

COMIC STRIPS TO FACILITATE STUDENTS READING COMPREHENSION ON NARRATIVE TEXT

Ayu Sartika Br Siregar¹, Riri Fauzana²

Faculty of Education and Teacher Training,
State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau,
Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia

ayusartikasiregar10@gmail.com¹, rifa_ii@yahoo.co.id²

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted based on students' problems in reading, such as students' low reading comprehension abilities, lack of vocabulary mastery which makes them difficult to understand texts, and also difficulties in pronunciation. Therefore, this research aims to find out whether the use of comic strips improves students' reading comprehension skills in narrative texts, in class X MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur students. This research uses quantitative research. This research was carried out in February-June 2024 at MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur. The population in this study were all class as many as 26 students. The design of this research is a pre-experimental method with one group pre-test and post-test design. To collect data, researchers used a reading test to determine students' reading abilities which consisted of multiple choice questions with 20 questions. The results of data analysis show that the average score of students after being taught using Comic strips (84.04) is higher than before being taught using Comic strips (53.85). It can be concluded that there is an influence between students' reading comprehension abilities before and after being taught using Comic strips in class X MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur.

KEYWORDS: Comic Strips, Reading Comprehension, Narrative Text.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four language skills that is taught in school. The most essential skill of English is reading. By mastering reading, people can be able to understand English text found in their daily activities well. Besides, reading is also useful for all of people around the world especially students to get knowledge. The meaning of reading can be defined as "Reading is the practice of using text to create meaning" Johnson (2008). Furthermore, Pang et al (2003) state that "Reading is about understanding written text". From those statements above, it is clear that reading is an activity to understand written text. Moreover, reading can be seen as a process between a reader and a text which lead to get the information and ideas from printed text. The students should comprehend the reading for certain purpose however it needs a practical and suitable method. The idea is supported by the fact that reading now has a part of daily life. Reading cannot be separated from daily activities. Students read many kinds written materials such as newspapers, magazines, novels, academic books and so on. Reading can be seen as an interactive process between a reader and a text which leads to automatically or reading fluency Alyousef (2005).

Through reading students can get information. Knowledge, enjoyment and even solutions to problems. According to Scanlon et, all (2010) that reading is a complex process that requires analysis, 2coordination, and interpretation of a variety of sources of information. So, reading is a process of analyzing interpretations in reading from various sources of information. Reading is very important to broaden knowledge so that you discuss other people's ideas and information in the reading. But, lack of self- awareness and motivation will influence reading interest. Through reading activities, students can improve their language and experience. Students will get information and ideas that they have never known before. According to Lems (2010) reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language through print media. As stated in the 2013 curriculum, students do not only read a text but also grasp what they have read. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. It means that comprehension is not a passive process, but an active one. Reading comprehension is about understanding what you read. Reading comprehension is the capacity to comprehend information in a text and correctly interpret what the material means, Grabe & Stoller (2013). They also stated that reading without comprehension is nonsense. It means that reading comprehension is a complex process that involves the successful or failure use of a variety of skills. We should be able to recollect information after we read it.

MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur is one of the senior high schools that applies 2013 curriculum as its guidance in teaching and learning process. English is one of the subjects that the compulsory subject which is taught once a week in 2x45 minutes for each meeting, which is always included in the syllabus. The students are taught the English language as a mandatory subject, which includes speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Based on Preliminary observation at MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur which was conducted by the researcher on July, 2023 by interviewing the English teacher of tenth grade at Ma Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur, the teacher at that school does not use specific media in teaching reading comprehension skill. He always uses reading material from the student's textbook available and worksheet or LKS. The teacher just explains the material and the text, then 4 she corrected what students read by asking them to answer the questions related to the text, and finally to discuss them to the whole class. He also said that the weaknesses of the students in reading narrative text are students have lack of vocabulary, they often found difficulties to get meaning of text and their reading interest is quite less. After interviewing the teacher, the researcher also interviewed with some of students of Ma Al Ittihad Tapung Makmur. Students say that reading narrative texts is boring because the text is long, so they need a long time to understand the text because they translate text from word to word. The students said that the media by the teacher was not interesting, and the students said they were bored because the teacher always used same media. Harmer (1998) states that various interesting media must be applied to encourage students because one of the greatest enemies of successful learning is students' boredom. There is so much media that can be used to teach reading narrative texts. One of media that teacher can use when teach about narrative text especially in reading comprehension skill is comic strips that's categorized as visual media. Comic strips are a short series of amusing drawings with a small amount of writing that is published in a newspaper. Not only in a newspaper, but it can be found on the internet and other digital media. Teaching reading comprehension using comic strips helps students in getting information easier than asking students to read a text-only.

Reading Comprehension

According to Snow (2002), reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It means that the primary activity of reading is to comprehend what the text about. It is because they do not know the exact meaning of the words that the writer uses. That is why, reading comprehension section always be given along with vocabulary section.

According to Klinger (2007), Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency. Comprehension is the active process of constructing meaning from the text; it involves accessing previous knowledge, understanding vocabulary and concepts, making inferences, and linking key ideas. Comprehension cannot be learned through rote instruction, but requires a series of strategies that influence understanding of the text. Sharon (2004), stated that reading comprehension includes the following: Applying one's knowledge and experiences to the text, setting goals for reading, and ensuring that they are aligned with the text, using strategies and skills to construct meaning during and after reading, adapting strategies that match the reader's text and goals, recognizing the author's purpose, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and drawing logical conclusions.

Comprehension is not a single unitary process. It begins with the movement of words on the page to meaning in the mind, followed by the recognition of individual words based on memory and understanding of letter and sounds patterns, the matching of the resulting pronunciations to meaning, and finally connect the words into idea units. It means that comprehension is ability to make sense of the context on what he or she reads or hears. It refers to how someone reads a text. Furthermore, according to Westwood (2008), reading comprehension is an active thinking process in which a reader develops meaning in order to gain a better knowledge of the concepts and information presented in a text. To comprehend, readers must filter, evaluate, arrange, and reflect on the incoming information on the page using information they already have. Regarding the definition of reading comprehension above, concluded that reading comprehension is a complex process in term of constructing the meaning in purposes to know what texts talk about. When readers read, they will make a connection between their background knowledge and the new information from the text. In comprehending texts, readers also need to understand about meaning of context, vocabulary, grammatical structure and concept of texts. So that the readers can have good reading comprehension.

The Components of Reading Comprehension

There are some components of reading comprehension that should be focused on comprehending reading text. According to Nuttal (2008) there are five components that may help the students to read carefully, they are:

1. Main idea. Determining main idea is the ability to grasp and find the point of passage by summarizing the passage and looking for repetitions of the ide/word.

2. Specific information or part of the text. Finding the specific information or part of the text means looking for the information related to the target and ignoring irrelevant ones.
3. Reference. Reference is the intentional use of one indicate something else, one providing the information needed to interpret the other. Finding a reference means interpreting one linguistic expression into another to determine it.
4. Inference. The inference is a good guess or conclusion based on the logic of the passage. The inference means that the reader implies that the sentence or sentence is understood and logically complete.
4. Understanding Vocabulary. Understanding vocabulary means understanding the meaning of a word. As your vocabulary improves, your understanding will deepen.

Understanding is the ultimate goal of reading, so readers cannot overestimate the importance of vocabulary development. According to King and Stanley (1998) here are the components of reading comprehension:

1. Finding Factual Information. It is one of reading comprehension that is suitable for Junior High School. While reading, the reader must be able to recognize the factual and certain information in details such as person, place, events, and times.
2. Finding Main Idea. It is an important activity in reading text because if it can find the main idea it can know the text is talking about what. It can find the main idea not only on the first paragraph but also in the middle, and in the last paragraph. So, it has to precise to see and identify where the main idea itself on the text.
3. Understanding the Text. It is the student's ability in comparing the text with other kinds of text. It also asks students to know the definition, the communicative purpose, the generic structure and grammar that are used in the text.
4. Identifying References. The references used to avoid the repeated the same word or phrase in several time. After one word it used, it can refer that word than repeat it. Recognizing and identify the reference will help the reader understand the reading passage. Reference is usually such as she, he, it, this, etc.
5. Identifying Inferences. Inference is important activity in reading comprehension. Inference is a skill where the reader has to be able to read between lines. As divide into attentions, draws logical inferences, and make accurate prediction. After the reader reads all of the text, he or she should be able to make inference by their own words and from their own thinking based on the text that they have read.

Levels of Reading Comprehension

Burns *et.al* (1984) divide reading comprehension into literal comprehension, interpretive comprehension, critical reading, and creative reading:

1. Literal Comprehension; Reading literal comprehension including assimilation Prerequisite is the information provided directly during the selection from a higher level of understanding. Recognizing the main ideas, details, cause and effect, and given order is the foundation of literal comprehension, and a thorough understanding of vocabulary, sentence meaning, and paragraph meaning is important. Smith (1977) argues that literal comprehension refers to ideas and facts expressed as facts directly on the printed pages.
2. Interpretive Comprehension; Interpretive comprehension involves reading between the lines draw conclusions. It is the process of deriving implicit ideas instead of directly formulated ideas. The reader draws conclusions based on your schemes.

Smith (1977) argues that interpreting or reading between the lines requires a higher level of thinking ability, since the questions in this interpretive category are about what is not directly stated in the text but is alluded to or implied. Interpreting may be defined as something that derives from thought, something that is not directly expressed but implied in the statement, a logical conclusion drawn from the statement.

3. **Critical Reading;** Critical reading is the evaluation of written materials and the comparison of ideas discovered in the material with standards and made conclusions about their accuracy, adequacy and timeliness. It requires the reader to think critically about what they read. Critical reading relies on literal comprehension and interpretive comprehension, and understanding implicit ideas is particularly important.
4. **Creative Reading;** Creative reading is about going beyond the material presented by the author. It requires the reader to think while reading, only critical reading, and also to use their imagination.

Comic Strips

Students faced some problem in reading, one of them is difficult language and vocabulary. Besides, students are lazy to read especially English text. To help them interest in reading, some media are developed. One of them is comic strips, comic usually found in magazine especially for children like Booboo's magazine. People know comic strip as some series of drawing that tells a story and are often printed in newspaper. According to Arroyani (2010), comic strips are good materials because comic strips can motivate students' interest. It was supported by Drolet (2010), who said that the effect of Comic Strips is it can motivate the students in learning second language. In addition, Csabay (2006) said that comic is not only amused and make the students interested in, but also can be used as media in education. Arlin and Roth (1978) suggest that comics are interesting, and students will attend to that which they find interesting more than to that which they find uninteresting. Absolutely, it can appeal to students, because of consisting of pictures series and interesting story. Each comic strip has various stories, it may tell about humor, action, mystery, thriller, adventure, and so forth. It also often influences that students emotion and feeling while conceiving the story. Furthermore, comic strips is combination of cartoon with a story line, laid out in a series of pictorial panels across a page and continuous character or set of characters, whose thoughts and dialogues are indicated by means of "balloons" containing written speech. The comic strips from can be employed to convey a variety of messages. As stated by Smith (2006) comic strips utilize panels, having a minimum of one and usually a maximum of three or four.

However, along with the development of media and information, comic strips can have more than four panels and have maximum until eight panels. Cary (2004) states that comics strips can be used as a medium to help students overcome complex language difficulties, particularly in language learning. Comic strips that incorporate text with visual representations offer teachers a great tool for helping students develop their visual literacy skills.

In summary, a Comic strip is a sequence of the picture that usually funny. It has the story that makes it is different from ordinary pictures. There is a dialogue in the comic strips that conveys the story. In teaching English through comic strips, the

students are expected to be more interested in English learning activity. The students have to elaborate the story in the comic strips into narrative. To do so, they have to understand to meaning or purpose of the text.

The Elements of Comic Strips

Comic strip has some elements that readers have to know in order to understand the story about. Thompson (2008), as cited in Timmins (2014), mentions some elements of comic strips, they are:

1. Panels: as a paragraph of comic, every action, size and placement create a sense of story.
2. Directionality: the position of panels will move the readers' eye accidentally in specific direction while reading. Sometimes the panels are drawn down or across, left to right or right to left the page.
3. Narrative boxes: it is written by authors to provide a third-person point of view, signal a change of time, change of location and sum up the action.
4. Speech bubbles and thought bubbles: every creator have their own way to drawn shape of bubble. This means to convey speech and thoughts, set an emotion or tone and to connect the dialogues to next action.
5. Lettering and symbols: some creators use different letters and symbols in order to emphasize some words or action. For example using bold or italic letters in some dialogues.
6. Pictures: it is as important as lettering and symbols. Pictures will convey author's story and illustrations. Through pictures the authors also convey action and emotion.
7. Gutters: in comic some of the actions always happen "off screen". It means by the gutter, the author tries to show the different view of the same location. Based on the explanation above, it is essential for the readers to understand the elements of comics. It will help them grasp the story and the meaning clearer.

Procedure of Using Comic Strips

Based on the first activity that can be done in teaching English by using comic strips in the classroom by Csabay (2006), researcher designed the activities that will be done in teaching English by using comic strips.

1. The teacher cuts apart the individual panels of a comic strip and puts them in an envelope.
2. The teacher then is asked to decide the topic of comic strips that are given to them.
3. The teacher explains the characteristics of narrative text to provide students with more information about the text they will write.
4. The teacher introduces the idea that the comic strip is an outline for the text.
5. The teacher shows one frame of a comic strip, and then explains that students will be changing the comic strip into text.
6. The teacher asks the students to read narrative text based on the comic that they already arranged.
7. The teacher and the students discuss the comic strips and the students' reading.
8. The teacher lets the student to ask question about the materials.
9. The teacher motivates the students to be more active in the classroom.

The Generic structures of Narrative Texts

As revealed by Wagner and Baskerville (2000) in their book that narrative has at least four stages with steps that are often repeated to increase tension and complexity.

1. Orientation; Orientation sets the mood by setting a time and place, and introducing characters. It also sets the scene by creating visual images. Orientation creates the first impression, and hints at the direction of the story to provoke the reader.
2. Complications; Complications are conflicts or problems that affect the setting or background character. It can be actual or imaginary, psychological or physical. This may occur as a direct result of another character's actions.
3. Series of Events; The story progresses through a series of expected or unexpected events that allow for further complications or resolutions. These events allow the plot, setting, and characters to develop, but they shouldn't stray from the author's goals.
4. Resolution; It is the solution to conflict. The final can be a twist or a reversal, which depends on how the whole story begins. Some of the stories have met the expectations of the readers while some of them have simply exceeded the expectations of the readers.
5. Reorient / Coda; The coda or reorientation usually gives advice or moral values based on what has been learned from the story.

2 METHODOLOGY

The design of this research was pre-experimental research design with one group pre-test and post-test. Cohen (2005) said the preexperimental research is the one group pre-test post-test. According to Ary (2013) in this pre-experimental study, there is no random assignment to subjects or groups without a control class. The design of this study requires a sample group to be treated. In this study the treatment is in the form of applying the Comic Strips for students reading comprehension. This research design study also requires three steps that must be carried out by the researcher during the application of independent variables, namely: 1) having a pre-test that measures the dependent (variable Y), 2) applying the independent variable/experimental treatment to research subjects, 3) there is a post-test that measures the dependent (variable X). After the three stages of implementation, the differences in pre-test and post-test results was evaluated and compared in the form of scores, Ary (2013). According to John (2008), population is a group individuals who have the same characteristic. The population of the research was all tenth grade of MA Al- Ittihad Tapung Makmur as the population of this research. For the specific, the tenth grade students' of MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur is chosen because they are learning about narrative text. There is one class that consists of 26 students.

In this research, the researcher used the test to collect the data, the test consist of narrative text. The test was given for getting to objectives data of the students' achievement in reading comprehension by using Comic Strips in the class especially for the tenth-grade students at state MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur. The test was applied two test, those are pre-test and post-test.

According to Singh (2006), data collection is the accumulation of certain evidences that will enable researchers to correctly analyze the result of all activities with the research designs and procedures. Quantitative analysis was carried out using statistic called statistical analysis. To find out significant influence between reading comprehension before and after being taught using Comic Strips, in this study the researcher used a paired sample T-test using SPSS 25.0 version. The question consists of 20 items the point of each correct answer was 5 and 0 for incorrect answer.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After doing the research, the researcher obtained two kinds of data: pre- test scores and post-test scores. Pre-test given before treatment and post-test given after treatment. However, the total score of pre-test in experimental class was 1400. The highest score was 65 and the lowest score was 40. Then, the mean score obtained by the pre-test was 53.85. 3 students got a score of 40 (11,5%), 1 student got a score of 45 (3,8%), 7 students got a score of 50 (26,9%), 6 students got a score of 55 (23,1%), 6 students got a score of 60 (23,1%), 3 students got a score of 65 (11,5%). So, the highest frequency was 7 at the score of 50. Then highest score was 65 and the total of frequency was 3. The mean was 53.85, standard deviation was 7.390, minimum score was 40 and maximum score was 65.

In the post-test in experimental class was 2185. The highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 75. Then, the mean score obtained by the post-test was 84.04. 2 students got a score of 75 (7,7%), 6 students got a score of 80 (23,1%), 13 students got a score of 85 (50%), 5 students got a score of 90 (19,2%). So, the highest frequency was 13 at the score of 85. Then highest score was 90 and the total of frequency was 5. The mean was 84,04, standard deviation was 4.247, minimum score was 70 and maximum score was 90. 24 students got a score of 80-100 with the categorized as "Very Good". The 2 students got a score of 66-79 with the categorized as "Enough" Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of students scores on the pretest can be classified into the "Very Good" category.

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teaching reading comprehension after using the Comic Strips at the tenth grade students of MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur is better than before using the comic strips. Thus, there is significant influence between the students' reading comprehension at the tenth grade of MA Al-Ittihad Tapung Makmur.

REFERENCES

- Alyousef, H.S. 2005. Teaching Reading Comprehension to ESL/EFL Learners. The Reading Matrix Vol.5, No.2, September 2005. Updated on 5 January 2007. [http.acrobat/rider.co.id](http://acrobat/rider.co.id).
- Anderson,K,and Anderson.M.(2003).Text types in English .Malaysia: The Modern art Production Group.

- Arlin, Marshall & Gerry Roth. (1978). *Pupils Use of Time While Reading Comics and Books*. USA.
- Ary, Donald, Lucy Cheser Jacobs and Chris Sorensen. (2009). *Introduction to Research in Education 8th Edition*. New York, Wadsworth Language Learning
- Astra, A. W. (2014). *Developing Comic Strips-Based Speaking Tasks for the Seventh Grade Students of SMP N 2 Temon in the Academic Year of 2013/2014*. Thesis. Yogyakarta: English Education Department Faculty of Languages and Arts Yogyakarta State University
- Brocka, B. (1979). *Comic books: In case you haven't noticed they've changed*. In J. L. Thomas (Ed.), *Cartoons and Comics in the Classroom: A Reference for Teachers and Librarians* (pp 21-25). Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited
- Burns and Roe and Ross. (1984). *Teaching Reading in Today's Elementary School*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cary, S. 2004. *Going graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clarke, Paula J: *Emma Truelove: Charles Hulme and Margaret J. Showling*. (2014). *Developing Reading Comprehension*. John Willey & Sons.Ltd
- Creswell, J,W.(2012). *Educational Research: Planning Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Fika, M., & Mirjam, A. (2012). *Comic Strips: A Study on the Teaching of Writing Narrative Texts to Indonesia EFL Students*. TEFLIN Journal, 23 (2), 183-204
- Gavigan, K. W. & Tomasevich, M. (2011). *Connecting comics to curriculum: Strategies for grades 6- 12*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC
- Gonzales, Espada, W.J. (2003). *Integration Physical Science and the Graphic Arts with Scientifically Accurate Comic Strips: Rationale, Description, and Implementation 2*. Russellville: Arkansas Tech University
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2013). *Teaching and researching reading, second edition*. In *Teaching and Researching Reading, Second Edition*.
- Johnson, A.P. (2008). *Teaching Reading and Writing*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- King, Carroll and Stanley, Nancy. (1989). *Building Skill for the TOEFL*. Thomas Nelson and Son Ltd
- Klingner, J.K., Vaughn, S. and Boardman, A. (2007). *Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- McCloud. Scott. (1993). *Understanding Comics*. New York. Harper Collings

- Nunan, D. (2009). *Practical English Teaching*. Singapore: Mc. Graw Hill
- Nuttall, L. (2008). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, London: Heinemann Educational Books
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS Survival Manual*. (2nd edition). Sidney: Allen & Unwin Pang, Elizabeth S. AngalukiMuaka, Elizabeth B. Bernhardt and Michael L.
- Kamil (2003). *Educational Practices Series-12: Teaching Reading*. Bureau: The International Academy of Education.
- Potter, H. Abbot. (2008). *Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge
- Rebecca, J. L. (2003). *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*. Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Sahin, Ayfer. (2013) "The Effect of Text Types on Reading Comprehension". Vol. 3 No. 2, MIJE.
- Scanlon, Donna M. et al. (2010). *Early Intervention for Reading Difficulties: The Interactive Strategies Approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Sharon Vaughn, and Sylvia Linan Thompson. (2004) *Research-Based Methods of Reading Comprehension*, United States America: ASCD Corporation, p.98-99
- Smith, Andrew. (2006). *Teaching with Comics*. University of Lethbridge: Canada
- Wagner, Patrick and Aleta Baskerville. (2000). *Targeting Text: Narrative, Drama Poetry*, Sydney. Blake Education
- Yang, Gene.(2008). *Graphics Novels in the classroom*, Proust Education Journals