

USING ENGLISH COMICS TO TEACH READING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Elizabet Habeahan

Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia

elizabethabeahan@gmail.com

*correspondence: elizabethabeahan@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.37147/eltr.v9i1.231>

received 13 December 2024; accepted 30 January 2025

Abstract

Reading is essential in language development, mainly when learning and teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In that case, few studies have explored using English comics as a reading-learning method for EFL students, specifically in Indonesian schools. In response, the researcher was interested in exploring the teachers' perspectives on using comics to teach reading in EFL classrooms, its benefits, challenges, and how to overcome the challenges. To meet the research objectives, the researcher first conducted a literature review of 18 articles published in national and international journals. The articles were explored from SINTA, Google Scholar, and EBSCO databases. The researcher then interviewed three teachers to discuss the literature review analysis results. The findings reveal that teachers perceive comics as beneficial for enhancing students' reading engagement and comprehension in EFL classrooms. However, teachers' challenges include a lack of exposure to digital comic resources, technological limitations, and the need for training in digital comic integration. Some students, particularly those with lower proficiency, also experience difficulties interpreting visual and textual information. Teachers suggested adequate support, including professional development and access to appropriate digital tools, as essential for maximizing the potential of comics in learning EFL teaching. Directions for further research are presented.

Keywords: comic, digital comic, English education, teachers' perspectives on comics for teaching reading, teaching reading

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in Indonesia requires four skills to be practiced. One of them is reading skills. Reading plays a crucial role in education (Ngabut, 2015; Saputri et al., 2021; Setyawan, 2018). Students are required to understand texts for specific purposes, which necessitates the use of practical and appropriate teaching methods (Setyawan, 2018). This process can increase students' understanding and assist them in comprehending the text accurately. However, students in Indonesia exhibit shallow interest in reading, and Indonesia is ranked second lowest in terms of literacy worldwide (Muhaimin et al.,

2023). In the challenging situation, EFL teachers still use conventional learning to improve reading skills, which is considered not to provide satisfactory results (Syafi'i, 2015).

As a response, there is a need for EFL teachers to explore more engaging and innovative approaches to teaching reading (Fajri & Nurmainiati, 2019; Fatimah et al., 2019; Senjaya et al., 2022). Previous studies also emphasized that considering media that students prefer would foster a good teaching and learning process (Ersani et al., 2021; Juliana, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2021). Therefore, selecting appropriate learning media plays an essential role in curriculum design, as it stimulates students' comprehension and fosters a conducive learning environment (Aeni & Yusupa, 2018; Muhaimin et al., 2023; Nugraheni, 2017).

Among various media available for EFL teaching and learning purposes, comics might be an innovative media tool to support students' learning in reading English (Ersani et al., 2021; Juliana, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2021). Some educators have already implemented comics in the education system, such as in France, and comics have also been used in UK classrooms for lessons on literature, art, and history (Sagri et al., 2018). Japan has been using manga comics as a learning medium in the form of English-translated manga in their EFL courses (Cho, 2023; Sagri et al., 2018). A study from Cho (2023) Japanese college students' reading habits; Japanese teachers use translations of manga to teach different aspects of language use. In the same position, Cho (2023) also believes it is worth looking into the usage of English-translated popular manga series in ESL/EFL schools. It supports the idea that comics can be the proper method to be used in the classroom as a medium for English language learning (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016).

However, little is known about English teachers' perspectives or critical responses to the literature discussed in comics, such as using comics to improve students' EFL reading comprehension. Many empirical studies have yet to explicitly address the implementation of comics as a medium for learning in an English classroom, specifically in Indonesian schools.

Therefore, this study attempts to conduct an in-depth exploration of the use of English comics as a learning tool. It intends to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the teachers' perspectives (1) using English comics as a medium for teaching reading in EFL classrooms?
 - (1a) What are the possible benefits of using English comics to teach reading in EFL classrooms?
 - (1b) What are the possible challenges of using comics to teach reading in EFL classrooms?
- (2) What are potential solutions to overcome the challenges of using comics to teach reading in EFL classrooms?

The results of this study will benefit EFL teachers and educators by providing insight into developing practical and interactive lessons using digital comics in classroom settings. Hopefully, this study may also be valuable for parents considering English comics to be effective instruction for teaching English to their children. Additionally, researchers interested in language education and innovative approaches will benefit from the effectiveness of digital comics as an alternative medium for language teaching.

Literature Review

This paper then proceeds to a brief overview of the literature, discussing the definition of comics and their interesting elements.

Reading in EFL classroom

Reading activities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms play an important role in enhancing comprehension skills, vocabulary development, and critical thinking (Ngabut, 2015; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Retnowati et al., 2018; Saputri et al., 2021; Setyawan, 2018; Syafi'i, 2015). Traditional methods, such as silent reading, reading comprehension exercises, and extensive reading activities, are commonly employed to build foundational literacy skills (Bui & Macalister, 2021; Sagri et al., 2018). Similarly, reading aloud can improve pronunciation and fluency but may limit deeper textual exploration (Juliana, 2021). However, these approaches often focus on text comprehension and vocabulary building, struggling to fully engage students or foster deeper critical analysis (Ngabut, 2015).

While traditional approaches emphasize discipline and accuracy, they often fail to address the diverse needs and interests of learners (Wijaya et al., 2021). This calls for more interactive strategies that utilize visual and contextual elements to support comprehensive language development. Comics present a promising solution to these challenges, blending visuals and text to make reading activities more engaging and accessible. By utilizing their narrative and illustrative features, comics not only enhance comprehension but also encourage engagement and student motivation in teaching and learning activities (Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Puspasari, 2019; Senjaya et al., 2022; Zainuddin & Perera, 2017).

Definitions of comics

Comics are a sequence of discrete, contrasted pictures comprising a narrative, independently or combined with text (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Fatimah et al., 2019; Meskin, 2007; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2021). Elements such as panels, gutters, speech bubbles, and other textual and visual elements are used by comics to express content. Comics are usually known as "comic books." The term "comics" is frequently used synonymously; it can also refer to comic strips, graphic novels, webcomics, and other sequential art forms. Comics look similar to novels, but the difference is that comics are short versions of those, and the rest of the text will be presented as illustrations (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Fatimah et al., 2019). Comics can deal with various topics, from politics and social issues to sports and popular culture, and can be comedic, tragic, or informative (Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Saputri et al., 2021). Comics' images and visual representations might attract people to be passionate about reading, especially children (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Fatimah et al., 2019). Therefore, reading English comics might be an appropriate and impactful strategy for students to improve their reading skills (Erya & Pustika, 2021).

Interesting elements of comics

Researchers (e.g., Andrefa et al., 2019; Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Cho, 2023; Gabaron, 2017; Hirsu et al., 2021; Wijaya et al., 2021) highlighted several interesting elements inherent to comics. Visual storytelling is a prominent feature,

conveying narratives through text and graphics. It enables readers with a limited vocabulary to comprehend stories through illustrations (Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Tambunan et al., 2022). Visual media, like comic strips, can help students increase their vocabulary acquisition and motivation in learning (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Maharani, 2021; Mahendra et al., 2021; Nuranis & Lubis, 2021; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023). Additionally, comics are known for their humorous attractiveness. Comics' humor enhances readers' engagement and is an excellent tool for grasping complex information (Karmiani, 2018; Nugraheni, 2017; Saputri et al., 2021). This enjoyment from reading comics is believed to accelerate the language acquisition process (Juliana, 2021; Maharani, 2021; McVicker, 2007; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Saputri et al., 2021).

Comics illustrate environmental issues and real-life situations (Juliana, 2021; Nugraheni, 2017; Puspasari, 2019). Previous studies suggest that environmental-based comics benefit students since they integrate instructional components and stories that emphasize the setting of society (Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Wajdi et al., 2022). Comics have a powerful emotional impact on readers, as they can convey emotions and relationships through images and text (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Retnowati et al., 2018). However, by providing students with a safe environment to examine complicated feelings and relationships, comics can help their social-emotional development as comic stories usually present stories related to everyday life (Juliana, 2021; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Wajdi et al., 2022; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023). Comics are sequential art, meaning they use a series of images to tell a story (Conard, 2016; Fatimah et al., 2019). Therefore, this makes comics a unique and exciting medium (Meskin, 2007).

Method

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives on the use of comics as a medium for teaching reading to EFL students and solutions to overcome possible challenges of using comics to teach reading in EFL classrooms. To fulfill the study goals, the researcher first conducted a literature review (following Li, 2012) of 18 articles (see Table 1). The articles were selected based on the following criteria: they were published in peer-reviewed national and international journals relevant to the purposes of this study (i.e., exploring the use of comics (digital or traditional) as a teaching medium in EFL classrooms, and focusing on teachers' perspectives and experiences), were published in the last ten years, and were cited more than three times by other studies. To find those articles, the researcher searched the publications from *SINTA*, *Google Scholar*, and *EBSCO* databases using the following keywords: “*English education, comics, digital comics, teaching reading, teachers' perspectives on comics for teaching reading.*” Studies that were non-empirical, not centered on teaching reading through comics in EFL classrooms, and published more than ten years ago, except for highly cited foundational studies were excluded from the analysis.

Table 1. Distributions of empirical studies

| Journal Title | Empirical Study | Research Goals | Context and Participants |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|
| English Review: Journal of English Education | Fatimah et al. (2019) | To investigate the use of ToonDoo as media technology for teaching English short story | 42 students from a university in Indonesia |
| Jurnal PAJAR (Pendidikan dan Pengajaran) | Karmiani (2018) | To improve the ability to read English comprehension | 21 junior high school (SMP) students from Indonesia |
| Studies in English Language and Education (SIELE) | Pazaer and Assaiqel (2023) | To explore ESL pre-service elementary school teachers' views on using English comics in the classroom | 64 pre-service teachers in a university in Malaysia |
| Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Research and Innovation (ICERI 2018) | Rengur and Surigin (2018) | To determine the effective media between students who were taught using comic strips and conventional media | 2 classes of eighth-grade junior high school (SMP) in Yogyakarta |
| International of Research and Review | Resmi et al. (2022) | To investigate the 2013 curriculum book and media were still being used for learning activities | 28 elementary school (SD) students in Central Java, Indonesia |
| International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE) | Wajdi et al. (2022) | To determine the effect of problem-based learning with environmental-based comic (PBLEC) model empowers students' environmental literacy in Indonesia | 97 university students in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia |
| Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan | Saputri et al. (2021) | To analyze students' impressions of digital comics as a learning medium | 80 students of class XI in Senior High School (SMA) in Surakarta |
| Jurnal Prima Edukasia | Budiarti and Haryanto (2016) | To investigate the effect on student's motivation to learn and students' reading comprehension | Fourth-grade elementary students in Bantul |
| Jurnal Refleksi Edukatika | Nugraheni (2017) | To determine the implementation of comics media in mathematics in primary school | Students of State Elementary School (SDN) Gajahmungkur 02 Semarang, SDN Gunungpati 02 Semarang, and SDN Petompon 02 Semarang, Indonesia |
| Journal of Teaching English, Linguistics, and Literature | Tambunan et al. (2022) | To find out if comics in reading skills can improve student's understanding, especially to understand the | 29 students of nine Junior High Schools (SMP) at SMP Negeri 3 Tondano |

| Journal Title | Empirical Study | Research Goals | Context and Participants |
|--|---|---|--|
| | | meaning based on the reading material | |
| Journal of English Language and Pedagogy | Wicaksono and Hartatik (2023) | To determine students' opinions on whether comic media may be utilized as a medium for learning English | 22 students of grade 7 from SMPN 2 Dau Satu Atap |
| Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning | Erya and Pustika (2021) | To explain whether or not Webtoon can increase students' interest in reading comprehension skill | 50 university students in Indonesia |
| Journal of English Teaching and Linguistics | Juliana (2021) | To investigate the effectiveness of increasing students' motivation in mastering vocabulary by using comic strips and to find out the obstacles faced by the students in using them | 21 Elementary School (SD) students in Banda Aceh |
| Journal Ilmu Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia | Senjaya et al. (2022) | To develop a variety of teaching through digital comic media to increase students' motivation and enthusiasm for teaching | The principal and 5 teachers of class V (SD) in Indonesia |
| <i>International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL)</i> | Puspasari (2019) | To examine English teachers' perspectives on using digital comics for learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) | 30 English teachers in Banten Province from different schools |
| International Journal of Language Teaching and Education | Muyassaroh et al. (2019) | To explore teacher beliefs, practices, and problems in implementing digital comics to teach vocational students | An experienced English teacher who holds an M.A. in English language |
| Journal of Education, Language Innovation, and Applied Linguistics | Muthmainnah et al. (2022) | To find the views of second-semester students on the use of Mangatoon digital comics in reading instruction | 30 second-semester students at a university in Indonesia |
| International Journal of Learning, Teaching, and Educational Research | Castillo-Cuesta and Quinonez-Beltran (2022) | To the effectiveness of digital comics in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary acquisition during the COVID-19 pandemic | 262 public High School students from three of the four regions of Ecuador. The students' ages ranged from 12 to 14 years |

After the literature review, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with research participants to discuss ideas obtained from the literature

analysis results. This should provide methodological novelty in the literature, where the results of the literature review analysis were followed up with the results of the research participants' interviews.

Research participants

The interviewees were three English teachers from private schools in Indonesia. The participants were selected purposively based on the following criteria: they have been teaching EFL in an Indonesian classroom for at least two years. With those experiences, the researcher believed that the participants could respond to the researcher's questions. To protect their real identity, the researcher used labels for participants: *Teacher 1*, *Teacher 2*, and *Teacher 3*.

Data collections

The researcher employed two primary sources for data collection: a literature review analysis of 18 journals and interviews with teachers. First, the researcher analyzed the journals to extract themes, ideas, and statements closely related to the research questions. These findings were then compiled into a list of key ideas. Subsequently, the researcher contacted the teacher participants via WhatsApp to explain the study's purposes and provide them with a list of ideas derived from the literature review. This allowed participants to reflect on the statements and prepare for the interview.

The interviews were conducted in both Bahasa Indonesia and English, either face-to-face or online, to ensure that participants could express themselves deeply and comfortably. All sessions were recorded and transcribed for analysis. After transcription, participants were allowed to review and confirm the accuracy of their statements through member-checking, which enhances the trustworthiness of the research (e.g., Birt et al., 2016; Jones, 2023; Mali & Salsbury, 2022; Wardani & Mali, 2023).

Data analysis

There were two data analysis stages. In the first stage, the researcher carefully reviewed the 18 selected journals multiple times, highlighting words, phrases, or sentences relevant to the research questions. These highlighted sections were categorized into themes that represented patterns or trends within the literature. The results of this analysis were used to identify key statements that informed the interview questions and guided the study's findings.

In the second stage, the researcher analyzed the interview transcripts using a similar thematic approach. The transcribed interviews were read multiple times, and relevant excerpts were highlighted and grouped into themes that aligned with or expanded upon the literature review findings. The integration of insights from the journals and teacher interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The themes developed from both sources are presented in the findings section, with the interviews serving to validate and deepen the insights gained from the literature review.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

This section presents the literature review analysis results on 18 articles (see Table 1) as the answers to the research questions of this study. The findings will also be completed with excerpts of the interview data. The subsequent sections will show themes from the data analysis to answer the research questions. First, below are the findings related to the first research question, teachers' perspectives on using English comics as a medium for teaching reading.

Benefits of using English comics as a medium for teaching reading

Theme 1: Comics can engage students' interest in reading English

Implementing comics is a unique way to develop teaching material and make the learning process feel different (Senjaya et al., 2022). Findings from Fatimah et al. (2019), demonstrated how this practice encourages students to be engaged in the classroom. According to Pazaer and Assaiqeli (2023), the questionnaire statement 'motivate pupils to participate actively in reading activities' received the most significant percentage of effective medium and very effective responses for the attribution of reading skill. This means that comics can boost students' engagement in reading activities (Nugraheni, 2017; Puspasari, 2019; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Saputri et al., 2021). The teachers provided the following statements:

My students understand better, they're fun to work with, and they don't read too much because kids these days don't like reading long texts.
[Teacher 1/ interview/August 29]

Comics could engage my students well because I used them to teach narrative before. I knew it would be very boring for them to just learn from the text all the time, so I tried to find a different teaching method. That's when I found that comics could be a fun way to teach narrative.
[Teacher 2/ interview/September 19]

My students enjoyed making and reading comics.
[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

Theme 2: Comics can improve students' reading comprehension

In research conducted by Karmiani (2018), data shows that by using comics, students' comprehension percentage increased from 57,3 8% in the pra-cycle, 64,84% in the first cycle, and 73,23% in the third cycle with the standard of minimum completeness of mastery is 70. Many previous studies also show the same results regarding the improvement of students' reading comprehension through English comics (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Resmi et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2022). This means that using comics in teaching reading is particularly effective in increasing reading comprehension. Comics consist of pictures combined with text and other visual information, facilitating the students to receive information and express ideas from those elements (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Fatimah et al., 2019; Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Wajdi et al., 2022). This is what teachers said in the interview:

Yes, I agree that comics can support students' reading skills, especially in the narrative context, because comics make it easier for students to understand stories and receive information.

[Teacher 1/ interview/August 29]

With comics, since they include pictures or visual elements, students are more interested in finishing the reading. Instead of just looking at the text, they can also visualize the story, which makes it more engaging for them.

[Teacher 2/ interview/September 19]

While most teachers viewed comics as a beneficial tool for enhancing reading comprehension, one teacher expressed reservations about their effectiveness. This teacher argued that:

There were no significant differences using comics and text. Not every student likes reading comics. [...], they preferred reading novels and books the most.

[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

This perspective contrasts with the majority who found that the visual and interactive character of comics improved student engagement and comprehension (Senjaya et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2022). However, teachers who disagree believe that comics may oversimplify complex language (Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023), which is no significant difference in students' reading comprehension compared to the long text.

You know, in comics, the sentences are shorter compared to novels or books. However, students with lower English proficiency think reading something in comics is quite difficult [...].

[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

Challenges when using comics to teach reading in English classroom

Theme 3: Limited technological resources challenge teachers in integrating digital comics into the classroom

According to the literature, there are some interesting and useful mediums/technologies to help teachers develop lesson plans. Some of the technology integrations are Webtoon, Mangatoon, Loadingartist, Pixton, Toondo, etc (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Darmawanti, 2022; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Juliana, 2021; Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2021; Zein et al., 2023). However, there are some challenges that teachers might face, such as the limitation of the technological facilities provided by the school itself (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Puspasari, 2019). As expressed by the teachers in the interview:

The internet problem sometimes occurs, but we can't do anything about it.

[Teacher 1/ interview/ August 29]

The technology isn't advanced enough to fully support high-tech facilities. [...]. The connection here is not good, and as you can see, I brought my LCD.
[Teacher 2/ interview/ September 19]

I used Pixton, it was good, but I couldn't download it, so I had to pay. [...], and another limitation is the internet connection.
[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

Theme 4: Teachers' lack of exposure to digital comics can reduce the effectiveness of classroom integration

Lack of sufficient expertise in employing comics in their teaching and unfamiliarity with integrating multimodal elements like comics have become the most crucial problems for teachers. It requires teachers should find ways to incorporate multimodal literacy into the teaching and learning process, particularly to enhance students' critical reading skills (Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Puspasari, 2019; Senjaya et al., 2022). Some teachers still employ outdated methods and strategies and develop uninteresting teaching. It makes students less interested in learning the materials (Tambunan et al., 2022). On the other hand, less than half of the respondents in studies by Pazaer and Assaiqeli (2023) and Puspasari (2019) were unsure whether creating digital comics is time-consuming and challenging.

Teachers sometimes encounter challenges in selecting suitable comics for their students (Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023). Additionally, many teachers may lack experience in creating digital comics themselves, making them less familiar with the process (Darmawanti, 2022; Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Puspasari, 2019; Saputri et al., 2021; Tambunan et al., 2022). During the interview, the teachers shared the following:

Since we are in the digital era, and our students are digital natives, [...]. If teachers don't improve their tech skills, it will be hard to make the class engaging and keep the students focused, even with the help of technology.
[Teacher 2/ interview/ September 19]

The teachers' capability is also a factor because teachers need to learn first. So, we need to practice before teaching.
[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

Solutions to overcome the challenges when implementing comings in the classroom

Theme 5: Technological support system can assist teachers in incorporating digital comics into lessons

Adequate and sufficient support from schools will not only support teaching and learning activities but also open up opportunities for teachers to be creative and develop digital teaching in teaching and learning activities (Puspasari, 2019). Integrating comics into lessons with the need for advanced technology will better ensure inclusivity and maximize existing teaching and facilities (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023). The teachers shared the following insights during the interviews:

A stable internet connection will greatly assist teachers in applying digital comics and make it easier for students to access them.

[Teacher 1/ interview/ August 29]

It could be iPads, laptops for students, and better facilities like LCD and better connection to facilitate teachers and students.

[Teacher 2/ interview/ September 19]

The first thing is a stable internet connection, computers, and a TV or big screen in the classroom because not every school has the privilege to have this kind of technology.

[Teacher 3/ interview/ September 24]

Theme 6: Teachers' training programs can help teachers effectively integrate digital comics into their teaching

One common barrier is the difficulty teachers face in creating or integrating digital comics into their lessons (Puspasari, 2019; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023). Providing teachers with training on using digital tools and comics effectively can help overcome this issue (Puspasari, 2019; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Saputri et al., 2021). A significant challenge is the lack of visual literacy among students and teachers, which can impede comprehension when using graphic materials (Wajdi et al., 2022; Wicaksono & Hartatik, 2023). Incorporating training on visual literacy could help overcome this barrier. Teachers can learn about user-friendly comic creation software and strategies to simplify the process, reducing the perceived complexity of the medium. In Saputri et al. (2021), a high percentage of students agree to adopt digital comics in tier reading classes, which means that teachers are expected to be able to integrate the use of digital media in learning (Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Muyassaroh et al., 2019; Resmi et al., 2022). Therefore, EFL teacher training programs will better equip aspiring teachers to use digital media in language teaching (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Puspasari, 2019), as highlighted by the teachers in their interviews:

A workshop is the best format. Technology doesn't mean anything without application. If it's just a theory, like "this is Pixton, and if you want to use it, click here," it won't be effective. Teachers need to experience using the app before they can teach it to students.

[Teacher 2/ interview/ September 19]

It's necessary because we live in the digital era, and teachers must be capable of using many kinds of technologies, including comics or digital comics. It will be very helpful for teachers to make their classes more engaging. Teachers can't always teach students manually because that would be very boring. So, as teachers, we have to know how to use LCD, TV, digital apps, and many kinds of educational technologies.

[Teacher 3/ interview/September 24]

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several key themes on the use of English comics in teaching reading. Teachers noted that comics are highly effective in capturing students' interest, as shown by their active participation, enthusiasm, and

motivation during reading activities (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022; Losi et al., 2023; Virgiyanti et al., 2024; Wajdi et al., 2022). This aligns with previous research, which suggests that comics can play a valuable role in engaging students and boosting their motivation to read (Budiarti & Haryanto, 2016; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Juliana, 2021; Karmiani, 2018; Meskin, 2007; Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023; Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Tambunan et al., 2022; Zein et al., 2023). Such findings underscore comics as an impactful tool for fostering reading interest among EFL students.

Comics incorporate visual and textual elements, allowing students to visualize stories, which aid in their understanding of the content. This aligns with findings that comics improved students' comprehension with teacher guidance (Rengur & Sugirin, 2019; Saputri et al., 2021). However, while two teachers supported this approach, one expressed a different viewpoint, arguing that comics did not make a significant difference compared to conventional texts and some students still preferred reading novels and books. This divergence indicates that the effectiveness of comics may depend on individual student preferences and learning styles, suggesting that not all students will respond equally to this medium. The teacher who disagreed also noted that while the language in comics might support students with lower proficiency, it may not be as effective for high achievers. Additionally, lower-proficiency students sometimes struggle to interpret the text and images in the comics, leading to confusion.

A major challenge identified by the teachers was the limited access to technological resources necessary for integrating digital comics into lessons. Despite the potential of platforms like Webtoon, Canva, or Pixton to enhance lesson conveyance, teachers faced hurdles such as poor internet connectivity and outdated school equipment. These findings reflect the broader issue of unequal access to technology in educational environments, which can limit the adoption of innovative teaching methods. Teachers' reliance on personal devices and workarounds highlights the need for better infrastructural support.

Limited familiarity with digital tools among teachers poses a significant barrier to incorporating comics into classroom instruction. Previous research (Muthmainnah et al., 2022; Pazaer & Assaiqeli, 2023) highlighted that integrating comics into lessons often requires a process of trial and error. This challenge is especially prominent for teachers who have limited experience with digital literacy. During interviews, several teachers admitted they would benefit from more exposure to and practice with digital resources. They expressed that additional training could help them confidently incorporate comics into their teaching methods, making lessons more engaging for students.

To overcome these challenges, two key solutions emerged from both the literature and teacher interviews. First, providing technological support through stable internet connections and adequate devices is essential. Teachers suggested that better access to laptops, iPads, or enhanced classroom facilities would make it easier to implement digital comics in their lessons. This solution addresses the logistical limitations many educators face, ensuring that comic-based learning can be more widely adopted. To help teachers integrate comics into lessons, schools could consider providing training on using digital tools in education, including digital comics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study explored the perspectives on EFL teachers using English comics as a medium for teaching reading in the classroom. Findings highlighted the potential of comics to engage students and improve their reading comprehension. However, the teacher also identified several challenges, including the limited technological resources and teachers' inability to use digital comics in the classroom.

Based on the findings and discussions, the researcher proposes several recommendations for teachers considering the integration of comics into their reading lessons. First, teachers should explore low-tech alternatives such as printed comics alongside digital activity to tackle the technological limitations in schools. Second, the teachers' training program is a must. It should focus on developing digital literacy to boost teachers' knowledge and integrate digital literacy in the classroom effectively. Based on the interview data, it also said that students' motivation also becomes the teachers' challenge. Teachers must also be willing to learn new methods to keep the class engaging and exciting. Workshops can be a good form for teachers to gain experience with comic applications or any educational technology that enables teachers to apply it confidently in the classroom. Teachers also need to observe their students' preferences so that the use of comics in class would be effective in terms of engagement and student outcomes.

Finally, the study suggested several avenues for future research. Further study into how comics impact students' long-term reading development would be valuable. It would be beneficial to conduct research that examines how different types of comics (e.g., digital vs. printable) influence students' learning outcomes. Additionally, this study was limited to a small group of EFL teachers from private schools. Expanding the dataset to include a more diverse range of participants, including public school teachers, could offer broader insights into the practical applications of comics in various educational contexts. Since this study only focuses on teachers' perspectives, future studies could incorporate the students' perspectives on using comics for their reading activities. Furthermore, exploring the potential of comics in teaching other language skills, such as speaking, writing, and listening, would provide a broader understanding of their effectiveness in the classroom. By addressing these areas, future research could offer a more comprehensive view of how comics can enhance language instruction in EFL settings.

References

- Aeni, W. A., & Yusupa, A. (2018). E-comic learning media model for high school. *Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan*, 6(1), 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.31800/jurnalkwangsan.v6i1.66>
- Andrefa, Y., Sudjoko, S., & Megawati, M. (2019). Meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa menggunakan media board game. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan STKIP Kusuma Negara*, 1–7.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>

- Budiarti, W. N., & Haryanto. (2016). Pengembangan media komik untuk meningkatkan motivasi belajar dan keterampilan membaca pemahaman siswa kelas IV. *Jurnal Prima Edukasia*, 4(2), 233–242. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21831/jpe.v4i2.6295>
- Bui, T. N., & Macalister, J. (2021). Online extensive reading in an EFL context: Investigating reading fluency and perceptions. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 33(1), 1–29. <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/item/523>
- Castillo-Cuesta, L., & Quinonez-Beltran, A. (2022). Using digital comics for enhancing EFL vocabulary learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(5), 478–491. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.5.24>
- Cho, S. (2023). Learning English through manga (Japanese comic books). *TESOL Journal*, 0(0), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.764>
- Conard, S. (2016). Lively letters and the graphic narrative. Revisiting comics theory on word and image through the lens of two avant-garde children's books. *Image & Narrative*, 17(2), 74–85.
- Darmawanti, A. A. (2022). Aplikasi Webtoon sebagai media pembelajaran membaca. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia*, 10(2), 201–209. https://doi.org/10.23887/jurnal_bahasa.v10i2.695
- Ersani, N. P. D., Suwastini, N. K. A., Padmadewi, N. N., & Artini, L. P. (2021). Schemes of scaffolding in online education. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 7(1), 10–18. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.7.1.2941.10-18>
- Erya, W. I., & Pustika, R. (2021). Students' perception towards the use of Webtoon to improve reading comprehension skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 51–56. <https://doi.org/10.33365/jeltl.v2i1.762>
- Fajri, N., & Nurmainiati, N. (2019). Faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesukaran siswa memahami teks bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa Inggris*, 4(2), 1–12.
- Fatimah, A. S., Santiana, & Saputra, Y. (2019). Digital comic: An innovation of using Toondoo as media technology for teaching English short story. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 7(2), 101–108. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v7i2.1526>
- Gabaron, S. (2017). The power of print reading: Comics in the classroom. *Journal of Cell Communication and Signaling*, 11(3), 285–290. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12079-017-0400-z>
- Hirsu, L., Zacharias, S., & Futro, D. (2021). Translingual arts-based practices for language learners. *ELT Journal*, 75(1), 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa064>
- Jones, D. A. (2023). A review and critical analysis of qualitative methodologies and data-collection techniques used for code-switching research. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 53–72. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/12988>
- Juliana, J. (2021). The effect of using comic strips on students' motivation in mastering vocabulary. *JETLi: Journal of English Teaching and Linguistics*, 2(2), 65–71. <https://doi.org/10.55616/jetli.v2i2.141>

- Karmiani, S. (2018). Penggunaan media komik berbahasa Inggris sebagai upaya meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pemahaman bahasa Inggris pada Siswa kelas VIII SMPN 3 Teluk Kuantan. *JURNAL PAJAR (Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran)*, 2(6), 883–890. <https://doi.org/10.33578/pjr.v2i6.6514>
- Li, M. (2012). Use of Wikis in second/foreign language classes: A literature review. *Call-Ej*, 13(1), 17–35.
- Losi, R. V., Sri, W., Sisi, W., & Putri, Z. (2023). Comic strip: A media to teach English. *JOLADU: Journal of Language Education*, 1(3), 127–133. <https://doi.org/10.58738/joladu.v1i3.202>
- Maharani, L. P. (2021). The use of Line Webtoon comic strips to upgrade students' vocabulary mastery. *Yavana Bhasha: Journal of English Language Education*, 4(2), 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.25078/yb.v4i2.2769>
- Mahendra, E. R., Siantoro, G., & Pramono, M. (2021). Pengembangan komik pendidikan sebagai media pembelajaran dan pengaruhnya terhadap motivasi belajar siswa. *Jurnal Education and Development*, 9(1), 279–284.
- Mali, Y. C. G., & Salsbury, T. L. (2022). An associate professor and a doctoral student learn from each other: Critical friendship. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 19(1), 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.56040/msaa1914>
- McVicker, C. J. (2007). Comic strips as a text structure for learning to read. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(1), 85–88. <https://doi.org/10.1598/rt.61.1.9>
- Meskin, A. (2007). Defining comics? *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65(4), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2007.00270.x>
- Muhaimin, M. R., Ni'mah, N. U., & Listryanto, D. P. (2023). Peranan media pembelajaran komik terhadap kemampuan membaca siswa sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Flobamorata*, 4(1), 399–405. <https://doi.org/10.51494/jpdf.v4i1.814>
- Muthmainnah, M., J, V. K., Ibna Seraj, P. M., Darmawati, B., & Asrifan, A. (2022). Digital Mangatoon to born out new peace in English classroom. *JELITA: Journal of Education, Language Innovation, and Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 135–144. <https://doi.org/10.37058/jelita.v1i2.5438>
- Muyassaroh, M. N., Asib, A., & Marmanto, S. (2019). The teacher's beliefs and practices on the use of digital comics in teaching writing: A qualitative case study. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 3(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v3i1.6502>
- Ngabut, M. N. (2015). Reading theories and reading comprehension: Review and discussed. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 5(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.33633/es.v2i2.3231>
- Nugraheni, N. (2017). Application of comic media in learning mathematics in elementary school. *Refleksi Edukatika: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 7(2), 111–117. <https://doi.org/10.24176/re.v7i2.1587>
- Nuranis, S., & Lubis, F. (2021). The development of digital comic media to increase student interest in learning Indonesian. *Proceeding ISLALE 2021 The 3th International Seminar on Language, Art, and Literature Education*, 493–498.
- Pazaer, N., & Assaiqeli, A. (2023). Pre-service teachers' views on using English comics to improve pupils' English language skills. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(1), 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i1.21836>

- Puspasari, D. (2019). Digital comics in english language teaching. *International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL)*, 7–14.
- Rengur, Z. A., & Sugirin. (2019). The effectiveness of using comic strips to increase students' reading comprehension for the eighth grade of SMPN 1 Pundong. *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Research and Innovation*, 330, 239–243. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icossce-icsmc-18.2019.24>
- Resmi, W. S. S., Nuryatin, A., & Latiana, L. (2022). Development of digital-based comic media to improve literature, reading understanding, and learning outcomes in class III students primary school. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 9(6), 456–463. <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20220648>
- Retnowati, G., Salim, R. M. A., & Saleh, A. Y. (2018). Effectiveness of picture story books reading to increase kindness in children aged 5-6 years. *Lingua Cultura*, 12(1), 89–95. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v12i1.2095>
- Sagri, M., Sofos, F., & Mouzaki, D. (2018). Digital storytelling, comics and new technologies in education: Review, research and perspectives. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 17(4), 97–112.
- Saputri, A. D., Sunardi, S., & Musadad, A. A. (2021). Digital comics as s media in EFL reading classrooms. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 13(2), 1097–1102. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v13i2.758>
- Senjaya, R. P., Indriani, I., Maharani, N., Muharam, A., & Mustikaati, W. (2022). Development of digital comic media (MEKODIG) in an effort to increase learning interest of elementary school students. *JUDIKDAS: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dasar Indonesia*, 1(2), 99–106. <https://doi.org/10.51574/judikdas.v1i2.248>
- Setyawan, F. H. (2018). The effectiveness of using comic in teaching reading narrative text. *Journal of English Teaching Adi Buana*, 3(1), 67–75. <https://doi.org/10.36456/jet.v3.n1.2018.1544>
- Syafi'i, M. L. (2015). SMART strategy to boost students' reading comprhension. *Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies*, 2(1), 100–115. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v2i1.30>
- Tambunan, V. E. G., Liando, N. V. F., & Kumayas, T. A. (2022). English comic to improve student 's reading skill at SMP Negeri 3 Tondano. *JoTELL: Journal of Teaching English, Linguistics, and Literature*, 1(12), 1393–1405. <https://doi.org/10.36582/jotell.v1i12.5234>
- Virgiyanti, D. F., Fachriza, A., Nuraini, E. I., Dipta, D., & Hafiz, L. A. (2024). Online and offline reading materials from students' perspective. *SAGA: Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.21460/saga.2024.51.181>
- Wajdi, M., Jamaluddin, A. B., Nurdiananti, N., & Magfirah, N. (2022). The effectiveness of problem-based learning with environmental-based comic in enhancing students environmental literacy. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 11(3), 1049–1057. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v11i3.22140>
- Wardani, C. D. D., & Mali, Y. C. G. (2023). Researching EFL students' disengagement in an online content-teaching classroom. *ELT Echo: The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context*, 8(1), 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.24235/eltecho.v8i1.11830>

- Wicaksono, D. D., & Hartatik, S. F. (2023). The students' view on the use of comic in teaching and learning English. *Journal of English Language and Pedagogy*, 6(2), 521–528. <https://doi.org/10.33503/journey.v6i2.3311>
- Wijaya, E. A., Suwastini, N. K. A., Adnyani, N. L. P. S., & Adnyani, K. E. K. (2021). Comic strips for language teaching: The benefits and challenges according to recent research. *ETERNAL (English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal)*, 7(1), 230–248. <https://doi.org/10.24252/eternal.v7i1.2021.a16>
- Zainuddin, Z., & Perera, C. J. (2017). Exploring students' competence, autonomy and relatedness in the flipped classroom pedagogical model. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(1), 115–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1356916>
- Zein, M., Iskandar, E., Moenada, M. S., & Thahir, M. (2023). Webtoon-based online comics in measuring the Pancasila student profile at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Riau province. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 12(4), 2073–2084. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v12i4.25759>