

THE USE OF COMIC STRIPS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF NARRATIVE TEXT FOR THE TENTH GRADERS AT SMK WAHID HASYIM IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to enhance reading comprehension among tenth-grade students at SMK Wahid Hasyim. They faced challenges with understanding English texts, including a limited vocabulary, low scores, and a general lack of interest in English reading materials. This research focused on enhancing reading comprehension skills in narrative texts through comic strips. The study involved 33 students from the Office Management and Business Services program and used a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. Various instruments, including modules, observation sheets, field note, and questionnaires, were employed, with collaboration from the classroom English teacher. Conducted in two of cycles planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The research showed initial results with 24.24% of students meeting the mastery level. After revising the instructional materials, the second cycle showed a significant improvement, with 90.91% achieving a perfect score. These findings demonstrate that comic strips are effective in improving reading comprehension among tenth graders, confirming their potential as valuable educational tools.

Keyword : *Comic Strips, Reading Comprehension, Narrative Text, Tenth Graders.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is basically a symbol system for communicating with other people (Nurbiana, 2010). It means that with language, people can communicate each other either in their native language or in a foreign language. Furthermore, because of the rapid expansion of the globalization period, individuals around the world are being required to learn a variety of languages, for example is English.

Since English has been unofficially admitted as an international language, mastering English as a means of communication is extremely important. Ilyosovna (2020) states in her article that learning English is important, thus

people worldwide decide to study it as a second language or foreign language. In accordance with that, the great need and requirement to learn this international language has caused the people who want to learn English increase. Certainly, Many individuals have begun learning and using English in their daily communication. Furthermore, English is now incorporated into education at all levels, from kindergarten to university.

In English classrooms at any level, there are two basic elements that must be acquired by students, namely English skills and English components. The skills are divided into receptive skills which consists of listening and reading, as well as productive skills which consists of speaking and writing (Thornbury:2012). He also explains further that there are also three basic components that need to be taught in English. They are pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Both skills and components in English have an important role in the process of learning English at all levels of education. Learning reading is one of the fundamental English abilities that help one to comprehend information correctly. According to Stone (2018), reading is a key aim that children must achieve in order to be successful in school and in life. The goal of language instruction is for students to comprehend all language abilities necessary for teaching English.

Reading comprehension is a crucial thing for students' English learning. However, most students encounter numerous difficulties when reading a text. For example, difficult words, sentence comprehension, and how to correctly read a word or sentence (Katemba & Samuel. 2017). As a result, because Indonesian students have already encountered difficulties with reading comprehension in Indonesian, the language that they have acquired and learned. Thus, they find it far more difficult to read and comprehend reading in English, the foreign language that they have only recently acquired and learned.

Vocational High School (SMK) is a formal education unit that organizes vocational education at the senior secondary education level as a continuation of SMP, MTS, or other equivalent forms. Vocational education has a main mission of forming a strong foundation for students in the learning process to master academic and non-academic abilities, master the ability in certain areas of

expertise, and have the ability to be able to work and open jobs (Achdiani, 2017:35). This preparation is supported by the application of a curriculum that is in accordance with the development and needs of the times. Some of these difficulties mentioned above are also found in SMK Wahid Hasyim Glagah Lamongan.

Students at SMK Wahid Hasyim Glagah Lamongan faced difficulties in English. First, many struggled with vocabulary, making it hard to understand texts. Second, they could understand words individually but had trouble connecting them to form meaningful ideas. Third, their reading comprehension was low, with average scores below the curriculum standard of 75. Fourth, they seemed uninterested in reading English texts, often lacking the vocabulary and understanding needed to analyze them. This suggests that learning English, especially reading skills, was challenging for them. Furthermore, Teaching techniques used in reading were monotonous, relying on uninteresting student worksheets. This was opposite to the Merdeka Curriculum, which allowed teachers to create engaging and educational learning experiences. SMK Wahid Hasyim Glagah Lamongan implemented a curriculum based on National Education Standards and Graduate Competency Standards but its implementation was not yet optimal.

The researcher sought effective ways to solve the problem. Improving teaching techniques and learning media can enhance students' reading comprehension. One of the solutions that the teachers should choose appropriate methods and media to make learning easier and more engaging for students. According to Zvavanhu (2010) also divides media into four types, they are printed media, visual media, audio media, and audio-visual media.

Learning media is one of the important elements in the learning process. Learning dynamics are determined by the methods used in the student learning process (Mansyur, 2020). Therefore, learning methods are an element in the learning system that makes lessons much more interesting. The use of learning media depends on technology, such as the Canva application. Canva is a graphic

design tool that helps users create designs like greeting cards, posters, brochures, infographics, and presentations.

According to Fajardo (2016) In order to make it works well, teachers need to use several kinds of visual media to teach English such as picture, game, comic, poster, realia, and etc. It means that English teacher should not remain passive or give up all efforts to make improvements. Discussing the case above, the researcher choose that teaching English reading skills by using comic strips which is one the teaching aids that makes the chance to learn English more fun. Comic strips combine pictures and sentences, so it will help the students to understand the content and context that the teacher has taught easily by using comics as a media to improve students' reading comprehension. Another benefit of the use of comics is able to accelerate the process of receiving a message that will be delivered and allows messages to be obtained by the student will be stored for longer in their memories.

Discussing the previous paragraph, Many research studies state the effectiveness of learning using comic strips in increasing reading comprehension. the researcher assumes that comic strips to teach English reading skills is one of the teaching strategies that provide the opportunity to learn English more enjoyable. It is hoped that comic strips will make learning English more enjoyable and inspire students to read and pay attention to the material. Meanwhile the problem of this research is formulated as follows: How is the implementation of comic strips to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative text at SMK Wahid Hasyim in the academic year 2023/2024?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is important for students. Akabuike and Asika (2012:11) found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic achievement. In other words, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass the exams than a student who is a weak reader. Further, they also found that there is a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, students who have a lot of vocabulary is to read extensively.

According to Mckee (2012), reading comprehension is vital to an individual's personal and pedagogical growth. It is the concept of understanding that can be even more important. Reading in itself is not enough, an individual must be able to analyze and reorganize ideas and information. It means that reading needs deliberate efforts to have effective comprehension in finding out the details of information that the readers pursue. Here, reading is a process that always has a purpose, so it is important for the readers to be aware of what they should do

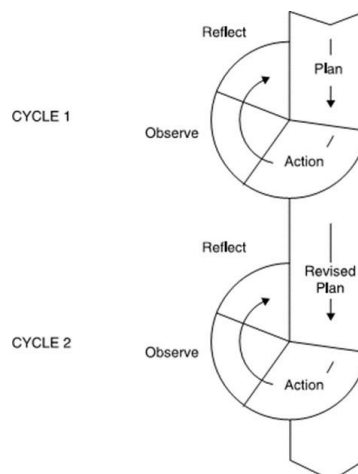
A narrative text is a type of text that tells a story or describes a sequence of events. Priyanka (2008) defined narrative text as focused on a pattern of events with a problem, and the purpose of the text is to entertain and educate the reader.

Comics are useful for providing information and entertaining readers of various genres. As described by Chon (2013:2) the definition of comics includes a network of ideas composed of their subject matter, format, readership, history, industry, the specific language they use, and another cultural characteristics.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers used Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the design of this research. The CAR design that was applied in this research was adapted from the model proposed by Kemmis, Mc-Taggart, and Nixon (2014). It can be seen in Figure 1 that this CAR model covered four steps, namely: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

Figure1 :Classroom Action Research (CAR) cycle adapted from by Kemmis, Mc. Taggart and Nixon (2014)



Procedure of the Research

The researcher began with the preliminary research. It aimed to collect data on the difficulties encountered by teachers and students in classroom teaching and learning activities that needed to be resolved. The initial step of Classroom Action Research (CAR) involved planning, which required identifying the necessary activities to achieve the desired goal. The Action step was the second phase of the cycle, involved implementing the teaching-learning process based on the module developed during the planning phase. The third step was observing. The researcher gathered two types of data: students' reading comprehension skills from worksheets and data on student involvement during the action. Reflecting was the last phase of this research procedure. The researcher reflected on the finished treatment of the previous phase. It aimed to evaluate and analyze whether the action was successful or not. If the researcher found unsolved problems in the teaching-learning process in the first cycle, the researcher repaired the difficulties by re-planning steps for the following cycles.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study was qualitative. Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world. While there are many approaches to qualitative research, they tend to be flexible and focus on retaining rich meaning when interpreting data.

Research Instrument

These data were collected through teacher observations, field notes, student worksheets, questionnaires, and interviews. During observation, the collaborator monitored how the teacher conducted the learning process. Field notes were used to document observations, with additional details written on separate sheets as needed. Questionnaires, consisting of written questions, provided insights into the respondents' personalities or knowledge. Interviews were conducted as dialogues between the interviewer and informants to gather further information.

Students' Participants

This research was conducted at SMK Wahid Hasyim, located in Glagah village on Jl. Raya Glagah, Kec. Glagah, Kabupaten Lamongan, East Java, 62292. SMK Wahid Hasyim comprises three grades: tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, with class numbers varying by vocational division. As a vocational school, it offers five specializations: (1) Office Management and Business Services, (2) Computer Network and Telecommunications Engineering, (3) Motorcycle Engineering and Business, (4) Machining Engineering, and (5) Institutional Accounting and Finance. Each specialization has one class section. The research focused on tenth-grade students in the Office Management and Business Services program, consisting of 33 students, with one male and 32 females.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding on the First Cycle

On the first meeting, several obstacles were encountered. Three students arrived late due to a school activity. The group seating caused noise, requiring the researcher to direct them back to their seats. The observer suggested focusing on reading and comprehension without rushing. The students had insufficient understanding of the simple past tense. As a result, they became noisy and lost focus on their worksheets. It is hoped that the researcher can address these issues in future classes.

During the second meeting, there were no significant obstacles, but the students showed notable improvement. They were motivated by comic strips and became fluent in reading the short story. The students were active in class, frequently asking about English words and acquiring new vocabulary. The feedback for the researcher was to provide vocabulary notes while students worked on their worksheets, as they encountered challenges in finishing them.

The emphasis also occurred in the field notes, the observer wrote that some of the students not really paid attention to the materials being taught by the researcher but did not really understand the materials presented.

The researcher observed the students' worksheets. In the first meeting of cycle 1, the total score was 1,800. Out of 33 students, only 6 scored above 75, while 27 failed to complete the worksheet effectively. Specifically, 2 students scored 30, 8 scored 40, 8 scored 50, 7 scored 60, 2 scored 70, 4 scored 80, 1 scored 90, and 1 achieved a perfect score of 100. These results highlight the need for further intervention to improve student performance and comprehension.

In the second meeting, the total worksheet score was 2,130. Out of 33 students, 12 had a good score, while 21 did not complete the worksheet effectively. Specifically, 1 student scored 30, 1 scored 40, 6 scored 50, 8 scored 60, 5 scored 70, 7 scored 80, and 5 scored 90. No students achieved a perfect score. These results highlight the need for continued efforts to improve student performance and comprehension.

From the result above, it showed that the score of the students was still low although it was proven between the first meeting and the second meeting of the Cycle 1 the students score was improve.

The teacher said that in the first meeting, students struggled with reading and comprehending texts and were reluctant to engage with English readings. However, in the second meeting, they felt more comfortable and began to understand better, asking more questions. The comic strip illustrations helped them follow the storyline, grasp the material, and gain confidence. This improved their comprehension and vocabulary. The teacher suggested that students need to focus more on reading comprehension for their worksheet tasks and require frequent reading practice to become more proficient.

The researcher found that the first cycle didn't meet the success criteria. However, to check if comic strips helped students' reading, they decided to continue to the second cycle. They based this decision on field notes which showed areas needing improvement, 1)The need for regular reading comprehension practice to help students become more accustomed and proficient in their worksheets was recognized. 2)The class was managed effectively to ensure students did not become noisy and lose focus on their learning. 3)Problems regarding simple past tense and vocabulary. The vocabulary notes were provided

while students worked on worksheets to prevent them from struggling with unfamiliar words.

To overcome the weakness found in the first cycle, the researcher and the collaborator remade the module with some revisions and improvements for the second cycle. Some modifications for the second module explained as follows:

To help students overcome difficulties, the researcher promoted regular reading practice. In the next cycle, students analyzed English words from previous worksheets and a comic strip story. They worked in pairs to discuss. The teacher read and explained each sentence clearly. Clear instructions and guidance ensured students understood how to approach worksheets effectively. Regular feedback and support from teachers aided students' comprehension development. With consistent practice and support, students improved their comprehension skills.

To keep the class focused, the teacher made sure students didn't get noisy or lose focus. In the next cycle, students were told not to use their phones, stay in their seats, and listen to the teacher. If there were any problems, the teacher dealt with them quickly. They also made learning enjoyable and comfortable, offering prizes for correct answers to keep students engaged.

The third way of overcoming the students' difficulty in simple past tense and limited vocabulary knowledge among the students. In the next cycle, the teacher gave vocabulary notes on the whiteboard while students worked on worksheets to prevent them from struggling with unfamiliar words. the teacher also had to explain clearly about the simple past and be able to identify it in the reading text.

The researcher also modified the module with the goal of making students feel more comfortable and finding the materials easier to understand. Additionally, the final worksheet was revised to include comic strip images that were more closely related to the story, aiming to assist students in comprehending the reading. The second cycle was conducted to enhance students' scores in reading narrative texts.

Finding on the Second Cycle

In the third meeting, there weren't any big problems, but there was a lot of progress. Students' reading improved, and they remembered what they learned before. The teacher gave many reading exercises, which helped students understand the comic strips. Students were happy and asked about new words. The class was more interesting, with students discussing and answering questions eagerly. Meanwhile, in the fourth meeting, there were no problems. Students worked on their worksheets individually. Most students understood the reading well, but they needed help with new words. They were enthusiastic about the comic strip worksheet and answered questions seriously. They finished their work faster than before. Overall, there was a big improvement in how students engaged and understood, showing the teaching methods worked well.

After observing the students' behavior, the researcher checked their worksheets. The total score was 2720. Out of 33 students, 26 did well, but 7 struggled. The scores varied: 1 student got 50, 2 got 60, 4 got 70, 11 got 80, another 11 got 90, and 4 got 100. These results showed the need for personalized support to help all students learn effectively and create a supportive learning environment.

Followed by the fourth meeting, the total worksheet score was 3010. Out of 33 students, 29 did well, but 4 didn't complete it effectively. Scores varied: 4 students got 70, 5 got 80, 7 got 90, and 17 got a perfect 100. This showed both progress and areas needing improvement. It highlighted the need for consistency and practice to help every student succeed in school.

The teacher said in the interview that the second cycle of the research went well. They noticed the students were more interested in learning with comics. The teacher found the classroom activities more enjoyable and saw increased enthusiasm among the students. They believed the research was successful and that understanding is vital for teaching children to read. The teacher found using comics more enjoyable for the children. Overall, the interview showed that using comics helped engage students and improve learning outcomes.

The study found that using comic strips improved students' reading comprehension. There was significant progress in reading comprehension during the third meeting, with engaging activities and teacher support. The fourth meeting showed continued improvement, with students becoming more enthusiastic and engaged. Data from student worksheets showed areas of achievement and areas needing attention, stressing the importance of personalized support.

After observation comes reflection. This involves looking at students' observation sheets, field notes, final worksheets, and interview data from the second cycle. Specific success criteria need to be met: First, the final assessment measures the percentage of students scoring above 75, as per school standards. Second, observations and field notes show excellent student engagement during teaching and learning. So, in the tenth grade of SMK Wahid Hasyim, with 33 students majoring in management and business services, the final worksheet results have been identified.

Based on the students' final worksheet scores, 75% met the "Kriteria Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran" (KKTP). Specifically, 30 students, or 90.91%, got a perfect score, while 3 students, or 9.09%, got a lower score. These results show the teaching methods were effective and students understood well. Collaborator observations also noted excellent participation and enthusiasm during teaching. Based on this, the researcher concluded that the second cycle was successful.

There was an enhancement in students' final score of the worksheet in the second cycle. This could be led by some factors: 1) All the students always had high enthusiasm during teaching learning process. The students always paid attention to each teacher's explanation in the classroom. 2) The material for teaching learning was good so the students felt enjoy during teaching learning process. 3) Enhancing students' reading comprehension from the worksheet results. In the second cycle, nearly all students received worksheet scores above 75 in accordance with school regulations. meaning that over 75% of students achieved the success target

Discussion on the Teaching Learning Process

In Cycle I, students understood the material well, but in Cycle II, they improved even more. After observing and reflecting, it was clear that activities, emphasis on understanding, and practice needed improvement. In Cycle 2, we saw good results: students had a better understanding, improved vocabulary, and were happy and enthusiastic learning with comic strips.

In the second cycle, there was notable progress in the students' performance on the worksheet. Specifically, out of the students, only 3 were unsuccessful, contrasting with the 25 students who were unsuccessful in the first cycle. It could be concluded that the students score in cycle 2 was better than their score in cycle 1. The findings from the first cycle revealed that students struggled with reading comprehension, facing issues related to their activity, vocabulary, motivation, interest, understanding, and practice. So that, teaching reading by using comic strips could reduce the problems faced by the students.

Based on the previous study, Csabay (2006:24) defined that one of the strongest benefits of using comic strips to teach is the ability to motivate students since it brings a cheerful atmosphere into the class. If the classroom is enjoyable and attractive, the students will learn preferably. Thus, an appropriate strategy combined with attractive instructional media is strongly recommended to create this condition. It could significantly raise the students' achievement.

Discussion on the Students' Ability in Reading Comprehension

From the students' worksheets, it's clear that 25 students got low scores, which is 75.76% of the total. Only 8 students, or 24.24%, did well. This shows that improvements are needed in the first cycle to make the research successful. Meanwhile, The latest data from the students' reading worksheet in the second cycle shows that 30 students got good scores. This means 90.91% of students did well, while 3 students, or 9.09%, got slightly lower scores. Even though there's a small difference, they still did well. This achievement is higher than the school's goal of 75% of students meeting the "Kriteria Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran" (KKTP). The students' scores from the first and second cycles show improvement in reading narrative text using comic strips for tenth graders at SMK Wahid

Hasyim. This shows that using comic strips is effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

Discussion of the Questionnaire

The questions had three choices of answer. The students answered “Yes, Sometimes, and No”. There are fifteen questions about students' opinion and teaching learning process in implementing comic strips to improve students reading comprehension of narrative text. The researcher gathered the data from Questionnaire, then analyzed the basis of the students' answer. 1) Most students like English lessons. 2) Students have varying interest levels in English lessons and language skills. 3) Some students enjoy reading lessons in English more than others. 4) Some students find reading difficult, while others find it easier. 5) Students have different levels of understanding when using the teaching method. 6) Most students feel interested when shown pictures (comic strips). 7) Many students feel motivated to ask questions with the teacher's guidance. 8) A few students find it consistently difficult to understand what they read. 9) Most students can extract information from texts, but some find it challenging. 10) The majority of students are proficient in handling questions about narrative texts. 11) Most students like learning to read using comic strip methods. 12) Many students believe that learning to read using this method helps them understand the content better. 13) Most students believe that using this method helps them summarize or retell the content of the reading. 14) Many students feel motivated to continue improving their reading skills using this method. 15) The majority of students find the teacher's use of this learning method for English reading lessons enjoyable.

The questionnaire data indicated that students could enhance their reading skills through the use of comic strips. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Istiqomah (2023), who concluded that teaching narrative text reading with comic strips could enhance students' comprehension of the material. In summary, the researcher affirmed that comic strips could serve as an engaging tool for teaching narrative text reading, as evidenced by students' comprehension levels and their performance on related assignments.

CONCLUSION

This research consisted of two cycles focused on improving students' reading comprehension using collaborative classroom action research (CAR). The researcher followed steps like preliminary research, planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. Using comic strips to teach reading proved effective for tenth graders at SMK Wahid Hasyim. After implementing it, students' comprehension improved, meeting success criteria set for the second cycle. In the first cycle, only 8 students (24.24%) met the school's minimum mastery level, while 25 students (75.76%) struggled. Revisions were made to the module and media to address this. In the second cycle, 30 students (90.91%) achieved a perfect score, while 3 students, or 9.09%, showing significant improvement. Thus, the second cycle met the success criteria of the research.

The researcher found the improvements between worksheet and activities in the first cycle and the second cycle. Before the comic strips are distributed by the researcher, the students' reading comprehension is still low and interest in English was also very poor. It was very different after the researcher distributes the comic strips media on the students' narrative worksheet. It proves that applying comic strips in teaching reading comprehension more effective to make the students understand the materials. Based on the finding, it showed that Comic strips are the effective media in teaching reading comprehension of narrative text at the tenth graders of SMK Wahid Hasyim Glagah Lamongan.

The researcher acknowledged that the study is not perfect but hopes it will serve as a valuable reference for future research. The study demonstrated that comic strips can effectively teach reading comprehension. Future researchers can use comic strips for various reading materials, like report and recount texts. The researcher aims for this work to be a useful resource for others.

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