

## THE EFFECT OF COMIC STRIPS ON STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF RECOUNT TEXTS AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF SMPN 6 SIAK HULU

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of using comic strips on eighth-grade students' ability to comprehend recount texts at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu. Reading comprehension is an important skill that supports students' academic success; however, many students still face difficulties in understanding English texts, especially recount texts. One of the causes is the use of conventional teaching methods that are less engaging. This research used a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group. The sample consisted of 68 students, divided into an experimental group and a control group, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests administered to both groups. The data were analyzed using an independent t-test in SPSS 27. The results showed that the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.009, which is lower than 0.05 ( $0.009 < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted. Therefore, the use of comic strips has a significant effect on students' reading comprehension of recount texts. In conclusion, comic strips can be used as an effective and engaging teaching medium to improve students' reading comprehension.

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### INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a central role in students' academic development. Through reading, learners gain access to information, develop critical thinking, and expand their knowledge across subjects (Hutagalung et al., 2019). In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), reading comprehension becomes even more important because students are required not only to decode linguistic forms but also to understand meaning in a language that is not their mother tongue. Tussa'diah and Nurfadillah (2018) emphasize that students' academic success is strongly influenced by their ability to comprehend written texts. Therefore, strengthening reading comprehension is a key objective in English language teaching at the junior high school level.

Reading comprehension is not a passive activity but an active and interactive process. Snow (2010) explains that comprehension involves constructing meaning through the interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the information presented in the text. This process requires students to identify main ideas, understand details, make inferences, and connect ideas within the text. However, in real classroom contexts, many students still face difficulties in achieving these skills, particularly when dealing with English texts.

In Indonesian junior high schools, reading instruction is generally based on genre-based texts as required by the curriculum (Simatupang & Lubis, 2020). One of the text types that eighth-grade students must master is the recount text, which presents a sequence of past events in a structured form (Hidayati, 2024). Understanding recount texts requires students to recognize text structure, follow chronological events, and comprehend vocabulary related to past experiences. Despite its importance, recount text comprehension remains a challenge for many students.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu, several problems were identified in eighth-grade students' reading comprehension of recount texts. Many students had difficulty identifying the main idea of the text, understanding the sequence of events, and interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary. These difficulties often caused students to lose interest and motivation during reading activities. Furthermore, the teaching process was still largely dominated by conventional methods, such as textbook-based instruction and teacher-centered explanation, which limited students' active engagement in learning. As a result, students tended to become passive learners and struggled to fully understand the texts.

One of the factors contributing to this problem is the limited use of engaging and interactive learning media. The use of various learning materials, such as visual aids, is still rare in reading instruction (Doepker et al., 2018; Marhamah & Yulianto, 2023). In fact, recent developments in education highlight the importance of using multimodal materials that combine text and visual elements to support comprehension (Oliveira, 2018; Belda-Media, 2024). Visual media can help students better understand abstract or complex information by providing contextual support. In this regard, comic strips can be considered a promising instructional medium.

Comic strips present stories through a combination of images and short texts arranged in a sequence, making them easier to follow and more engaging for students. This format can support students in understanding the flow of events, identifying key information, and connecting ideas within a text. In addition, the visual elements in comic strips can help students infer meaning from context, which is particularly useful for learners with limited vocabulary (Mulyawati et al., 2024). Therefore, the use of comic strips has the potential to create a more interactive and enjoyable reading environment.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of comics in improving students' reading comprehension. For example, Ahmad and Ma'rifatulloh (2023) found that the use of comics significantly improved eighth-grade students' comprehension of narrative texts. Similarly, Aini (2024) reported that comic-based learning made reading activities more engaging and easier for students to understand. Other studies also support the positive impact of visual media on reading comprehension (Ismiati et al., 2024). However, most of these studies focus on narrative texts and are conducted at the senior high school level.

Despite the growing interest in using comics as instructional media, there is still a limited number of studies that specifically examine the use of comic strips in teaching recount texts at the junior high school level (Rosyidah & Hidayah, 2024). This indicates a research gap that needs to be addressed. Considering that recount texts are an essential part of the curriculum and that students continue to face difficulties in understanding them, further investigation is necessary to explore more effective teaching strategies.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the effect of using comic strips on eighth-grade students' reading comprehension of recount texts at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu. The novelty of this study lies in three main aspects: the use of comic strips as an instructional medium, the focus on recount texts as the learning material, and the involvement of junior high school students as research subjects. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and engaging reading instruction by providing an alternative teaching strategy that can improve students' reading comprehensio

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design using a non-equivalent control group with a quantitative approach. The research involved two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using comic strip media in learning recount texts, while the control group received instruction through conventional teaching methods without the use of visual media. Both groups were administered a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' reading comprehension before and after the treatment. The pre-test was used to determine the initial ability of both groups, while the post-test was used to measure the effect of the treatment. The study was conducted in six meetings, consisting of one pre-test session, four treatment sessions, and one post-test session. The schematic representation of the research design is depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research Design

<b>Experimental</b>	O1	X	O2
<b>Control</b>	O3		O4

O : Pre and Posttest  
 X : Treatment

The population of this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu, totaling 198 students distributed across six classes (8.1–8.6). The sample was selected using purposive sampling based on several considerations, including relatively similar academic ability, the same learning materials, teacher readiness, and schedule suitability. Based on these criteria, two classes were selected as the sample, with a total of 68 students. Class 8.1 (34 students) was assigned as the control group, while class 8.4 (34 students) was assigned as the experimental group.

**Table 2.** Sample of the Research

No	Classes	Total Students
1	8.1	34 Students
2	8.4	34 Students
<b>Total</b>		<b>68 Students</b>

The instrument used in this study was a multiple-choice reading comprehension test administered during both the pre-test and post-test. The test aimed to measure students' comprehension of recount texts, covering several indicators such as identifying main ideas, finding specific information, understanding vocabulary in context, recognizing references, and making inferences. The instrument was adapted from a junior high school reading resource and adjusted to suit the students' level and the research objectives. Prior to its use, the instrument was pilot-tested on students outside the sample to ensure its quality.

The validity of the test items was analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation. The results showed that all items met the validity criteria, as the obtained correlation values exceeded the critical value ( $r_{table} = 0.355$ ). The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.749, which indicates that the instrument has acceptable internal consistency.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. First, descriptive statistics were used to present the students' scores in both groups. Then, prerequisite tests were conducted, including the normality test using Shapiro–Wilk and the homogeneity test to examine the equality of variance between groups. The results showed that the data were normally distributed and homogeneous, which means the assumptions for parametric testing were met. Therefore, an independent t-test was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, and to examine the effect of using comic strips on students' reading comprehension of recount texts.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

The investigational outcomes commenced with a descriptive statistical exegesis of the pre-test and post-test score dispersions to furnish an overarching delineation of learners' competency levels in the control and experimental groups. This is shown in Table 3

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistic Results

Descriptive Statistic	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
						Deviation
Pre-Test Experiment	34	28	44	72	55.76	4.918
Post-Test Experiment	34	28	60	96	78.47	9.799
Pre-Test Control	34	28	44	72	55.18	5.283
Post-Test Control	34	24	60	84	72.94	7.036

The experimental group exhibited a pre-test mean score of 55.76 accompanied by a standard deviation of 4.92, whereas the control group manifested a pre-test mean score of 55.18 with a standard deviation of 5.28, according to the data shown in table 3. This suggests that both courses' pre-test outcomes shown comparable starting proficiency levels. Subsequently, The experimental class improved to 78.47 on the post-test following the intervention, while the control class improved to 72.94. Consequently, it may be inferred that subsequent to the comic strip intervention, the experimental group shown a greater gain in interpretation of written discourse than the control group.

Normality and homogeneity tests were executed prior to the independent t-test to ascertain the normality of the pre-test and post-test scores and the homogeneity of the data variances, which were necessary for the conduction of a parametric analysis. In this case, the data dispersion was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test, as indicated in Table 4, and the homogeneity test is displayed in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Normality Test

Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test Control	.961	34	.256
Post-Test Control	.978	34	.708
Pre-Test Experiment	.956	34	.182
Post-Test Experiment	.949	34	.117

In light of the outcomes of the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality delineated in Table 4, it is observable that the significant indices across all datasets demonstrate values exceeding 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05) for both pretest and posttest measurements. The control group yielded a pretest significant value of 0.256, followed by 0.708 for the posttest; meanwhile, the experimental group registered 0.182 for the pretest and 0.117 for the posttest. These empirical outcomes indicate that the pretest and posttest dispersions of both groups are adhering to normality, thereby fulfilling the assumptions requisite for parametric inferential analysis utilizing an independent t-test.

**Table 5.** Homogeneity Test

Group	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-Test	.609	1	66	.438
Post-Test	3.939	1	66	.051

According to the outcomes of the homogeneity assessment presented in Table 5, the significant coefficients for both pretest and posttest datasets exceed the 0.05 threshold (Sig. > 0.05). The variance structure between the experimental and control group is therefore deemed homogeneous, as revealed by a pretest significant value of 0.438 and a posttest value of 0.051. Consequently, the dataset is considered methodologically appropriate for parametric inferential procedures utilizing an independent t-test.

**Table 6.** Results of Independent Sample T-Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)

Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.609	.438	-.475	66	.636
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	3.939	.051	-.2.673	66	.009

The investigational hypothesis pertaining to the effectuation of comic-strip media upon learners' comprehension of recount discourse was scrutinized through an independent t-test. The pretest outcomes manifested a significant coefficient (Sig., 2-tailed) of 0.636, which surpasses the 0.05 alpha demarcation. This denotes the absence of any differential in the initial hermeneutic processing of recount textual discourse between the experimental and control group prior to the intervention. Accordingly, both groups commenced from an equivalent epistemic baseline in the interpretation of written recount text. Consequently, H<sub>0</sub> (the null hypothesis) is retained while H<sub>a</sub> (the alternative hypothesis) is dismissed. Conversely, the posttest findings indicate that the significant value (Sig., 2-tailed) falls below the 0.05 threshold, specifically at 0.009. This suggests that after the intervention, the experimental and control groups' scores differed significantly. Consequently, H<sub>a</sub> (There is a significant effect of using comic strips on students' reading comprehension of recount texts at the eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu ) is substantiated, whereas H<sub>0</sub> ( There is no significant effect of using comic strips on students' reading comprehension of recount texts at the eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu ) is repudiated. Hence, the empirical data corroborate that the incorporation of comic strips within interpretation of written discourse instruction for recount texts in the experimental group yielded a markedly superior impact relative to the control group, which was subjected to conventional pedagogical training.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of comic strips has a positive and significant effect on students' reading comprehension of recount texts. Rather than merely showing improvement in scores, the results suggest that comic strips support the learning process in ways that address students' main difficulties in understanding texts.

One of the key reasons comic strips are effective lies in their visual nature. According to Snow (2010), reading comprehension is an active process in which readers construct meaning by integrating textual information with prior knowledge. In this study, comic strips provided visual representations that helped students build this connection more easily. The images in the comics supported students in understanding the context, identifying main ideas, and following the sequence of events in recount texts. This is particularly important because recount texts require students to understand chronological order, which can be challenging when presented only in written form.

In addition, the use of comic strips helped reduce students' difficulties with vocabulary. The combination of images and text allowed students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context, making the reading process more accessible. This finding supports Azzah and Fadilah Hamid (2022), who found that visual elements in comics can facilitate vocabulary understanding and improve overall reading comprehension. Compared to traditional text-based instruction, comic strips offer contextual clues that make abstract or unfamiliar content easier to grasp.

Another important aspect is student engagement and motivation. The findings suggest that comic strips created a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment. This aligns with Rismawati and Somantri (2025), who argue that comic-strip media not only improves comprehension but also increases students' motivation and participation in reading activities. When students are more interested and actively involved, they are more likely to process information deeply, which ultimately enhances comprehension. In contrast, conventional teaching methods tend to make students passive, limiting their opportunity to engage with the text meaningfully.

Furthermore, comic strips help students understand the structure of recount texts more clearly. The sequential arrangement of panels reflects the chronological structure of recount texts, making it easier for students to identify the orientation, events, and reorientation. This supports the idea that learning media should align with the characteristics of the material being taught. In this case, the visual sequencing in comic strips directly supports students' understanding of how events are organized in recount texts.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, but they also provide a more specific contribution. Alimin et al. (2025) demonstrated that comic strips improve reading comprehension despite challenges such as limited vocabulary and low motivation. However, this study further shows how comic strips address these challenges by providing visual support and increasing engagement. Similarly, while Ahmad and Ma'rifatulloh (2023) and Aini (2024) found positive effects of comics on narrative texts, this study extends those findings to recount texts at the junior high school level, which has received less attention in previous research.

In line with Rosyidah and Hidayah (2024), who reported that comic strips improve students' understanding and participation, this study also highlights that the effectiveness of comic strips is not only reflected in improved outcomes but also in the learning process itself. Students become more active, more confident in interpreting texts, and more willing to participate in classroom activities. This suggests that comic strips function not only as a learning medium but also as a tool to create a more student-centered learning environment.

Overall, the findings confirm that comic strips are an effective instructional medium for improving students' reading comprehension. Their effectiveness can be explained through three main aspects: visual support that aids comprehension, increased student motivation and engagement, and alignment with the structure of recount texts. Therefore, the use of comic strips is not only supported by empirical data but also by theoretical perspectives on how reading comprehension develops and how learning media can facilitate that process.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of comic strips has a positive effect on eighth-grade students' reading comprehension of recount texts at SMPN 6 Siak Hulu. Comic strips help students understand texts more easily by providing visual support, improving engagement, and making it easier to follow the sequence of events in recount texts. As a result, students become more active and motivated during the reading process. In practical terms, comic strips can be used as an alternative and effective teaching medium to support reading instruction, especially in EFL classrooms where students often face difficulties in understanding texts. Teachers are encouraged to integrate comic strips into their teaching to create a more interactive and meaningful learning environment. For future research, it is recommended to explore the use of comic strips in other types of texts, such as descriptive or argumentative texts, or to apply this medium at different educational levels to further examine its effectiveness..

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