

The Effectiveness of using Comic Strips to Increase Students' Reading Comprehension for the Eighth Grade Students of SMPN 1 Pundong

Zul Aini Rengur
Postgraduate Program
Yogyakarta State University
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
ainy_syifa@yahoo.com

Sugirin
Postgraduate Program
Yogyakarta State University
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
sugirin@uny.ac.id

Abstract—This research was aimed to find out whether the use of comic strip was more effective than the use of conventional media in increasing students' reading comprehension. This research was a quasi-experimental research which involved two groups, there were the experimental group and the control group. The samples were two classes of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Pundong, Bantul, Yogyakarta. The variables of the research were comic strip as the independent variable and the students' reading comprehension as dependent variable. The data collection used a pre-test and post-test. Data analysis was ANCOVA. The result of the research shows that the use of comic strip was more effective than the use of conventional media in students' reading comprehension. It can be seen from the result of LSD test with a mean difference of 0.265 and a significance of p 0.00 was lower than 0.05.

Keywords—*comic strips, reading comprehension.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is called a receptive skill, as one of the four language skills, It is very important in foreign language learning. Harmer in [1] stated that receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. Therefore, the readers can get some information or ideas from reading activities.

Reading plays an important role in the English learning process. It is noted by Richards and Renandya in [2] stated that in many second or foreign language teaching situations, reading receives a special focus. The other reason stated by Harmer in [3] stated that reading texts provide opportunities to study language such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way of constructing sentences, paragraphs, and texts.

Reading is one of the complex skills. Nunan in [4] stated that reading needs recognition and explanation processes which require the readers' knowledge about the language structure used in the text and their knowledge about the given topic. Relevant background knowledge is an important factor in reading comprehension than grammatical complexity. This kind of complexity often makes it difficult for students to comprehend reading texts.

To avoid the complexity above, students need to comprehend the contents and the topics of the text. Students usually read without comprehending the text. Meanwhile, reading activities need comprehension to know the contents of the text. Since, without comprehending the contents of the text, students cannot achieve the purposes of reading. Grabe and Stoller in [5] stated that reading for general comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately. NSW Department of Education and Training claims that when learners comprehend, they interpret, integrate, critique, infer, analyse, connect and evaluate ideas in texts, then they negotiate multiple meanings on their mind [6].

Reading activities are focus to improve students' comprehension in reading the passage. Reading is one of the essential skills in language teaching should be taught to learners. Despite reading plays a main role in teaching process and it can help the students in many aspect of their life, but they still face many problems in reading comprehension. There were research findings from [7], [8] they investigated the problems of reading comprehension of English foreign language learners are the lack of vocabularies, limited background knowledge of the students, the text given to the students was not appropriate with the level competence. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students' reading problems are about lack of vocabularies, the limitation of students' background knowledge, and the appropriate materials are needed.

Teachers are the fundamental role in the teaching and learning process, and teachers should stimulate students in learning process. Meanwhile, teachers often used text book in the classroom without applied some visual media that can improve students' interest. Visual media can be used to help teachers delivering their material easily. Considering the effectiveness of using visual media in teaching and learning process, this research used comic strips as teaching and learning media which can improve the students' reading comprehension.

Comic strips play an essential role to support the teaching and learning process. This media can be the effective media in increasing students' reading comprehension, as are the media which used by the researcher to help students' reading comprehension. Rokhayati and Utari in [9] stated that

investigate that the use of comic strip as an English teaching media for Junior High School students was effective. Thus, comic strips as the media in teaching students' reading comprehension should be implemented in the English classroom.

Comic strips create messages through story line and images. Comic strip have some benefits such as; assisting students comprehending the contents of text, helping the students to improve their ideas, increasing the students' interest in reading. Carry in [10] state that argues that in comics, readability measures are determined not only on words alone, but also on pictures. Here, pictures support the words to make the written text becomes more comprehensible.

Reading is a process of negotiating meaning: the reader brings to the text a set of schemata for understanding it, and intake is the product of that interaction [11]. In reading process, Alyousef argues that the reader and the text must be interactive to lead reading fluency automatically [12]. The reader interacts directly with the text as he/she tries to require the meaning.

Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman in [13] stated that reading is termed as a receptive skill. The receptive skill means that the reader receives input from a writer. The reader rarely has the opportunity to ask the author about what is on her or his mind when writing a text. Linse and Nunan in [14] stated that reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word. In order to read, students must be able to decode (sound out) the printed words and also comprehend what they read.

In addition, Grellet in [16] claims that reading is a constant process of guessing and what the reader brings to the text is more important than what he or she finds it. Nunan in [17] argues that reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from the text and their own background of knowledge to build meaning. It means by reading a text someone can get some information and find the readers goals of the writing.

Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that reading comprehends about the written text and composed of two related processes. Then, teaching reading can be more enjoyable and comprehended using an appropriate media which can incur an interesting learning. Reading comprehension is understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible [16].

Therefore, reading comprehension refers to get the meaning and understanding the text and it involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the reader and the text. Klingner, Vaugh and Boardman in [18] state that reading comprehension involves much more than readers' responses to text. Reading comprehension is a multicomponent, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in text, understanding of text types).

The comic strip creates messages through words and images. The comic strip has the different characteristics by a comic book. Butler in [24] stated that reveals that the comic strip is

formed into one or three panels that appear daily in newspapers or magazine and it is more concise than a book whereas comic book is a short novel contains story. Meanwhile, Liu in [19] emphasizes that comic strip can be defined as a series of pictures inside boxes that tell a story. It means comic strip is a kind of comic which is made by putting the pictures and the words in the right order.

Csabay in [20] asserts that comics are usually funny, applying them to methodological purposes will have the same effect as using games in teaching English it brings a good atmosphere into the class. Comic strip is not only amuse and interest L2 students; there are plenty of other reasons to use them in education. As Liu in [19] states that EFL and ESL teachers often give students reading material accompanied by visuals such as pictures, cartoons, or comic strip to make reading more enjoyable and comprehensible.

It is supported by Rokhayati and Utari in [9] stated that the visualization through pictures and text can support the sharing of the materials from the teacher to students. The teaching and learning process called successful if the result or the output is success.

Meanwhile, Mahir, *et al.* in [21] claim that comic strip spark laughter or amusement that will have a great influence to attract students' attention in learning activities. It has been used excessively as one of the media to entertain students' learning session. One way to arouse students' interest in reading activity can be achieved by giving something extraordinary into the language class to cope the boredom and the complex language.

Therefore, Roozafzai in [22] argues that comic strip is more interest-getting and enjoyable which draw readers' attention more considerably and stir their imagination more efficiently. Cary in [11] adds that comic strip can be used as a means to help students deal with difficulties in complex language or in language learning especially. There are five major functions of using contextual visuals in combination with written text [19]:

- 1) *Representation*: visuals repeat the text's content or substantially overlap with text
- 2) *Organization*: visuals enhance the text's coherence
- 3) *Interpretation*: visuals provide the reader with more concrete information
- 4) *Transformation*: visuals target critical information in the text and recode it in a more memorable form.
- 5) *Decoration*: visuals are used for their aesthetic properties or to spark readers' interest in the text.

According to Mahir, *et al.* in [21] comic strip can easily help learners to learn English in a fun way, to express their ideas through images, and to make them easier in understanding dialogues. Csabay in [20] clarifies that comic strip help students to deal with spoken and even informal language, preventing them from sounding "bookish," as students might when they are only exposed to written, formal language.

Wright and Sherman in [23] claim that the use of comic strip as a media of instruction can provide instructional sessions which both stimulate and activate students' thought processes.

Butler in [24] supports that comic strip make students easily read and reread the content providing a thorough cognitive processing of the words and images, and it is expose students to various types of literature. The last is stated by William in [25] that using comic in second language classroom can guide students in hypothesizing about the cartoons' language, raise awareness of pragmatics, and emphasize language's underlying regularity. Therefore, the use of visual media will help students easier in learning process and make them more interesting in reading activity.

The researcher used comic strip in teaching reading. The ways of using comic strip are adopted from Csabay in [20]. (1) The teacher cuts apart the individual panels of a comic strip and puts them in an envelope. The students (in pair) are asked to arrange the pieces into the proper sequence to comprehend the story. (2) The teacher removes the speech or thought bubbles of the comic strip. The students' task is to figure out the proper order of the speech or thoughts bubbles. (3) The last panel of a comic strip is cut out and students are asked to continue the story either in a written or spoken mode. (4) The students are asked to complete some missing information in a story based on a comic strip later given to them.

It can be concluded that comic strip has the methodological reasons for teachers to use it in the classroom. It is related to Oller's episode hypothesis about the text that has a story line and a logical structure is easier to remember and to recall. Comic strips provide the structure and stimulus to which students respond [20]. Therefore, the researcher uses comic strip as one of media in teaching reading.

Then, considering the explanations above, it is clearly stated that comic strip is a sequence of pictures which has the meaningful message conveyed in some words related to the theme of the graphic. The researcher chooses comic strip as one of the media in teaching reading because it has many benefits which help students reading' comprehension as below.

This research was aimed to find out whether the use of comic strip was more effective than the use of conventional media in increasing students' reading comprehension.

The rest of this paper is organized as follow: Section II describes proposed research method of this work. Section III presents the obtained results and following by discussion. Finally, Section IV concludes this work.

II. PROPOSED METHOD

The type of this research was the quantitative research which used a quasi-experimental design. The researcher used this type of the research because of the experimental subject cannot be fully controlled even it has been maximized control. This study proved the effectiveness of using comic strip as media in teaching reading comprehension. In addition, this study aimed to determine the effective media between students who were taught using comic strips and conventional media.

There were two groups related to this research: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group was the group using the treatment (using comic strips),

and the control group was a group without using comic strips. The researcher gave the pre-test and the post-test to experimental group and the control group. After conducting the pre-test, the researcher conducted the treatment only to the experimental groups. In the end of the teaching process, the researcher conducted the post-test to find out the effective media. The research design can be seen in the following Table I.

TABLE 1. DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment	O_1	X_1	O_2
Control	O_3	-	O_4

Note:

O1: Pre-test for experimental group

X1: The treatment by using comic strips

O2: Post-test for control experimental group

O3: Pre-test for control group

O4: Post-test for control group

In this research, the researcher used content validity. It was used to know the content of the test which was appropriate with standard competence and basic competence based on the school curriculum. Content validity explains whether all the items of the test were suitable with the relevant materials or not. The researcher organized the test instrument based on the syllabus of reading skill for Junior high school. The research also validated the instrument by using construct validity and it has been measured by the expert judgment. Meanwhile, the researcher used ITEMAN 4.00 version program to measure the reliability of instrument. The result of reliability coefficient of the pre-test was 0.961 and the post-test was 0.936. Meanwhile, the reliability coefficient is at least 0.7. Therefore, the pre-test and the post-test were reliable as the research instrument.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher proposed to explain about the results of the research finding. Meanwhile, the objectives of the study were to find out whether the use of comic strips is more effective than the use of conventional media in students' reading comprehension. Based on the data analysis, it shows that the hypothesis of this research was accepted. The use of comic strips also shows more effective than the use of conventional media. It revealed by the value of mean difference was 0.265.

The researcher used this media to increase students' reading comprehension. Comic strip was proved effective in teaching students' reading comprehension. On the other hand, the use of comic strips is the most effective media, due to it consists of pictures and story line that make students more interested in reading. The students have to understand the story line and the comic strip to create a good text.

It is supported Rokhayati and Utari in [9] who stated that the use of comic strip as an English teaching media for Junior High School students was effective. This study was aimed to know whether Printed Material in the form of Comic Strips can improve the English vocabulary of the students of SMP 2 Bae Kudus, and to describe the strength and the weaknesses of comic

as a means of teaching English. The results show from the mean score of cycle I is 76.97, and in the cycle II is 85.10. Thus, it concluded that comic strip is appropriate and effective as teaching media not only in reading comprehension but also in teaching English vocabulary, because it deserve an easy way to present the English material. They add that comic strip also has been effective for students' ability in understanding the expression of characters inside the comics.

This research has similar results with Merc in [26] who investigates the effects of comic strip on reading comprehension of Turkish EFL learners. The result shows that all students who taught using comic strips are better in comprehending the text because it is included visual or the picture in increasing reading comprehension. It can be seen from the mean score of students using comic strips was 52.38 and the mean score of students without using comic strips was 16.75. Therefore, it can be said that there is significant difference between students who were taught using comic strips than the groups were taught without using comic strips.

In addition, Mahir, *et al.* in [21] investigate that the use of comic strips in the newspaper as teaching can improve the 1st semester students of Faculty of Quran and Sunnah Studies of Sains Islam Malaysia University (USIM) in reading and writing skills, it also motivates the students in studying narrative texts. He revealed that comic strip bring out the fun and laid back learning environment, require the students in using their higher order thinking skills, create the students' creative side. Based on the test, the *t*-value 5.191 was higher than the *t*-table 1.66. The average value of experimental group was 71 and the average value of control group was 51. It presented that there is significant difference between students who were taught reading comprehension and writing skills using comic strips in the newspaper and the students who were not taught with it.

The other study was conducted in Argentina by Ravelo in [27] stated that who investigated the use of comic strips as a means of teaching history in the EFL class. This study was aimed to know that the use of comic strips can be regarded as a valid resource to teach history in the EFL classroom with CLIL (content language integrated learning) as the methodological framework. Then, the result is presented that comic strips are appropriate and practical genre for facilitating the teaching and learning of history in the CLIL classroom, because the students are able to understand the meanings through words and images.

Furthermore, there were some students in EFL classroom at Japanese universities have lower abilities, attitudes and motivations in English reading. They are often bored and need dictionaries to look for the meaning of new vocabularies. Hence, Jones in [28] gave a new approach by using comic book style graded readers into the extensive reading program. The approach was showed that the students were very enjoy the comic book and have the good motivation in reading English.

IV. CONCLUSION

Comic strips can be the option media in teaching students reading comprehension. Thus, the English teachers are recommended to use this media in teaching and learning process

to enhance students' interest in reading narrative text, recount text and other texts in general. In reading comprehension, the students are required to understand well about the English text. Here, the researcher suggests comic strip as the media to improve students' interest in reading the text. Thus, students are suggested for using these media in teaching and learning process. This research may become another reference for the other researchers who want to investigate the use of comic strip in teaching students reading comprehension. It will better to make learning process more interesting and enjoyable using this media.

REFERENCES

- [1] Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. England: Longman.
- [2] Richards, J.C & Renanyda, W.A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Harmer, J. (1998). *How to teach English: an introduction to the practice of English language teaching*. England: Longman.
- [4] Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] Grabe, W. & Stoller, L.F. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Longman: An Imprint of Pearson Education.
- [6] NSW Department of Education and Training Literacy Continuum. (2010). *Teaching comprehension strategies*. Sydney: NSW Government Education & Training.
- [7] Gunning, T.G. (2002). *Assessing and correcting reading and writing difficulties*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- [8] Medjahdi, W.B. (2015). *Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners: the case of third-year learners at Nehali Mohamed Secondary School*. (Dissertation, published, University of Tlemcen, 2014).
- [9] Rokhayati, A. Utari, P.R.A. (2014). The use of comic strip as an English teaching media for Junior High School students. *Language Circle Journal of Language and Literature*, 7, 143-149.
- [10] Alderson, J.C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Cary, S. (2004). *Going graphic: comics at work in the multilingual classroom*. Portsmouth, Nh: Heinemann.
- [12] Brown, H.D. (2004). *Language assessment: principles and classroom*. New York: Pearson Education.
- [13] Alyousef, H. S. (2006). Teaching reading comprehension to ESL/EFL learners. *Journal of language and learning*, 5(1), 63-73.
- [14] Leaver, B, L. Ehrman, M. & Shekman, B. (2005). *Achieving success in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [15] Linse, C.T & Nunan, D. (2005). *Practical English language teaching: young learners*. New York: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT.
- [16] Grellet, F. (2003). *Developing reading skills*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [17] Nunan, D. (2003). *Language teaching methodology: a text book for teachers*. London: Prentice Hall.
- [18] Klingner, J.K. Vaugh, S. & Boradman, A. (2007). *Teaching reading comprehension to students with learning difficulties*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- [19] Liu, J. (2004). Effects of comic strips on L2 learners' reading comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 225-243.
- [20] Csabay, N. (2006). Using comic strips in language classes. *English Teaching Forum Magazine*, 24-26.
- [21] Mahir, N.A., Ali, R.M., & Amin, K.M. (2016). Using newspaper comic strip to improve reading and writing among muet band 1 & 2 year 1

students of faculty of quran and sunnah studies, university sains islam malaysia (USIM). *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship* (GBSE), 2 (3), 57-62.

- [22] Roozafzai, Z.S. (2012). The role of comic reading materials in enhancing the ability to read in EFL. *I-manager's Journal on English Language Teaching*, 2 (3), 7-15.
- [23] Wright, G. & Sherman, R. (1999). Let's reading a comic strip. *Reading Improvement*, 36 (2), 66-72.
- [24] Butler, K. (2008). *American comic strips and international students: an exploration of humor in second language teaching*. Master Thesis, published, University of Oregon.
- [25] Williams, N. (1995). The comic book as course book: why and how. *Proceedings of the 29th Annual TESOL Convention Long Beach*, at New York University.
- [26] Merc, A. (2013). The effect of comic strips on EFL reading comprehension. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 4 (1), 1309-6249.
- [27] Ravelo, L. C. (2013). The use of comic strips as a means of teaching history in the EFL class: Proposal of activities based on two historical comic strips adhering to the principles of CLIL. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 6 (1), 1-19.
- [28] Jones, E. (2010). *The use of comic book style reading material in an EFL extensive reading program: a look at the changes in attitude and motivation to Read in English in a Japanese University*. Language Education in Asia.