

# Teaching Reading by Using Comics to Improve Students' Comprehension

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## ABSTRACT

The learning of reading for students at junior high school and senior high school is not easy because the students face difficulties to understand the meaning of the text being read. The aim of this paper is to describe how to teach reading by using Comics to improve students' comprehension. Comics are thin books, bound with staples media that can make teaching and learning more interesting because they are divided up the text into manageable chunks, which are supported by images. It makes students interested in reading the story that is why the English teachers at junior and senior high school are suggested to use comics as media while teaching reading in order to make the students comprehend the text easier. The procedures of teaching reading by using comics are preparation, pre-teaching, whilst teaching and post teaching. In preparation, the teacher prepares the material, media and lesson plan. In pre-teaching activity, the teacher leads the students to have a brainstorming about the topic that is going to discuss. In whilst teaching activity, the teacher gives the comic and asks the students to read the comics and discuss the topic in groups. The last, post-teaching activity, the teacher concludes the lesson and gives the task to the students in order to make the students understand about the material has given.

**Key Words :** Teaching reading, comics, comprehension.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Problem

English as an international language is one of the important languages in the world. It bridges people to keep in touch together around the world. As a global or universal language, English does not only help people to communicate and interact with every one throughout the world but it can also alter our life to be better.

In learning English, the students should master four language skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Bashrin (2013:3), the skills are

divided into two. They are productive skills and receptive skills. The productive skills are speaking and writing, because learners need to articulate words and write to produce language. Listening and reading are receptive skills, because the learners receive language by listening to conversation, music, video and also by reading comprehension, newspaper, poem, book, etc. As discussed above, reading is one of language skills that should be mastered by students. Reading is a process to get information. It means if someone reads a text he or she will get something. Widiati (2006:36) says that reading is one of the four

language skills, and it can be classified into two types: initial reading and reading comprehension. Initial reading is an effort made by those who have not been able to read to learn reading (e.g., how to read the alphabets and combination of letters or simple words), whereas reading comprehension is an activity aimed to understand the messages of a particular text. As discussed above, reading is one of language skills that should be mastered by students. Reading is a process to get information. It means if someone reads a text he or she will get something. Widiati (2006:36) says that reading is one of the four language skills, and it can be classified into two types: initial reading and reading comprehension. Initial reading is an effort made by those who have not been able to read to learn reading (e.g., how to read the alphabets and combination of letters or simple words), whereas reading comprehension is an activity aimed to understand the messages of a particular text. There are several factors which cause students have difficulty in reading, and one of them is teaching media. The purpose of media is to facilitate communication and learning, and to make the learning process easier. Sometimes teachers do not use media in the teaching learning process in the classroom so that students often got bored or uninterested to the teaching and learning process in classroom. As the result, they are not motivated to learn English seriously. In other words, English teacher should be able to

find the appropriate media in process of teaching and learning the reading.

One of the interesting appropriate media in teaching reading is comic. Comic has been suggested as classroom media due to their broad appeal to almost any age group or learner level because they depict real dialogue and culture.

### **Purpose of Writing this Paper**

The writer has purposes to write this paper, they are :

1. To describe about the problem based on comics.
2. To share knowledge for future teacher and others about the important of problem based comics.
3. To fulfill a partial requirement to get Sarjana (S.1) Degree at English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Bung Hatta University.

### **The Organization of Paper**

This paper comprises four chapters. Chapter I discusses the background of the problem, organization of the paper, and the purpose of writing the paper. Chapter II discusses two major topics: concepts of reading and comics. The concepts of reading deal with the point of view of the definition of reading comprehension, the reading strategies, techniques of comprehension and levels of

comprehension. The concepts of comics were discussed under some subtopics: the definition of comic, the advantages of comic and using comic in teaching reading. Chapter III describes the procedure of using comic in teaching reading. Chapter IV concludes the paper with some conclusions and suggestions.

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **The definition of reading comprehension**

Learning reading is the most important educational outcome of primary education. Some people think that the term of reading is an activity just to read sentence in a text or in a passage, and other people say that reading is to get information from what they read. To do it successfully, we have to understand what the words mean, see the pictures the words paint, understand the arguments, and work out if we agree with them.

There are some definitions of reading comprehension elaborated by experts. Reading comprehension is a process that involves memory, thinking abstractly, visualization, and understanding vocabulary as well as knowing how to properly decode (Ness, 2010).

From definition above a simple conclusion can be drawn that reading is a process of getting meaning and information or ideas, and this activity will success if the readers can understand the writers' message.

## **Reading Strategy**

Many strategies in reading can help readers to comprehend the text. In this paper the writer explains some reading strategies, there are: skimming and scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading.

### **a. Skimming and Scanning**

Skimming and scanning are two specific speed-reading techniques, which enable you to cover a vast amount of material very rapidly. These techniques are similar in process but different in purposes, quickly "looking over" an article is neither skimming nor scanning.

Skimming is reading at the fastest speed a person can accomplish. It is used when a reader wishes to cover material in a hurry (Zainil, 2008). Skimming is a method of rapidly moving the eyes over text with the purpose of getting the main ideas and a general overview of the content. Skimming can usually be accomplished at about 1000 words per minute.

Scanning is a reading technique used when one wishes to locate a single fact or a specific bit of information without reading everything (Zainil, 2008). Scanning is very useful for finding a specific name, date, statistic, or fact without reading every word. In scanning the reader must be willing to skip over large section of text without reading or understanding them. Scanning can be done at 1500 or more word per minute. Table 2.1 will

guide you to have a clear thought of the differences between skimming and scanning.

**Table 2.1 The Differences Between Skimming and Scanning.**

	Skimming		Scanning
1	Read the first few paragraphs, two or three middle paragraphs and the final two or three paragraphs of a piece trying to get a basic understanding of the information.	1	Knowing your text well is important. Make a prediction about where in the text you might find a word, a date, a name or a fact.
2	Some people prefer to skim by reading the first and last sentence of each paragraph.	2	Note how the information is arranged on a page. Ask yourself, "Will headings, diagrams, boxed or highlighted information guide me?"

3	If there are pictures, charts or diagrams, a quick glance at them may help you to understand the main idea or point of view in the text.	3	Move your eyes vertically or diagonally down a page, letting them dart quickly from side to side, and keeping in mind the exact type of information that you want. Look for closely associated words that might steer you towards the detail for which you are looking.
4	Remember: you do not have to read every word when you skim.	4	You have scanned successfully when you have found the information you were looking for.

(Take from: Queensland Studies Authority, 2010)

#### b. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a technique of reading for high degree of comprehension and retention over a long period of time. Brown

(1989) explains that intensive reading "calls attention to grammatical forms, discourse markers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships. It is basically a study technique for organizing reading that will have to be understood and remembered.

### c. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is reading as much as possible, for reader own pleasure, at a difficulty level at which to read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translate the word. According to Brown (1989), extensive reading is carried out "to achieve a general understanding of a text." The teacher's role in the extensive reading is to encourage and help the students with their reading during or after class time.

## **Technique of Comprehension**

In comprehending a text, there are some technique that can be used, they are: top-down, bottom-up, and interactive strategy.

### a. Top-Down

Saricoban (2002) defines that Top-down is a technique of comprehending text by which the readers are required to have general predictions and then seek for the input for the message. To do this, a teacher can give some ideas to form generalizations about the topic to process the information as an initiator. Then the students are required to process information.

Top-down technique happen when individual uses background information or knowledge to predict meaning of language or text. Top-down processing is thought to be an effective way of processing language. It makes the most of what the person brings to the situation. In addition to prior knowledge as a key point, top-down model is actually a whole-language teaching approach, in which readers focus on the context, and manage to construct meanings in the text. Top-Down processes deal with understanding the meaning of a text and how ideas are interrelated. It involves (1) recognition of coherence and consistency in a text (2) knowledge of the text structure (3) inferences (guesses from context) and background knowledge about the content of a text.

### b. Bottom-Up

Saricoban (2002) states that bottom-up as the previously acquired knowledge structures (Schemata) are hierarchically organized from most general at the top to most specific at the bottom. To do this a teacher can move from grammar points and vocabulary to direct the learners to focus on the message.

### c. Interactive Strategy

Saricoban (2002) says that interactive model for teaching reading refers to the dynamic relationship between bottom-up and top-down, between decoding and

interpretation, and between text and reader. This approach is best applied to teaching literary works because the reading or teaching goals-interpretation and meaning construction—are likely to be reached, and the reader or learners are not excluded from the text/learning process.

### **Level of Comprehension**

There are three levels of reading comprehension. They are literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical comprehension.

#### **a. Literal Comprehension**

Literal comprehension is the understanding of the written meaning of passage: the definition of words, the context of writing, the main idea of the passage, and the sequence of thought chosen by the author. The reader needs to understand ideas and information explicitly stated in the reading material.

#### **b. Inferential Comprehension**

Inferential comprehension involves with what the text mean by what is said. Students use information clearly stated in the text to infer the meaning which is not stated in the text. According to Huggin (2009), inferential comprehension means that the readers must go beyond what the author has explicitly stated in a passage and look for those details that are implied or hinted (thinking beyond the text) and thinking what it means to readers .

#### **c. Critical Comprehension**

Critical comprehension requires readers to make judgments about what they are reading based on an evaluation of several text- grounded factors, such as the quality of the writing, the determination that in is fact non opinion, the objectivity of the author and whether the text is believable.

### **The Concept of Comic**

Comic can be used efficiently for this purpose especially among students because it brings a cheerful atmosphere into the class.

### **The Definition of Comic**

There are some definitions of comic given by experts. Kunzle (2008) says that a comic book consists of a sequence of separate images with a preponderance of image over text that appears in a mass medium and tells a story which is both moral and topical. In addition, Derrick (2008) declares that comics not only can provide language learners with contextualized comprehensible input but they can also engage the learners and lead them to explore more graphic novels or books, magazines and newspapers.

### **The Strengths of Comic**

The strengths of comics in education according to Yang (2003) are many, such as:

a) *Motivating*. Due to human's natural attraction to pictures, comics can capture and maintain the learner's interest;

b) *Visual*. Pictures and text mutually tell a story. In this "interplay of the written and visual" comics "put a human face on a given

subject" resulting in emotional connection between students and characters of a comic's story.

c) *Permanent*. Williams (1995) cites comics' "permanent, visual component" in contrast to film and animation, where the medium dictates the pace of the viewing progresses.

d) *Intermediary*. Comics can scaffold to difficult disciplines and concepts, can give reluctant readers the non-threatening practice and to experienced ones inspiration and confidence for more challenging texts.

### **The Advantages of Comics**

The comic book format is a powerful combination of discursive skills, artistic creativity and expressions. Comics were an effective tool for improving reading comprehension for second language learners.

The benefits of comics in the classroom are vast. They can:

1. Engage readers who learn visually, and who are comfortable with visual media, such as video games and computer graphics
2. Increase vocabulary
3. Encourage readers to explore different genres, and develop an appreciation for different literary and artistic styles
4. Teach positive messages, such as helping others, working to one's best

ability, working as a team, and persevering

5. Open a reader's mind to new ways of storytelling, and increase their imagination, through the unique combination of text and pictures used in comics to convey the story.

### **Using Comic in Teaching Reading**

Comic books have always been a favorite for children. Comic books are benefit in education because of its inspiring power. Sherman & Wright (1996) introduces a teaching strategy using newspaper comic book to promote higher level thinking in elementary and secondary students. When a student is reading for fun, they feel a certain amount of control in the reading process. In contrast, when they are studying a literary text, there are a little room for innovation and creativity and make the students will be bored and they not understand what they reads. According to Smith (2006:13), there are several steps of using comics in teaching reading. First, students take turns reading a comic book in the class. In addition, when reading the comic, students must also describe the actions of each panel/page without revealing the images to the rest of the class. Second, present students with a comic book that have had the titles removed (or had no titles to begin with). Students are charge with reading the strip, assessing the themes, ideas, images, and so forth and coming up with a title for the strip, as well as

the appropriate justification. Third, using either an image of a character or a quotation, have students deduce what kind of person that character may be. After the student has complete a short characters based on the information they have been provided with, tell them information. Fourth, present students with a script of a comic and ask them to find out the set of scene of the story.

## **THE IMPLEMENTATION TEACHING READING BY USING COMICS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION**

### **Preparation**

As a professional, the teacher must master all of the learning materials before she/he gives them to the students. The teacher has to prepare himself in giving questions, examples, evaluation, and worksheet. Teacher also needs to know their subjects from a pedagogical perspective relating to the the use of comic in teaching reading to improve student comprehension. In choosing material, the teacher can search and link the topic with the syllabus and curriculum.

### **Implementation**

#### **Pre-teaching Activities**

Before beginning the teaching and learning process in the classroom, a teacher has to do pre-teaching activities. Some activities in pre-teaching like praying, taking

attendance, and brainstorming. In this activity, the teacher finds out background knowledge of the students about the material that will be taught. The pre teaching activities will be as follows:

- a. Teacher leads students to pray.
- b. Teacher greets all of the students.
- c. Teacher takes student's attendance.
- d. Teacher does brainstorming by asking some questions to students about material that will be discussed.

#### **Whilst Teaching Activities**

In this part the teacher tells a short story and asks the students' knowledge about the story, and after all students understand about the story or get the point on the aspects of the story like, characters, time and places, teaches gives the same comic book to whole students in the classroom, and ask the students to read the comic book. Whilst teaching activities will be as follow:

- a. The teacher introduces and shows a comic book to students.
- b. The teacher asks some questions related to the topic.
- c. The teacher divides the students into small groups; four members in each groups.



- d. The teacher distributes the comic to all students in all groups.
- e. The teacher asks every group to discuss the meaning of the difficult words.
- f. Teacher asks the students to discuss the story in their own group.
- g. The teacher asks each group to make a summary of the story.
- h. The teacher asks all groups to present their result of the discussion in front of the class.
- i. Finally, the teacher guides the students to discuss of the story.

### **Post-Teaching Activities**

Post teaching is the end of all process of teaching activity. Here the teacher reviews, summarizes and assesses the material they have done. In this stage the teacher seeks for understanding of the students about the material they got. To do it, teacher can give homework or assignments. Teacher gives students the names of comic and asks them to read at home.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusions**

The conclusion section is intended to facilitate the readers in

understanding the important ideas that have been discussed in this paper. Several experts that have been quoted by the writer suggest their opinions on the definition of comic. They have little different opinions, but basically their opinions are the same. From many views that have been posed by the experts, the writer concludes that the definition of comic is a sequence of separate images in a printed book and contains multiple stories.

Related to the benefits of comics in the class room given by the experts before, it can be concluded that, comics is very suitable for teaching reading skill because engage readers who learn visually, and who are comfortable with visual media, such as video games and computer graphics, increase vocabulary, encourage readers to explore different genres, and develop an appreciation for different literary and artistic styles. Comics also teach positive messages, such as helping others, working to one's best ability, working as a team, and persevering. And finally comics open a reader's mind to new ways of storytelling, and increase their imagination, through the unique combination of text and pictures used in comics to convey the story.

### **Suggestions**

In order to be successful in the teaching reading by using comics to improve students' comprehension, teacher is suggested to be able to create an interesting media and effective way of teaching. They should not teach their

students with the monotone activities every day because it can make the students feel bored. In reading this paper, the writer expects the teacher to motivate the students in reading process by using comics. Comics will make students interested in reading comprehension. This media provides interesting sequence of pictures to help students to develop their skill in reading.

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