

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING COMIC STRIPS ON 8th GRADE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The goal of teaching English in the classroom is to enable students to utilize the language both performatively and functionally. Researchers observed two main issues with students at MTs Al-Maarif NU Malang: a lack of interest in reading English texts and low achievement that fell short of the minimum completeness criteria (KKM). One potential solution is to use engaging media to improve reading comprehension. The study aimed to investigate the impact of using comic strips on students' reading comprehension at 8th graders at MTs Al-Maarif NU Malang. The research used an experimental method with pre-experimental design approach without control variable, with 14 randomly selected students as the sample. Data was collected through pretest and posttests using different methods and analyzed using a T-test. The results showed that both conventional and comic strips materials had significant differences in student learning outcomes. Conventional materials had a mean score of 4.86, while comic strips had a mean score of 9.14. This indicates that comic strips have a better influence on students' reading comprehension. The t value of comic strips was higher than conventional materials at 3.95, indicating their effectiveness in influencing reading comprehension. The findings suggest that teachers should motivate students to read by providing visual support like comic strips, and students should use picture-supported text such as comic strips to develop their reading skills. The next researcher is suggested to choose a research location with more population to study, as more data can better explain the phenomenon compared to fewer data.

Keyword: *The Effectiveness, Comic Strips, Reading Comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

The English curriculum focuses on four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The goal is to help students use English functionally and performatively. Supporting all components of the learning process is crucial, and reading plays a vital role in understanding the content of the reading, which is essential for the development of science. Reading is an interactive process that involves writers and readers interacting through written texts that can broaden the reader's understanding and help them interpret writing correctly (Ruddle, 2005). The most important thing a reading instructor can do, according to Junaidi, Mustofa, Ubaidillah, and Lee (2023), is to get students excited about reading. The teacher's main goal should be to help students

become better readers. Reading involves two stages: decoding symbols and constructing meaning. The primary goal is to capture meaning. In English teaching, these stages are included in the curriculum. Reading aloud activities teach symbol decoding, while reading comprehension involves constructing meanings. Rubin (2013) highlights that reading comprehension is a complex intellectual process involving word meaning mastery and verbal concept recognition.

Reading is a crucial skill for learning English as a foreign language, as it helps students understand the context of texts and is considered the most significant activity in the classroom, as it not only enhances language proficiency but also provides information and enjoyment (Ayun, & Yunus, 2017). Reading is the process of obtaining meaning from written information, which can enhance knowledge and improve other skills and one of the indicators of reading success is reading comprehension. Reading comprehension, as defined by Tarigan in Abidin (2012), involves understanding literary norms and standards, as well as fictional patterns. It involves reducing students' difficulties in reading different types of English textbooks. Moreover, Yunus and Ubaidillah (2021) highlight that comprehension exercises involve reading a textbook, answering questions, identifying key concepts, synthesizing ideas, and summarizing what has been read. However, many readers struggle to understand the meaning or information contained in the text, especially in English lessons, despite these related processes. Reading involves various brain functions like comprehension, searching, pronunciation, and production, involving eye, voice, and brain functions (Rahma & Mistar, 2022).

The study suggests that improving students' reading skills, particularly in English, can be achieved by incorporating interesting media into the teaching and learning process. Hamalik in Kustandi (2013) argues that using interesting media can create new interests, encourage learning activities, and have psychological impacts on students. This approach can significantly enhance the effectiveness and enthusiasm of the teaching and learning process. Media plays a role in bridging the process of delivering learning information to students. In line with the definition put forward by Heinich (in Pribadi, 2017) that “learning media is something that contains information and knowledge that can be used to carry out the learning process”. A learning media contains information related to the material being taught and has been arranged in such

a way as to facilitate the transfer of that information to students. According to Ambiyar (2016) the learning process's effectiveness is significantly influenced by the method and learning media used, with the choice of method significantly affecting the choice of media, while other factors like the learning context and learner characteristics also play a role. Learning media offers several benefits, including clearer message presentation, overcoming space, time, and sense limitations, increasing motivation to learn based on abilities and styles, and providing learning stimulation. It also helps students relate their experiences and perceptions towards the lesson content, making it a more engaging and effective learning tool.

Comics can be served as both entertainment and education, teaching science and ethics to students through humour, a visual communication form that combines images and writing into a story. This makes information easier to absorb, while the flow of the content makes it easier to follow and remember. Comics offer five benefits in education: motivation, image quality, long-term use, intermediary media, and popularity. They increase student engagement, help students with low and average intelligence levels, and can be used multiple times for difficulty recall. Comics also help students overcome reading barriers, become fonder of reading, and are a popular part of culture (Yang, 2003). According to Nurgiantoro (2018), Comics are arranged pictures with various structures and elements. Characterizations, plots, themes, and morals are key elements in comics. Characters can be humans, animals, or animate objects. The plot is a series of causal events, forming a sequence according to the comic's theme. Themes and morals are conveyed through images, language, plot, and characterizations. Images and language represent the comic itself, with narrative form being the largest element. Language can be grouped into narrative form, character's words and thoughts, and sound imitation words. Comics have become a popular information and entertainment media in Indonesia since the 1930s, often appearing in print media like newspapers as short comics. Visual media, particularly comics, can enhance learning outcomes by facilitating understanding of structured content, fostering student interest, and connecting subject matter content to real-world situations. According to Arsyad (2014) and Rohani (2014), instructional comics in education can create clear and communicative message delivery, while Rohani (2014) highlights the benefits of visual media in fostering a connection between subject matter and the real world.

Comics serve as inspiration for artists to convey news and stories, while also providing a platform for children to learn through humor. Humor enhances communication between students and learning resources, promoting understanding and growth. Proper communication in learning can expand the message and enhance students' understanding. Wijayanti (2017) highlights the advantages of using comics as learning media. Comics can stimulate students through positive messages, improve learning quality, and be used repeatedly on different students. They are permanent, accessible at any time, and can develop interest in reading and discipline. Additionally, comics can enrich educators' skills in mastering learning media, enhancing the overall quality of education. Overall, comics offer a versatile and effective tool for teaching and learning.

There are several studies regarding the implementation of comics in reading comprehension, for instance, a study by Mahir et al (2016) suggest that humour can effectively engage students in learning activities by serving as an entertainment source during lessons. They suggest introducing something special in the language classroom to combat boring and complex language. Moreover, Roozafzai (2012) suggests that comics enhance children's imagination and learning process, utilizing visual aids to stimulate their interest in reading activities. Another study by Kölin (2021) found that serial comics can potentially aid teachers in promoting reading comprehension, although not always achieved in selected studies. The researcher used comic strips as serial comics, indicating the potential benefits of serial comics in education. Moreover, a previous study by Utami (2019) “also aims to study the effect of using comic strips on narrative reading comprehension using a quasi-experimental design on 330 students. The result shows that teaching reading comprehension of narrative text by using comic strips is effective on students’ reading skills. Furthermore, Rengur and Sugirin (2018) aim to compare teaching using comic strips and conventional media. The result shows that the use of comic strips as media is more effective than the use of conventional media. Based on the background and previous studies, the researcher assumes that it is important to conduct research regarding the effectiveness of using comic strips to increase students’ reading comprehension for 8th grade students at MTs Al-Ma’arif NU Kota Malang.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts quantitative research using is the experimental design of pre-experimental. This is because in the Pre-Experimental Designs approach there is no control variable, and the sample is not randomly selected. Population refers to objects or subjects with specific characteristics that researcher's study and draw conclusions from. In this study, the population consisted of 14 students at MTs Al Maarif NU Malang, which is considered representative of the population under study. The researcher used total sampling, ensuring that the number of samples was equal to the population, as the number of 8th grade students at MTs Al Maarif NU Malang is less than 100. This study utilized a test as the core learning instrument, consisting of initial and final questions based on six narrative texts. The test was validated through tryout and analyzed using validity and reliability analysis. The test consisted of 20 multiple choice questions, with three of them containing comic strips, to measure the difference in students' reading comprehension abilities.

Data collection is a crucial process in research, involving several stages. The pre-experimental stage involves literature and field studies, while the experiment stage involves description, instrument design, and research. The post-experimental stage follows, analyzing the pretest and posttest data using statistical calculations. The final stage is the post-experimental stage, where the researcher draws conclusions based on the data collected. This comprehensive approach helps researchers solve research problems and improve their understanding of the subject matter. The study employs statistical data analysis techniques, specifically SPSS 21, to analyze quantitative student learning outcomes. The t-test is used to compare two averages, with SPSS 21 for Windows being used for the difference test. The hypothesis is tested using the Paired Sample t-Test, which examines the average difference before and after treatment for the same group of samples. If the t-count value exceeds the t-table value, the effect is accepted, and if the sig. value is less than 0.05, the effect is not found.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher conducted a study using a pre- and post-reading comprehension test to analyze data, presenting it as descriptive statistics to measure the data distribution and also paired sample statistics using SPSS statistics to determine the study's results. Here is the result of descriptive statistic test.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	14	64.00	84.00	75.1429	6.68934
Posttest_Conventional	14	72.00	100.00	80.0000	7.01646
Posttest_Comic	14	72.00	96.00	84.2857	7.09744
Valid N (listwise)	14				

The study involved 14 8th grade students and used two pretest and posttest methods. The conventional materials were used without comic strips, while the comic strips were used with them. The results showed a mean score of 75.14 for the conventional pretest, 72.10 for the posttest without comic strips, and 84.28 for the posttest with comic strips. The standard deviation was less than the mean score, indicating good data representation. The study found no significant differences between students' scores. Previous study by Arsyad (2014) backs up the claim that visual media has the power to increase student attention and comprehension while also establishing a connection between the subject matter and the outside world. In addition, Rohani (2014) discovered that the use of instructional comics in the classroom can provide components of a clear and effective message delivery. Faiz, Widowati, and Elfianto (2024) found that when the English learning cycle was implemented using comic media, the average student score increased by 83%, and the number of students who reached the KKM increased. The study focused on the improvement of reading comprehension through comic reading in eighth grade at MTS Bahrul Maghfiroh. The study is therefore considered effective, and teaching comic book understanding can improve reading comprehension. Moreover Yang's (2003) hypothesis, which holds that comics are structured according to pictures and that pictures serve as visual aids for students with

low and moderate intelligence levels to learn as long as they use comics, lends credence to this notion. Comics make reading simpler for kids, especially for those who dislike reading or fail frequently. They may be used repeatedly with struggling students to help them remember.

To measure the effectiveness of using comic strips, it is necessary to find the mean difference between pretest and posttest in both conventional and comic strips teaching. The result is presented in the paired samples t test as follows:

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Posttest_Convent - Pretest	4.862	3.11906	.74256	3.1618	7.8247	3.958	13	.000
Pair 2	Posttest_Comic Pretest	9.142	4.27618	1.14286	6.6738	11.6118	8.000	13	.000

The study found that both conventional and comic strip materials significantly improved students' posttest scores compared to pretests. The mean score difference was 4.86 for conventional materials, while 9.14 for comic strips. The results indicated that comic strips had a better influence on students' reading comprehension. The posttest with comic strips had a higher t value of 8.00 than conventional materials, indicating their effectiveness in influencing reading comprehension. This suggests that comic strips can be a valuable tool for improving students' reading skills. Other than that, comic strips also motivate the students and promote interest, it is shown in the class that the students are more enthusiastic and focused their eyes on the picture instead of looking in the text. This phenomenon also confirmed by Mahir et al (2016) who claims that comic strip spark amusement that influence to attract students' attention in learning activities. Moreover, Roozafzai (2012) also stated that comic strip is more interesting and enjoyable which draw readers' attention more considerably and stir their imagination more efficiently. The study suggests that using comic strips in education

can improve posttest scores and promote reading comprehension. Other studies, such as Kölin's (2021) and Utami's (2019) studies, also show that comic strips are effective in teaching narrative text comprehension and are more effective than conventional media.

The researcher tested two hypotheses: the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that comics significantly impact reading comprehension, and the null hypothesis (H_0) that comics do not. The data showed that comics significantly impact reading comprehension at a significance level of less than 0.05, confirming the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0). The hypothesis was accepted if $p_1 < 0.05$ and $p_2 > 0.05$, indicating that the hypothesis was accepted. The result of this study which indicate better score in posttest when comic strips are involved also confirmed by other researchers such as Kölin (2021) studied the use of comics in education and revealed that reading materials in the form of serial comics potentially support the teacher to promote reading comprehension even though in the case of the selected studies it does not always do so. A study by Utami (2019) also shows that teaching reading comprehension of narrative text by using comic strips is effective on students' reading skills. Furthermore, Rengur and Sugirin (2018) aim to compare teaching using comic strips and conventional media. The result shows that the use of comic strips as media is more effective than the use of conventional media.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings show that, with a significance level of 0.000, students perform better on posttests than they did on pretests while using comic strip materials. This demonstrates that improving students' reading comprehension may be achieved through the use of comic strips in addition to traditional methods. In terms of effectiveness, the mean score demonstrates that, following treatment with comic strip materials, there is a greater difference between the pretest and posttest scores for comic strip materials at 9.14 than for conventional materials at 4.86. These findings suggest that comic strips have a greater impact on students' reading comprehension than conventional methods. The t value of comic strips materials was also higher, with an 8.00 value, indicating better effectiveness in influencing reading comprehension compared to conventional materials. The study suggests that using picture-supported text like comic strips for low-interest learners to develop reading skills. Teachers should

motivate students with visual aids like comic strips. The next researcher should choose a larger population-based study location for better understanding of the phenomenon.

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