

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH READING COMIC AT EIGHT GRADE OF MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh

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Abstract

The preliminary study aims to investigate the potential impact of reading comics on the reading comprehension skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang. English language teacher reported challenges in improving reading comprehension among students. This study aims to use comic media as an alternative media to enrich students' reading comprehension.

This study suppose to provide valuable insights and recommendations for educators on the use of comics as an instructional tool to enhance reading comprehension among eighth-grade students. The author uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) for this study. CAR is used to find out and solve the students' problems in a classroom. Each cycle includes planning, implementing action, observing, and reflecting. There are twelve students out of twenty five (48%) who reached the KKM of the total twenty five students before using comic as learning media in class eight-grade A of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang.

After carrying out the English learning cycle using comic media, the overall average student score increased by 83% and the number of students who reach the KKM increased from twelve students to twenty-two students. Research is considered successful because 88% of the total number of students reach the KKM score. Thus, learning English by using comic media can improve student learning outcomes.

Key words: Comic, Reading Comprehension

BACKGROUND

The ability to comprehend written text is a crucial skill for students in every school level. However, many students face challenges in developing strong reading comprehension skills (Septiyana and Aminatun 2021). Hamidin (2017) stated that students are sometimes frustrated when they are difficult in comprehending a reading passage or failure in completing their test particularly English proficiency test. Their failures and difficulties in reading may be caused by their habits of reading, reading experiences, and their motivation. This preliminary study aims to investigate the potential impact of reading comics on the reading comprehension skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang.

Basically, learning is one of the main keys for humans to gain intelligence and knowledge that can be obtained through books, educators, and the natural environment. Our ancestors went through the process of developing knowledge by learning gradually over a very long period of time until we can experience modern civilization as it is today (Alhaysony, 2017). When someone learns, they will gain intelligence or knowledge and change their attitude to be better (Manik, 2019). However, it cannot be denied that knowledge can also be misused by students to the wrong way. Therefore, intensive and regular supervision is needed to ensure that the knowledge gained by a learner, especially an early-age learner, is used in the right way.

One of the basic skills in learning English is reading. According to Wijaya et al (2021) reading is one of the skills that must be mastered by every individual to master a field of science, especially linguistics. Besides, Widowati and Kurniasih (2018) stated that reading is an inevitable activity to gain information. Through reading, students are able to deliver their opinion better and show better performance.

According to Hamer and Lely (2019), to master English reading skills, one is faced with several aspects that must be mastered, such as English grammar, pronunciation, and others. Hamidin and Saukah (2020) said that mostly, less successful readers tend to be passive students, less motivated, fewer interests, and less inter-individual characteristics in improving their reading ability, only one of them who has self-motivation, self-efficacy, and interest in enhancing their reading ability. Therefore, new teaching innovations that are efficient and interesting are needed. So that, they can understand the material presented and practice their English skills properly and correctly. Interesting and effective learning media can be one of the alternatives to overcome problems in the learning process (Damopolii et al., 2021). One of the media that can support and help learning reading skills is comic media.

According to Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (2023), comics are defined as illustrated stories that are easy to digest and funny. In general, comics can be interpreted as a medium to convey a story through pictures that are illustrated to describe the story. Darmayanti et al (2020) said that students are easier to understand an explanation. Individually, students can see the form and description of learning material without having to listen to explanations from educators through image media. Comic media gives a simpler impression to students in learning English. Thus, it is likely to be more favoured to be used as an alternative learning media.

Based on the observation, it is indicated that there are challenges in improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh. The English teacher at the school states that many students face difficulties in understanding the context and important details of reading texts. It is indicated that there are twelve students of twenty-five students in eighth-grade of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh who do not reach Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum (KKM) score on midterm test. Factors such as lack of interest in reading, and insufficient variety in teaching strategies have been identified as issues that need to be addressed. Additionally, the English teacher expresses a desire for more engaging teaching methods, such as using comics. It is hoped that by reading comics students can enhance their interest and involvement in the stories, as the visual images and dialogues help them visualize the narratives more effectively. Based on these findings, this research is deemed necessary to explore the use of comics as an effective tool for improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang.

Therefore, the researcher tries to use comic media as an alternative media to enrich students' reading comprehension in eighth-grade of Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang in order to make students in that class easier to learn of English language. Therefore, they need sufficient English language understanding to support their abilities such as speaking, listening, reading and writing English in the future.

According to Atmowardoyo and Sakkir (2021) reading involves perceiving the written form of language, either visually or kinesthetically (using Braille). Here, we can know that reading is a process where a reader recognizes various forms of words in a writing media such as newspapers, books, and so on.

The statement above is also supported by Patel and Jain in Hamer and Lely (2019) that state reading means to understand the meaning of printed words i.e. written symbols. This process of recognition and understanding of written symbols is important to improve, deepen and broaden our knowledge of our language. In addition, reading also provides pleasure and satisfaction for the reader.

The thesis conducted by Ayuningtyas (2019) entitled “Development of Adobe Flash-Based Interactive Quiz Media in Civics Learning” had several similarities with this research regarding the development of interactive learning media, so that the research also used the Research and Development method. However, the media developed in the study was Adobe Flash, besides that the subject used was Civics Education. The next difference was in the school level of the research subject, where in the study the research subjects were high school students. While in this study, it was applied to eight-grade students of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh.

A research that was conducted by Ulfa (2020), entitled “Development of Android-Based Interactive Learning Media in IVSD/MI Class Thematic Learning” had many similarities with this research. One of which was that both of the research and this research develop interactive learning media. Then, the research method used was Research and Development. However, the research also had a difference in the media being developed, the research used Adobe Flash Professional CS6 while this research was carried out using comics.

Listianingsih et al (2021) “Android-Based Comics: An Alternative Media to Improve Scientific Literacy”. This research aimed to test the feasibility of developed Android-based comics on material style and motion to scientific literacy. This study used research and development using ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model. The subjects of this research were students from eight-grade at one of the junior high schools in Indonesia. The instruments of this research were validation sheets and student response sheets. The result of validation test in term of material expert acquired on average percentages of 93.26% and media experts at 97.08%. Moreover, the pre-test of students’ scientific literacy score was 2.26, and the post-test of students’ scientific literacy score was 3.40, with the N-gain formula obtained a value 0.72 with the category "High". Based on these results, it could be concluded that the developed Android-based comics as an alternative media were worthy to be used according to expert recommendations and students’ responses. Android-based comics could be used to improve students’ scientific literacy. The implications for future teaching appear to be that Android-based comics had clear value as an innovative tool.

METHOD

The author used Classroom Action Research (CAR) for this study. CAR is used to find out and solve the students’ problems in a classroom. The following is the definition of Classroom Action Research according to Kemmis et al., (2014:89).

Action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of the own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

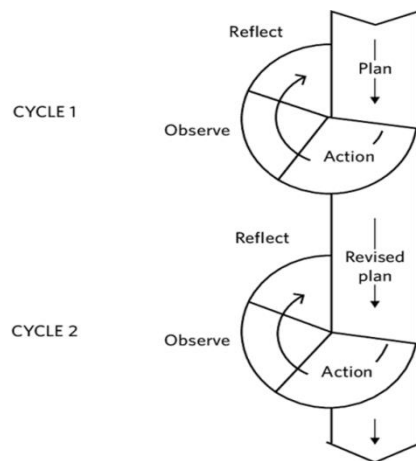


Figure 1 CAR cycles (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

Each cycle includes plan, action, observation, and reflection. Here is a brief explanation of each cycle:

a) Plan

During the cycle, the researcher identified the problem or area of improvement in reading comprehension and developed a plan to address it. During the planning phase, the accurate steps were outlined to achieve the research objectives. First, in the planning step, a lesson plan was carefully prepared. This involved identifying the subject matter to be taught, the teaching strategies to be employed, and the necessary steps to achieve the learning objectives. Subsequently, the researcher selected an appropriate teaching medium, considered its alignment with the previously crafted lesson plan. The timing of the implementation was also wisely determined to ensure the smooth flow of the teaching process.

The choice of using the “Naruto Shippuden” comic in this research was well-founded and stemmed from its rich storyline that encompassed a plethora of moral messages and engaging narratives. This comic had been selected as an instructional medium due to its potential to deeply resonate with male students. “Naruto Shippuden” was renowned for its compelling storytelling, vivid characters, and thought-provoking themes.

By utilizing this comic in the research, educators could tap into its relevance and used it as a vehicle to engage male students in meaningful discussions about moral values, decision-making, and character development. Incorporating “Naruto Shippuden” into the teaching process allowed for an interactive and immersive learning experience. By analyzing the characters’ choices, students could explore the consequences of various actions and understand the underlying ethical considerations. Additionally, the comic’s captivating visuals and dynamic storytelling could help sustain students’ interest and enthusiasm for learning.

b) Action

In the second phase, the researcher designed effective ways to manage and organize the classroom before the teaching process began. Furthermore, student attendance was meticulously recorded to monitor their participation. Students were also specially prepared to ensure their readiness to learn effectively. Setting learning objectives in line with the competencies to be taught came next, guiding students toward the intended learning focus. Introducing comic media as a teaching tool added an innovative touch to instruction, and the material was taught utilizing this medium.

c) Observation

Observation became the essence of this step. The researcher formulated observation standards related to students' reading comprehension in accordance with the established lesson plan. Ongoing evaluation of student progress became crucial in designing the subsequent actions.

d) Reflection

Finally, in reflection, the researcher evaluated some errors or improvements needed in the planning phase to ensure a more mature lesson plan in the next cycle.

In summary, the utilization of CAR cycles based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) explained a structured and systematic approach to enhance reading comprehension through the use of comic books. This approach emphasized change, reflection, adaptation, and collaboration, all of which contribute to the overall success of the research in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

After carrying out the cycle, the researcher conducted a test to assess the students' initial reading comprehension abilities. The test measured the baseline level of reading comprehension skills among the students. This baseline data was essential for comparing the students' progress after the intervention (action cycle) was conducted. The test was held to know the score before the researcher carried out the action cycle to measure the score of students by answering twenty questions which consisted of ten multiple choice questions and ten essay questions. Before the questions were used, firstly the questions were validated by English language expert in the field of reading, English teacher in eight-grade of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh and validation test using the Cronbach's Alpha formula with SPSS 20 in B class of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang as the try out class that consists of twenty students

The criteria of success in this research is adapted to KKM of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh for English classes, while the KKM is 70 for each student and 80% of total students reach KKM score.

FINDINGS

The learning results of eighth-grade students of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang before using comic media refer to the results of the recapitulation of student score obtained after carrying out the midterm exam in the 2023-2024 school year. There were twelve students out of twenty five (48%) who reached KKM score, while the number of students who did not reach and exceed the KKM was thirteen students or 52% from twenty-five students.

Action Cycle

1. Plan

At this stage, the researcher planned the actions that would be taken to improve the English reading skills of eighth-grade A students of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang. The action taken by researcher was the application of learning comic media. The researcher's plans of this research were described as follows:

- a) Deciding on the comic learning media that would be used.
- b) Preparing materials and learning methods that would be used.
- c) Preparing a lesson plan that would be used during the learning intervention.
- d) Preparing the questionsheet that would be used to measure the improvement of students' reading ability which would be compared with the pre-cycle findings.

2. Action

At this stage, the researcher intervened in English language learning in the eighth-grade of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh for six meetings every Thursday and Saturday. On Thursdays, English is carried out from 07:15 a.m to 07:45 a.m. While on Saturday, it was from 09:30 a.m to 10:30 a.m. The following is the details of the meeting running from the beginning to the end.

Meeting 1

This meeting was held on Saturday, 16th September 2023 at 09:30 a.m to 10:30 a.m.

Before getting into learning using comic media, researchers conducted pre-reading activities to activate students' prior knowledge of the topic. This activity began with an introduction to the comic media used, namely the Naruto Volume 44 comic by Masashi Kishimoto no 405 entitled Inheritance. This comic section was taken because the storyline in this section tells the relationship between teachers and students as well as students and teachers at school. This pre-reading activities were in the form of brainstorming from students about the comics that will be used, predicting stories, or discussing relevant vocabularies.

Meeting 2

This meeting was held on Thursday, 21th September 2023 07:15 a.m to 07:45 a.m.

At this meeting, the researcher guided students through the reading process by providing support and scaffolding. Then the researcher and students broke down complex sentences, highlighted any important vocabulary, and encouraged comprehension strategies such as making predictions or asking questions.

After all activities above were already done, an assessment was conducted through a written test to measure students' understanding of the vocabulary in the reading text.

Meeting 3

This meeting was held on Saturday, 23th September, 2023 at 09:30 a.m to 10:30 a.m.

In this session, students conducted a dialogue analysis. Students focused their concentration on the dialogue that occurred between the characters in the comic. They observed, analysed and asked the meaning inside the dialogue. The researcher did not directly explain what the fragments of dialogue in the comic meant but instructed the students to understand and looked up the meaning of words that they did not understand using their personal dictionaries. Students were also trained to understand the reactions and emotions of the characters in the story. This method could help to improve students' reading comprehension skills and expanded their vocabularies.

Meeting 4

This meeting was held on Thursday, 28th September 2023 at 07:15 a.m to 07:45 a.m.

The researcher organized the group discussion into five groups where the students were instructed to analyze the comics, share their interpretations, and discuss the characters, plots, and themes. The researcher also asked several questions to all groups that were made like a competition. The group that answered the question correctly first was the winner. The researcher also gave

appreciation to the participants individually and the winning group by giving prizes such as snacks and others to increase the enthusiasm of the students.

Meeting 5

This meeting was held on Saturday, 5th October 2023 at 09:30 a.m to 10:30 a.m.

Students were asked to make a summary or review of the comics they read using intensive reading techniques. Students were instructed to read 3-4 pages of comics regularly. This trained their ability to extract important information from the text and determine the level of comprehension of students in reading comics using intensive learning techniques. Then all students were randomly selected to come to the front of the class to present the comic summaries they made in front of other students. The assessment was carried out by collecting comic summary results with grammar identification for researcher by writing them on paper.

Meeting 6

This meeting was held on Thursday, 5th October 2023 at 07:15 a.m to 07:45 a.m.

In this meeting, learning was focused on identifying the grammar in the comic being studied. This could include word forms, word types, sentence structures, and punctuation. The results of student identification were discussed in class with the direction of the researcher to solve word forms and grammar that students did not understand.

Meeting 7

This meeting was held on Saturday, 7th October, 2023 at 09:30 a.m to 10:30 a.m.

This last meeting included a test to evaluate the impact of the cycle. Comparison of pre-cycle scores and final test results to determine the impact of the CAR action cycle on students' reading ability. The test consisted of 10 multiple choices and two essay questions. In the essay questions each question contains 5-point answers. The test was conducted with a duration of 20 minutes.

3. Observation

Based on the results of the actions that had been carried out, researcher and teacher observed the results of action cycle. During the intervention, students were considered to be more interactive in following the lesson using comic media than the learning that they used to apply before. It was found that twenty two students or 88% of the total number of students in eight-grade A reached or exceeded the KKM score while three students or 12% of the total number of students did not reach the KKM score. After referring to the criteria of success of this research, where the success of this research was guided by the school's KKM and the percentage of the number of students who reached the KKM score or exceed it reached 80%. Therefore, it could be stated that this research was success.

4. Reflection

Teaching and learning activities in the implemented cycles found that there was an increase in students' reading ability to achieve the ultimate goal. The ability of students to solve problems in learning, such as text comprehension, grammar, ability of students in group work and ability of students to master learning materials. Thus, the researcher did not continue to the next cycle.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted in September - October in eight-grade A MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang on the English subject, it was found that students' learning outcomes were low. Students who could reach the KKM score on the results of the midterm exam for the 2022/2023 academic year were less than half of all students in class eight-grade A of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang. There were twelve students out of a total of twenty-five students who reached and exceeded the KKM score.

One of the causes of these unsatisfactory learning outcomes could be triggered by learning methods that were old-fashioned with only teacher explanation in class and the use of media that seem monotonous. Nasrulloh (2020) stated that to make learning effective, the development of learning media and resources can be carried out by teachers in various ways. Therefore, new media and learning patterns were needed to improve student learning outcomes in class eight-grade A of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang. Because the use of electronic media such as mobile phone was not permitted to use, the researcher used Naruto comic media as learning material for students both inside and outside of class. Musfida (2020) Said that utilization of learning media such as comic can build pattern educational interaction, develop students' potency and build students' multicultural characters. According to Karmila (2018) the reason why this comic media was feasible to use in learning English was because the use of comic media was very easy to plan by English language teachers. Besides, according to Wahyudi et al (2020) the use of comic media could help students in improving students' reading skills because by using comic media the student could explain the whole story or material that was complemented by illustrative images to make it easier for students to know the shape or example of the material.

The use of Naruto Shippuden comics in this study was based on the moral values and characters in the comic. There moral values were shown by each character in Naruto comics that was used during learning interventions. The moral values contained in the Naruto comics used during the ongoing research were expected to be learning for students and to be applied in daily life.

After carrying out the English learning cycle using comic media, the overall average students' score increased by 83% and the number of students who reached the KKM score increased from twelve students to twenty-two students. These results completed the criteria of success of this research, where the research would be success if 80% of the total number of MTs Bahrul-Maghfiroh students achieved the KKM score. Students who reached the KKM after the treatment were twenty-two or 88% of the total 25 students in eight-grade A of MTs Bahrul-Maghfiroh Malang. Thus, this research was already successful by one cycle and would not be continued to the next cycle.

CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The research was conducted in September-October 2022 at eight-grade of MTs Bahrul Maghfiroh Malang revealed low English learning outcomes among students. Less than half of the students reached the KKM score on the midterm exam, with twelve out of twenty-five students reached the KKM score. The outdated learning methods and monotonous media were contributing to these unsatisfactory outcomes. To improve learning outcome, the researcher used Naruto comic media as teaching material by considering the moral and characters values in the comics such as leadership learning and overcoming limitations. After the research was already done, it was found that the overall average students' score increased by 83%, and the number of students who reached the KKM increased from twelve to twenty-two students. This research was considered successful because 88% of the total number of students reached the KKM score and would not be continued to the next cycle.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher provided several suggestions as follows:

1. Learning English by using comic media can improve student learning outcomes. Therefore, this learning media can be used by teachers as an alternative learning media.
2. For students, it is hoped that they can have the motivation to improve their foreign language skills, especially English, and be active in the learning process.
3. For researcher, it is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for teaching materials in teaching when becoming a teacher later and make it a reference to use other media for learning
4. For other researchers who want to conduct the same research, it is recommended to conduct this research with different subjects and schools especially in schools that consist of male and female students in order to obtain better research results and be useful as information material for education.

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