9.	CAT	65	65	65	65	65	65
10.	DDZ	63	62	63	64	63	63
11.	FA	63	63	62	64	63	63
12.	GBAM	78	78	77	79	78	78
13.	HHH	65	65	65	65	65	65
14.	I	60	60	59	61	60	60
15.	JOAM	60	60	60	60	60	60
16.	JS	78	78	77	79	78	78
17.	MP	62	62	61	63	62	62
18.	MR	72	72	71	73	72	72
19.	MJ	80	80	80	80	80	80
20.	MFGS	61	61	60	62	61	61
21.	MMP	81	81	80	82	81	81
22.	NO	78	78	77	79	78	78
23.	NAS	67	67	66	68	67	67
24.	NKW	79	79	78	80	79	79
25.	NPP	60	60	59	61	60	60
26.	RDA	78	78	77	79	78	78
27.	RK	78	78	77	79	78	78
28.	RA	77	77	76	78	77	77
29.	RCA	79	79	78	80	79	79
30.	SMR	81	81	80	82	81	81
31.	YACB	68	68	67	69	68	68
32.	YFS	83	83	82	84	83	83
Average score		70.66	70.59	69.91	71.31	70.66	71.09

The students' passing status on the post-test (cycle 1) relative to the minimum completion criterion of 75, which shows the percentage of students who passed and did not pass in the overall score and individual writing components, is presented as follows:

Table 4: Post-test (cycle 1) passing status

Category	Overall final score (amount / percentage)	Content (amount / percentage)	Organization (amount / percentage)	Grammar (amount / percentage)	Vocabulary (amount / percentage)	Punctuation (amount / percentage)
Passed (≥ 75)	14 / 43.75%	14 / 43.75%	14 / 43.75%	14 / 43.75%	14 / 43.75%	14 / 43.75%
Not passed (< 75)	18 / 56.25%	18 / 56.25%	18 / 56.25%	18 / 56.25%	18 / 56.25%	18 / 56.25%

However, student performance on the writing task above showed insignificant improvement and remained below the minimum completion criterion of 75 points. Post-test results (cycle 1) showed measurable improvement, although challenges remained. In the final assessment, 14 of 32 students (43.75%) achieved a passing score, while 18 students (56.25%) did not meet the score threshold of 75. This marked an improvement from the Pre-Test, where no students achieved a passing score. Analysis of individual writing aspects revealed consistent trends. Fourteen students (43.75%) achieved passing scores in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, while eighteen students (56.25%) did not meet the criteria in these areas. This indicates that nearly half of the students made sufficient progress to pass, but a significant number still needed additional support across all writing components. Therefore, an evaluation was conducted to identify components requiring revision from the first cycle to improve performance in the second cycle. The reflection suggests that students should be provided with a definitive set of terms found in memes, rather than being instructed to look them up in a dictionary, which may not adequately address various aspects of national and global culture, norms, customs, and objects. The provision of term boxes accelerate the students comprehension competencies contextually in the second cycle, representing the importance of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978).

Second Cyle

In the second cycle, most of the activities were slightly different from the first cycle, as

reflection was conducted to provide term boxes for students, which facilitated their understanding of the meaning and context of certain terms. The results of students' writing skills, which reflected their performance in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation after the second cycle, showed significant improvements, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 5: Post-test (cycle 2) individual scores

No.	Student's initial	Content (1-100)	Organization (1-100)	Grammar (1-100)	Vocabulary (1-100)	Punctuation (1-100)	Post-test (cycle 2)
1.	ADP	83	83	82	84	83	83
2.	ADB	85	85	84	86	85	85
3.	ANA	81	81	80	82	81	81
4.	AAP	81	81	80	82	81	81
5.	AAA	80	80	79	81	80	80
6.	ANZ	92	92	91	93	92	92
7.	AAS	95	95	94	96	95	95
8.	AVP	81	81	80	82	81	81
9.	CAT	95	95	94	96	95	95
10.	DDZ	80	80	79	81	80	80
11.	FA	80	80	79	81	80	80
12.	GBAM	83	83	82	84	83	83
13.	HHH	85	85	84	86	85	85
14.	I	81	81	80	82	81	81
15.	JOAM	80	80	79	81	80	80
16.	JS	95	95	94	96	95	95
17.	MP	81	81	80	82	81	81
18.	MR	85	85	84	86	85	85
19.	MJ	83	83	82	84	83	83
20.	MFGS	83	83	82	84	83	83
21.	MMP	91	91	90	92	91	91
22.	NO	83	83	82	84	83	83
23.	NAS	81	81	80	82	81	81
24.	NKW	82	82	81	83	82	82
25.	NPP	81	81	80	82	81	81
26.	RDA	81	81	80	82	81	81
27.	RK	85	85	84	86	85	85
28.	RA	83	83	82	84	83	83
29.	RCA	90	90	89	91	90	90
30.	SMR	91	91	90	92	91	91
31.	YACB	80	80	79	81	80	80

32. YFS	92	92	91	93	92	92
Average Score	84.66	84.66	83.66	85.31	84.66	84.84

Students' passing status in the post-test (cycle 2) relative to the minimum completion criterion of 75, which reflects the overall level of success on the total score and individual writing components, is illustrated as follows:

Table 6: Post-test (cycle 2) passing status

Category	Overall final score (amount / percentage)	Content (amount / percentage)	Organization (amount / percentage)	Grammar (amount / percentage)	Vocabulary (amount / percentage)	Punctuation (amount / percentage)
Passed (≥ 75)	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%	32 / 100%
Not passed (< 75)	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%

Post-test results (cycle 2) demonstrated significant and consistent improvement in student performance. The final assessment revealed that all 32 students (100%) achieved a passing overall score, with none (0%) failing the criteria. This indicates that all students achieved a minimum completion score of 75 or higher. Examining individual aspects of writing—content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation—the data demonstrated consistent success: all 32 students (100%) passed each category, with no students failing. The results indicate that the intervention and learning cycle were effective, resulting in comprehensive mastery of writing skills among the entire student group by the end of the program.

After all, the overall student scores from the pre-test, post-test (cycle 1), and post-test (cycle 2) clearly demonstrate student progress, as illustrated below.

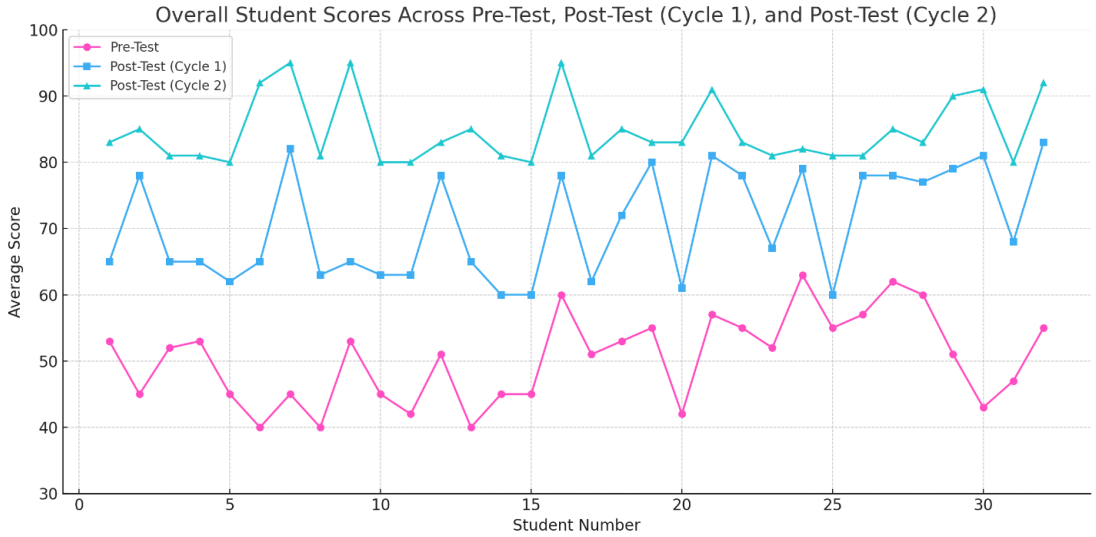

Figure 1: Overall student scores across pre-test, post-test (cycle 1), and post-test (cycle 2)

In accordance with the line chart above, the pre-test line consistently showed low initial scores, generally ranging from the 40s to 50s, thus establishing a baseline. Post-test results (cycle 1) showed substantial score increases after the intervention, with many students achieving scores between 70 and 90, reflecting significant learning gains. Post-test (cycle 2) typically maintained or slightly exceeded these increased scores, indicating continued and strengthened improvement. This chart effectively illustrates the significant and sustained positive impact of memes across both cycles. The writing aspects across the pre-test, post-test (cycle 1), and post-test (cycle 2) effectively illustrate student progress across the three assessment points, as shown below.

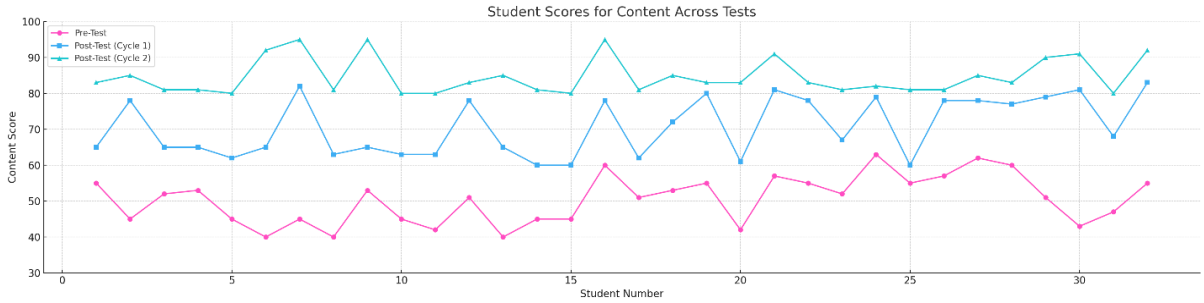

Figure 2: Student scores for content across tests

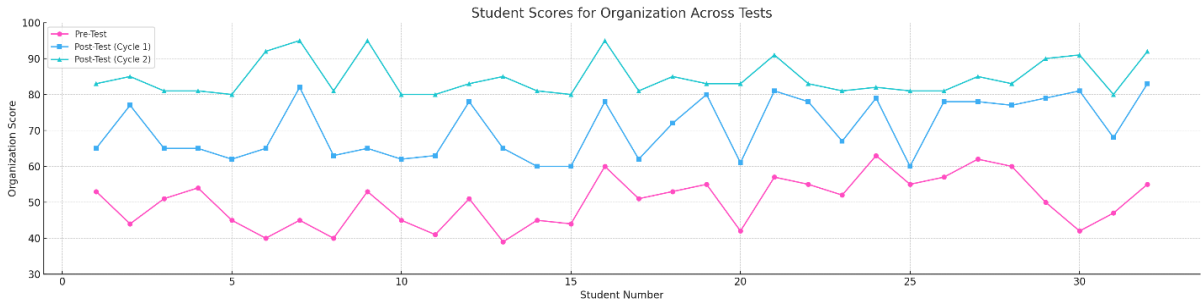

Figure 3: Student scores for organization across tests

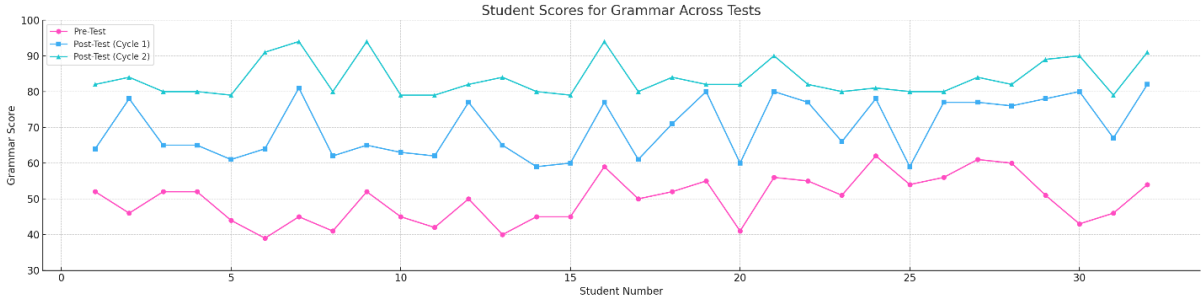

Figure 4: Student scores for grammar across tests

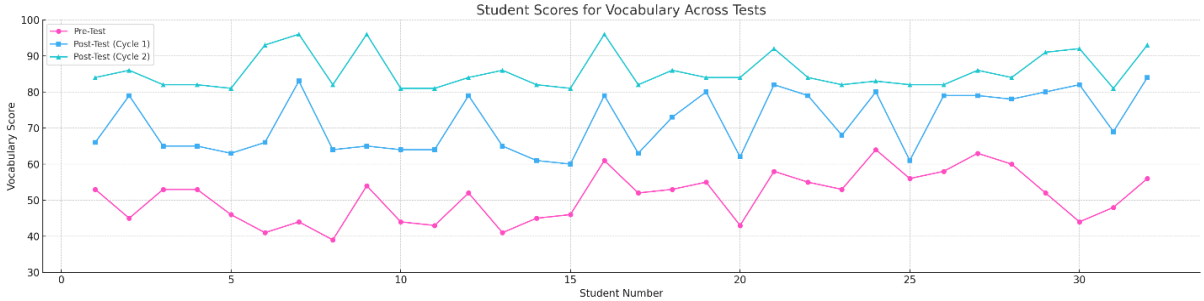

Figure 5: Student scores for vocabulary across tests

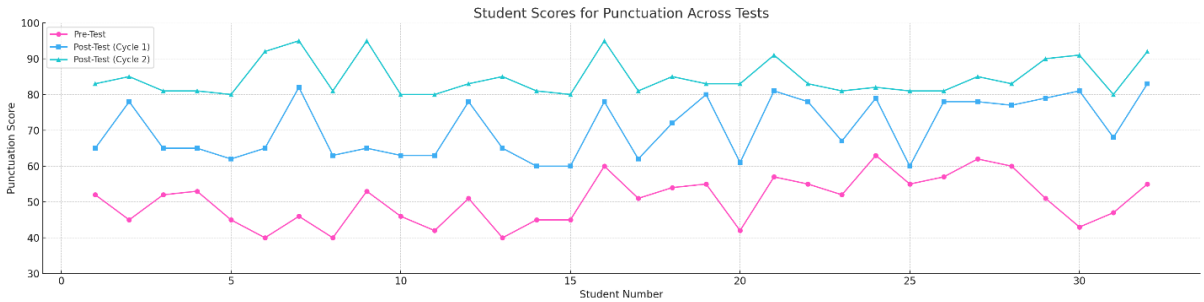

Figure 6: Student scores for punctuation across tests

Based on the line charts above, the pre-test established a baseline, consistently reflecting the lowest scores, generally in the 40s and 50s, for most students. This initial performance underscores their baseline understanding. The post-test (cycle 1) showed significant improvement, with scores frequently rising into the 70s and 90s, reflecting the positive effects of the initial learning cycle. Post-test (cycle 2) results generally maintained or slightly exceeded these high scores, indicating that the improvements were largely maintained and further strengthened. This trend effectively demonstrates the significant and sustained progress made by students utilizing memes as a learning media.

Discussion

This study presents strong evidence of the effectiveness of using internet memes as a pedagogical tool to improve the writing skills of 7th-grade junior high school students. Findings indicated that assignments utilizing memes resulted in increased writing scores after each cycle (Kress, 2010). The initial pre-test results, with 100% of students failing to meet the passing threshold, established a baseline indicating a substantial need for improvement in basic writing skills. This highlights the problem presented in the introduction, where conventional approaches often fail to engage students who are digital natives, resulting in disengagement.

After implementing the meme-based learning approach, the post-test (cycle 1) showed significant improvement, with approximately 44% of students achieving a passing score. The improvement in the first cycle aligns with research showing that digital media increases engagement (Barab et al., 2010). This represents a significant improvement from the baseline; however, it also highlights that a significant number of students still needed additional support. This prompted significant reflection and refinement of the approach in the second cycle, particularly through the introduction of a "term box" to enhance students' understanding of the context and meaning of memes. Explicit scaffolding improves comprehension and writing skills (Gee, 2015). The refined approach significantly impacted the post-test results (cycle 2), which resulted in 32 students (100%) passing all writing components and achieving a final overall passing score. This universal success demonstrates comprehensive mastery of writing skills across the entire student group, significantly exceeding the study's success criterion of 85%.

These results provide substantial support for the hypothesis that leveraging students' familiarity with memes and their intrinsic motivation can significantly improve their writing

skills, including the construction of coherent narratives, the development of critical thinking, and overall written expression. The analysis, interpretation, and creation of memes require concise storytelling, rhetorical analysis, and audience awareness—skills that are directly applicable to formal writing. Previous research shows that multimodal tasks enhance narrative skills (Hafner, 2015). This study theoretically supports the integration of contemporary digital media into traditional curricula to address the engagement gap in skill development, challenging the perception that informal digital content lacks academic value. These findings offer substantial evidence for educators to implement meme-based learning as an effective pedagogical approach. Affinity-based learning strategies that utilize digital tools can enhance the success of all students (Green & Jenkins, 2014). This method increases student engagement and produces measurable improvements in writing skills, addressing the critical demand for innovative and effective teaching strategies for the digital generation.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the strategy of integrating internet memes as a pedagogical tool improved the writing skills of 7th-grade junior high school students. Empirical findings showed significant improvements in student proficiency across all evaluated writing components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. Pre-test results established challenging baselines, as no students met the minimum completion criteria, indicating a clear need for innovative teaching methodologies. The incorporation of memes into the initial writing facilitated the success of nearly 50 percent of students. The implementation of a "term box" approach to meme comprehension significantly improved results, achieving a 100% pass rate for all 32 students in the second cycle, far exceeding the 85% success criterion. The incorporation of memes into writing instruction resulted in significant improvements in middle school students' writing skills (Shifman, 2014).

This study demonstrated that utilizing internet memes as a teaching tool significantly improved the writing skills of 7th-grade students. Leveraging students' familiarity with memes can facilitate the integration of traditional instruction with digital learning environments. Meme creation and analysis develop important skills such as effective communication, critical thinking, and audience awareness, which are essential for proficient formal writing. This study confirms the effectiveness of integrating digital media into educational environments, providing an engaging approach to developing 21st-century communication skills in young

learners. This study concluded that the internet meme integration strategy significantly improved Grade 7 students' writing skills, as evidenced by a 100% permission rate after implementing the meme-based approach. This suggests that memes connect traditional instruction with digital learners' preferences, thereby improving essential communication skills. Future research should investigate long-term effects and broader applicability across contexts (Jenkins et al., 2016). Thus, future research should investigate the long-term effects of meme integration on writing retention and its relevance across grade levels and subjects.

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