



THE USE OF COMIC STRIPS AS MEDIA IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING SKILLS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract: *This study investigates the effectiveness of comic strips as a medium to improve students' reading comprehension skills at SMAN 1 Darul Imarah. Reading is a complex process that requires mastery of various skills, including identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary, recognizing references, and locating specific information. Preliminary observations revealed that many students at SMAN 1 Darul Imarah face challenges in these areas, which hinder their reading performance. Previous studies indicate that comic strips, which combine visual and textual elements, can enhance student engagement, facilitate vocabulary learning, and improve comprehension. This research focuses on determining whether the integration of comic strips into reading instruction can address students' difficulties and improve their overall comprehension skills. Data were collected through reading comprehension tests administered prior to and following the implementation of the model. The findings demonstrated a significant improvement in students' reading performance, with the score increasing from 3,625 in the pre-test to 4,900 in the post-test, with the average score rising from approximately 69.71 to 94.23, reflecting an average gain of 24.52 points. Among all the students assessed, 38 students demonstrated improved scores, 14 maintained the same scores, and none showed a decline. These results indicate that the treatment had a positive effect on enhancing students' reading abilities. The findings are expected to benefit students by enhancing their reading strategies, support teachers in adopting engaging teaching methods, and provide future researchers with a reference for further studies in English language education.*

Keywords: *Comic Strips, Reading Comprehension, Visual Media*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui efektivitas penggunaan komik strip sebagai media untuk meningkatkan kemampuan pemahaman membaca siswa di SMAN 1 Darul Imarah. Membaca merupakan suatu proses kompleks yang memerlukan berbagai keterampilan, termasuk mengidentifikasi gagasan utama, memahami kosakata, mengenali referensi, serta menemukan informasi spesifik. Hasil observasi awal menunjukkan bahwa banyak siswa di SMAN 1 Darul Imarah mengalami kesulitan dalam aspek-aspek tersebut, yang berdampak pada rendahnya kemampuan membaca mereka. Penelitian sebelumnya menunjukkan bahwa komik strip, yang menggabungkan unsur visual dan tekstual, dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa, menambah kosakata, serta memperbaiki pemahaman bacaan. Penelitian ini berfokus untuk mengetahui apakah komik strip dalam pembelajaran membaca dapat mengatasi kesulitan siswa dan meningkatkan kemampuan pemahaman mereka secara keseluruhan. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes pemahaman membaca yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah penerapan model pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan membaca siswa, dengan skor meningkat dari 3.625 pada pre-test menjadi 4.900 pada post-test, dan rata-rata nilai meningkat dari sekitar 69,71 menjadi 94,23, yang menunjukkan kenaikan rata-rata sebesar 24,52 poin. Dari seluruh siswa yang dinilai, 38 siswa menunjukkan peningkatan skor, 14 siswa memperoleh nilai yang sama, dan tidak ada siswa yang mengalami penurunan nilai. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perlakuan yang diberikan memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca siswa. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan manfaat bagi siswa dalam meningkatkan strategi membaca.

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mereka, membantu guru dalam menerapkan metode pembelajaran yang menarik, serta menjadi referensi bagi peneliti selanjutnya dalam studi lanjutan di bidang pendidikan bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci : Komik Strip, Pemahaman Membaca, Media Visual

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a very complex process. In the reading process, students should pay very extra attention to several aspects such as critical thinking, vocabulary mastery, language skills, time management, reading strategies, and concentration (Albdour, 2015). Therefore, reading is more than just recognizing words on a page. Students need to develop several important reading skills. These skills include understanding the main ideas, identifying important details, and connecting what they read to what they already know. Effective reading requires students to actively make sense of the text by relating new information to their own experiences and knowledge. To develop reading skills, students should identify, criticize, and consider the reading text to their prior knowledge (Memis & Sivri, 2016).

According to Khalifatussalam (2021), Indonesia ranks second from the bottom in terms of world literacy. The reading interest of the Indonesian people is very concerning, only 0.001%. This low percentage indicates that among every 1,000 Indonesian citizens, only one individual is classified as an active reader. As a matter of fact, a preliminary study conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Darul Imarah indicated that students experienced various difficulties in reading comprehension. These difficulties were identified through classroom observations and discussions with English teachers. The problems encountered by students encompassed several key aspects of reading skills. Firstly, many students struggled to identify the main idea of a text, which hindered their overall understanding of the reading material. Secondly, the presence of unfamiliar or complex vocabulary often caused confusion, making it difficult for students to comprehend the intended meaning of the text. Thirdly, students had difficulty in recognizing references within sentences, such as pronouns or linking words, which are essential for understanding textual cohesion. Lastly, students were often unable to locate specific information efficiently, especially when required to scan or skim through a passage. These findings highlight the urgent need for implementing more effective teaching strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension skills, which are crucial for academic success, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language.

Therefore, reading comic strips is one of effective strategy to increase their reading enthusiasm and increase reading fluency, vocabulary, and the meaning of a text (Setyawan, F. H. (2018). Because comic strips contain both pictures and text, reading comic strips can help improve visual comprehension skills, such as a better understanding of the concepts of space, time, and visualization. Comic strips represent a unique art form consisting of sequential static images arranged to convey a narrative (Pratt, H. J. 2009). These visual narratives are typically printed on paper with accompanying text elements. Comic strips, as visual media, consist of pictures that can enhance the quality of learning. They have the potential to stimulate reading interest and motivate students, particularly reluctant readers, to engage with texts. Furthermore, comic strips represent a significant element of popular culture, making them highly relevant to students' daily experiences. To support the discussion

above, several relevant previous studies are presented. Kurniawan, B. (2017) stated that comic strips and pictures can be used effectively by teachers to generate interest, develop vocabulary words and reading skills as well as broaden interest in reading. Rokhayani and Utari (2014), demonstrated that the implementation of comic strips as an instructional media led to significant improvements in students' reading comprehension achievement. Liu (2005), stated that comic is an effective tool in enhancing reading comprehension among second language learners. In other words, comic represents an effective instructional media for developing students' reading comprehension skills.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study is pre-experimental, pre-test, post-test method and questionnaire. Sugiyono (2014) stated that pre-experimental design is one in which only one group or class is subjected to pre and post-testing. Without a control or comparison group, this one-group pretest and posttest design is performed on just one group. The population in this research was the students of SMA N 1 Darul Imarah with two classes, namely Class X1 and Class X2, were chosen as the sample for the study. The total number of students classified in the sample was 52, which was deemed appropriate based on the minimum sample size requirement for data analysis using SPSS, which recommends at least 50 participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the statistical results. And therefore, the selection of these two classes was not only methodologically justified but also statistically adequate to support the quantitative analysis conducted in this research.

This study employs text including pre-test and post-test to measure students' reading comprehension. The pre-test is administered to measure students' reading ability before the implementation of the treatments. While a post-test is administered to measure students' reading ability after the implementation of the treatment. Both pre-test and post-test are used to measure the students' achievement after treatments are applied. It involves taking measurements on individuals both before and after they have undergone some type of treatment (Martyn, 2009). In this case, the treatment in the form of the use of comic strips to improve students' reading ability.

To determine the development of students' reading comprehension, this analysis compared their achievement scores between the pre-test and post-test. Both tests consisted of ten questions, with each correct answer awarded 25 points. Students who answered all questions correctly received a maximum score of 100 points. To analyze the results of both the pre-test and post-test, the data were processed using SPSS version 26.0. The analysis included the calculation of mean scores and standard deviation. To measure the effectiveness of comic strips on students' reading comprehension ability, the researcher applied the following formula proposed:

$$\bar{x} = (\sum x) / N$$

Where :

$\bar{x}$ = Mean score

$\sum x$ = Total of raw score

N = The number of sample

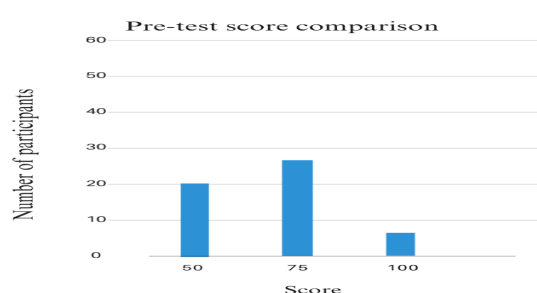
To determine whether there was a significant difference in students' reading ability before and after the use

of comic strips, a paired sample t-test analysis was employed. The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. The decision rule was based on the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed): the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted if the result showed Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05 (5%), indicating no significant difference; conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted if Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 (5%), indicating a statistically significant difference in students' reading comprehension scores after the treatment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-test

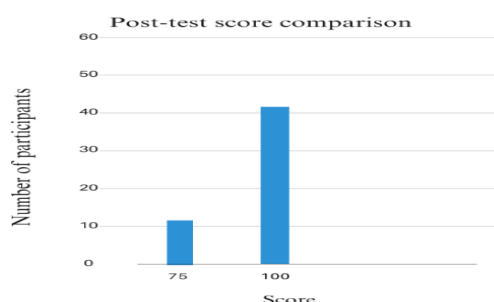
The students' score of Reading Pre-test before implementing the treatment:



Based on the chart above, it illustrates the distribution of students' reading pre-test scores before the implementation of the treatment. The scores are grouped into three categories: 50, 75, and 100. The highest number of students, totaling 26 participants, achieved a score of 75. This is followed by 20 participants who scored 50, and the smallest group, consisting of 6 participants, obtained a perfect score of 100. This distribution indicates that the majority of students performed at a moderate level before conducting to the treatment, while only a few demonstrated high proficiencies.

Post-test

The students' score of Reading Post-test after implementing the treatment:



The chart above illustrates the distribution of students' reading post-test scores after the implementation of the treatment. The scores are grouped into two categories: 75 and 100. A significant majority of students, totaling 41 participants, achieved a perfect score of 100, while the remaining 11 participants scored 75. Compared to the

pre-test results, this distribution clearly indicates a substantial improvement in students' reading performance. The high number of students reaching the maximum score suggests that the instructional treatment was effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills.

Test of Hypothesis

The next step is to determine whether there is a significant difference in students' reading ability before and after using comic strips, a paired sample t-test analysis is employed. The analysis is conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. The null hypothesis is accepted if the result shows Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05 (5%), while the alternative hypothesis is accepted if Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 (5%).

Tabel 1. The result of T-test

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre	69.71	2	15.127
Post	94.23	2	11.732

Tabel 2. The correlation of T-test

Pair	Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre & Post	0.308	0.026

Tabel 3. The Data Test of SPSS

Pair	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pre - Post	-24.519	\16.035	2.224	-28.983	-20.055	-11.027	52	0.000

The results of the Paired Samples T-Test indicate a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the 52 participants. Based on the descriptive statistics, the mean score before the intervention (pre-test) was 69.71, while the mean score after the intervention (post-test) increased to 94.23. This shows a substantial improvement in performance, with an average increase of approximately 24.52 points. The Paired Samples Correlation analysis shows a moderate positive correlation between the pre-test and post-test scores, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.308 and a significance value (p) of 0.026. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, this correlation is statistically significant, indicating that the students' performance on the pre-test is moderately related to their performance on the post-test.

Tabel 4. The analysis of Pre-test and Post-test

	Mean (SD)	Difference (SD)	95% CI	P Value
Before using comic strips (n =52)	69,71 (15,12)	24,519 (16.03)	20,05-28,98	0.000
After using comic strips (n=52)	94,23 (11,73)			

The results of the paired sample t-test comparing students' reading abilities before and after the use of comic strips show a statistically significant difference. The mean score before using comic strips was 69.71 with a standard deviation of 15.12, while the mean score after the intervention increased to 94.23 with a standard deviation of 11.73. The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was 24.519 (SD = 16.03), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 20.05 to 28.98.

The p-value obtained is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the result is statistically significant, and thus the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in students' reading abilities after using comic strips compared to before their use. The use of comic strips has had a positive and meaningful effect on enhancing students' reading performance.

Discussion

This study investigated whether the use of comic strips improve students' reading comprehension skills at SMAN 1 Darul Imarah or not. Data were collected using a pre-experimental design covering pre-test and post-test assessments. The mean pre-test score was 69.71, and the mean post-test score rose to 94.23. The mean difference of 24.519 fell within the 95% confidence interval of 20.05 to 28.98. The associated p-value was 0.000, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. These results affirm the alternative hypothesis (H_a), demonstrating a significant improvement in reading comprehension following the introduction of comic strips.

These findings are supported by recent studies. Ahmad and Ma'rifatulloh (2023) observed that students showed significant gains from a pre-test mean of 39.67 to a post-test mean of 87.41 after incorporating comic strips, the paired-sample t-test yielded $p = 0.000$. Similarly, Azizah and Hamid (2022) reported significant improvements in both vocabulary and reading comprehension among tenth graders at SMK Lab Business School Tangerang, also with $p < 0.05$.

This study supports the idea that comic strips are an effective learning media for helping students to enhance their comprehension and expand their vocabulary. Comic strips combine pictures, short conversations, and stories, which makes the reading material more interesting and easier to follow. Because students can understand the meaning through both the images and the words, they are more likely to stay engaged and comprehend the content better. This also helps students with different learning styles, whether they learn better by seeing, reading, or both. In addition, using comic strips can reduce the mental effort students need to process information, making it easier for them to focus and remember what they learn (Ahmad and Ma'rifatulloh, 2023; Azizah and Hamid, 2022).

This study aligns with several previous research, for example Firnanda et al. (2022) found that ninth-grade students at SMP Bunga Matahari improved their narrative text comprehension from a mean of 70.63 to 89.50 using digital comic books. Fitrianita et al. (2023) reported an increase in mastery from 19% to 100% across two cycles in teen learners, while Mulyawati et al. (2024) confirmed a statistically significant improvement ($p = 0.000$) among tenth graders at SMAN 1 Cijaku. Similarly, Tampubolon et al. (2023) documented a 25.56% gain among students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi, with mean scores rising from 57.66 to 72.40 following exposure to digital comics. Mekuo and Budiarta (2023) observed that student success rates in narrative reading comprehension rose from 8% to 67% over two cycles of comic-based group work, and Azizah and Hamid (2022) found statistically significant gains ($p = 0.000$) in vocabulary and reading comprehension using Wilcoxon Signed-Rank analysis.

In Saudi Arabia, Aldahash and Altalhab (2021) showed that intermediate EFL learners using graphic novels

significantly outperformed peers using traditional texts in reading comprehension tests and reported greater motivation. In China, Yang and Koda (2022) found that graphic novels helped students with developmental language disorders improve comprehension and reduce cognitive load. Venetopoulou and Kalasaridou (2024) demonstrated in Greece that graphic novels, when combined with strategic reading instruction, enhanced students' reading strategy use and engagement. These findings align with Cohn's (2020) theory that comics function as a visual language system supporting comprehension through narrative grammar and dual coding.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that using comic strips can significantly improve students' reading comprehension. Based on the statistical findings, there was a clear increase in students' scores after the treatment, with the average rising from 69.71 in the pre-test to 94.23 in the post-test. The very low p-value (0.000) indicates that this improvement was not just by chance. Besides, many students also showed greater interest and confidence during the learning process, suggesting that comic strips made reading more enjoyable and easier to follow.

These findings are in line with previous research that also supports the use of comics in learning reading. The combination of images and text seems to help students better understand the material and stay focused, especially for those with different learning styles. For high school students in particular, comics can be a helpful tool to support literacy development. This study reinforces the idea that comic strips are not just fun to read, but also a valuable resource in helping students engage more deeply with reading texts.

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