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The Effectiveness of Get Epic as Digital Comics on Ninth-Grade Students' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text at an Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

This study tried to figure out how ninth-grade boarding school students could read narrative texts using "Get Epic" digital comics. This study involved 34 students where a pre-experimental research design with pre and post tests was used. To evaluate students' reading comprehension, a multiple-choice test was designed with five indicators: the main idea, specific details, word references, contextual meaning, and inference. The normality test used was Shapiro Wilk and the paired sample test was used to assess the effect of reading digital comics on students' reading comprehension. This study used the calculation of the effect size (Cohen's d). The use of "Get Epic" digital comics improved reading comprehension from a pre-test average of 65.88 to a post-test average of 79.41. There was a significant effect from the pre-test to the post-test at a significance level of less than 0.05. It was also found that the effect size of 1.091 showed that reading comprehension of students was improved by the use of digital comics. Based on the study, because of the integration of text and images, comprehension of narrative texts can be improved by digital comics.
Keywords: digital comics, Get Epic, reading comprehension, narrative texts, Islamic boarding school.

INTRODUCTION

A very important part of learning and teaching is reading. It helps students gather information from different written sources and reading helps create opportunities for students, like seeing beyond their own reality Ayu Setiawati & Budiasih, (2021). Also, reading comprehension helps students improve when it comes to different academic subjects since reading helps them think critically and evaluate information from different sources. For students learning a new language, reading is important because it helps them understand written language and improve their vocabulary and language. Although many students studying at Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) struggle to comprehend story texts, this weak comprehension is linked to a lack of interest and having a small vocabulary as a result of using outdated and traditional teaching methods that focus on the texts (Elfiyanto, 2024). It leads to low involvement in reading activities and a passive learning attitude. Capin et al., (2021) stated that students with reading comprehension difficulties and cognitive disabilities continue to have reading comprehension difficulties despite having reading comprehension support and intervention.

Understanding reading comprehension of narrative texts is more than knowing words and sentences. This involves students interpreting a story, understanding events, identifying relationships among characters, and developing understanding of a story and/or text as a whole. Narrative texts usually convey a series of events with characters, settings, problems, and solutions to capture the readers' interest in the story, and enhance their interpretation skills (Rianti et al., 2024).

One of the genres found in most English language learning instruction is narrative text. Reading different kinds of narrative text helps learners build different structures of language and acquire new vocabulary, along with developing the imagination and the ability to think critically. The different narrative texts or stories constructed give different and meaningful contexts to the learners to help them understand the different ways language can be used in different real life situations. This is why working to enhance the comprehension of narrative text is still one of the most significant focuses of teaching English (Rustipa, 2020). The different genres of narrative texts also help in developing critical and imaginative thinking which are important in language learning and especially in reading comprehension.

At Islamic boarding schools, students learn about both religion and general education. Even though educational activities are done with great intensity, English teaching

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takes place using traditional techniques, which will negatively affect the students' interests and students' involvement in reading activities, and even worse, they will have great difficulties maintaining interests (Muhid et al., 2020). It is necessary to innovate learning media in order to provide and construct better reading experiences for the students and also create good reading interests among the students.

Digital comics are a cool and convenient way to communicate information in pictures and words in one setting, allowing every student to understand the content of the digital comic through text and illustrations. Images help students to easily follow the plot and understand the emotions and the context of the picture. Understanding the emotions of the characters through images, is especially helpful for students with challenges in understanding passages in English (Al-Abdullatif, 2022).

Also, digital platforms like Get Epic offer lots of much kids like and easy to access illustrated digital narrative texts. Get Epic is a digital library app with over 40,000 picture, comic, and audiobook texts for users which include instant online access (Ervianto, 2022). Settings like this encourage students in their language learning by offering interest based options. It has lots of helpful supporting features like a dictionary and elocution of the word (Manurung & Santosa, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that digital comics have a generally positive impact on students' reading comprehension. Fitri et al., (2023) showed that students showed increased comprehension, engagement and motivation with the use of digital comics. Additionally, students in Islamic boarding Schools benefit from the use of new, modern teaching aids that motivate them and aid them in comprehending lesson materials. However, there are not many studies that examine the use of Get Epic digital comics in Islamic Boarding Schools, especially relating to comprehension of narrative texts.

This study on digital comics will use theories and previous studies to see how Get Epic digital comics help ninth graders at an Islamic boarding school in improving their narrative text reading comprehension. More specifically, this study will look at the difference in reading performances due to reading comprehension tasks before and after digital comics instruction. It will also explore the extent of the influence of the digital medium on students' comprehension of main ideas, locating supporting details, making connections, understanding language in context, and drawing inferences. This study intends to provide evidence on the use of digital comics to support reading instruction of narrative texts in Pesantren.

METHODS

This study looks at the impact of "Get Epic" digital comics on student's reading comprehension of narrative text with a pre-experimental research design. Participants in the study complete a pretest before the research intervention, and a posttest after, which is the basis for the single group pretest-posttest design. According to Creswell John W, (2014), researchers use this design to analyze the impact of an intervention. The study aims to assess the effect of 'Get Epic' digital comics on reading skills, where reading skills are evaluated before and after the use of the digital comics. The researcher uses this design for convenience, to study the impact of the intervention in a real classroom.

Table 1

Pre-experimental (one-group pre-test and post-test)

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
O1	X	O2

(Cohen Louis et al., 2018)

Note:
O1 = experimental class pre-test value
O2 = post-test value of the experimental class
X = given treatment within a certain period

This research studied a Bojonegoro boarding school for the 2024/2025 school year. The subjects were 34 students in the 9th grade. These students had prior lessons on the narrative texts for the English subject. The research location had different school divisions, so the researchers used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is when researchers choose participating cases based on their opinion of the case's uniqueness or their possession of a characteristic that the researchers need (Cohen Louis et al., 2018). In this context, sampling is used on participants that are best suited for evaluating the impact of digital comics on reading comprehension levels.

This evaluation tool features a reading comprehension test consisting of a narrative text with several multiple choice questions. The test assesses reading comprehension through five indicators: identifying the main idea, locating details, analyzing references, understanding words in context, and drawing inferences. The same test format is used for the pre-test and post-test.

There were three main steps to the study. The first was having the students take a pre-test to see how well they understood what they read. The second step was teaching the students about narrative texts using the Get Epic digital comics during three treatment meetings. While learning during the treatment meetings, the students answered comprehension quizzes, found the generic structures and language features of the narrative texts, and completed other activities. The last step after the activity was having

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the students take a post-test to see how much they improved in their reading comprehension.

Some gathered data was analyzed with statistics. A test for normal distribution was used to understand if the collected data was normally distributed. Paired samples t test was then used to analyze the difference between the pre-test and post-test results. To measure the size of the effect that the intervention caused, Cohen's effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To evaluate the data, the researcher analyzed students' test scores in SPSS 30, and calculations were done based on data exported to Microsoft Excel. Findings are categorized in four main sections: (1) Normality Test, (2) Hypothesis Testing with the use of Paired Sample t-test, (3) Effect Size, and (4) Analysis of Reading Comprehension Indicators. The normality test was the first test done in this case in order to assess the distribution of the data. Results of the normality test are shown in the table below:

Table 2
Normality Test

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	.132	34	.138	.939	34	.058
Post-test	.163	34	.952	.952	34	.141

Normality tests indicate that both data sets support the assumption of normal distribution. For the pretest data, the Shapiro Wilk p value was 0.058. For the post test data, it was 0.141. Because both p values were greater than 0.05, the data are said to be normally distributed. Therefore, the assumptions for parametric analysis are met, and the difference of the pretest and post test data will be analyzed using a paired samples t test.

Table 3
Paired Sample T-test

Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. dev	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Post-test	79.41	34	8.770	1.504
	Pre-test	65.88	34	13.510	2.317

A paired samples t test was conducted to determine if there was a change in students' reading comprehension before and after "Get Epic" digital comics were introduced. The average reading comprehension score for the pre-test was 65.88 and 79.41 for the post test. The post test score was significantly higher with a p value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that "Get Epic" digital comics improved students' comprehension of narrative texts.

Table 4
Effect Size (Cohen's D)

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

		Standarizer	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Post-test – Pre-test	Cohen's d	12.403	1.091	.659	1.512
	Hedges' correction	12.694	1.066	.644	1.477

To look at how big a treatment effect was, Cohen's d was calculated. With regard to Cohen's guidelines, a value of 1.091 was found, indicating a very large effect for this analysis. It was found that this treatment effect at both a statistically and an educationally significant level increased students' reading comprehension. It can be concluded from this that Get Epic's digital comics provide a very positive effect on students' reading and understanding of narrative texts.

Table 5
The Result of Students' Correct Answers

Indicators in the Reading comprehension test	Questions	Percentage of correct answer	
		Pre-test	**Post-test**
Identifying the main idea	1,4,11	78%	91%
Findings: specific facts and events from the story	2,6,7,9,12,13, 1415,19	72%	82%
Vocabulary	10,17,20	68%	69%
Reference words	3,8,16	67%	76%
Inference	5,18	58%	75%

The percentage scores for each reading comprehension concern for the pre-test and post-test are shown in the chart above. It shows that there is an improvement on each metric through the usage of "Get Epic" digital comics. The students' recognition of facts and events in the digital comic strips reached an understanding of explicit information at 82% from 72% and understanding of the main idea at 78% improved to 91%. Understanding of all reading references reached an improvement from 67% to 76%, and word understanding increased slightly from 68% to 69%. The greatest improvement was comprehension of reading inferences, which increased from 58% to 75%. Improvement on this metric indicates a greater understanding of implied information. The overall results indicated that digital comics helped students improve reading comprehension particularly in understanding the main ideas and inferences.

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This study shows using "Get Epic" digital comics has students better understand reading of narrative texts. With the addition of both elements, students scored better on the post-test, indicating students understood the plot with both words and images. The addition of graphics helps students understand the overall progression of the plot, the function of the characters, and how to understand the words. There are also improvements of the reading skills of understanding the main idea, locating details, understanding the relationships, and drawing conclusions. The study also reports a large effect size of digital comics on students' reading comprehension. The ease and the engaging nature of digital comics helps students to have a constructive value in the reading activities. Therefore, the findings of this study support the idea that digital comics are alternative teaching aids to promote reading comprehension of students who prefer learning with visual aids and are interacting with English narrative texts.

CONCLUSION

The study shows how ninth graders at Islamic boarding schools improve reading comprehension of narrative literature with the use of "Get Epic" digital comics. The paired-samples t test and the increase from pre-test and post-test scores showed that the intervention helped reading comprehension of the students to be both significant and substantial. The effect size being very large indicates that this intervention helped reading comprehension of the students to be significant, substantial and of great value. Digital comics helped students reading comprehension of narrative structures, identification of main ideas and supporting details, relationship analysis, vocabulary comprehension and inference, and synthesis. The study illustrated the value of multimodal digital media to help English language learners in reading comprehension of the traditional text-based teaching frameworks. Despite the findings, the study has its own limitations.

There are a few limitations related to this study. Since a pre-experimental design lacking a control group was used, the effect of a different teaching technique on student's performance could not be measured. Additionally, the sample was drawn from a single ninth grade class of an Islamic boarding school, so the degree of generalization of the findings would be limited. The use of Get Epic digital comics to enhance students' reading comprehension was of short duration, so the extent of its effect was not measured. Therefore, in further research, it is necessary to use a larger sample size and more alternative methods of research.

Given the findings and limitations of the study, some recommendations are provided. One of the recommendations is for English teachers to consider using the digital comic "Get Epic" in their lessons. To foster interest and critical engagement, digital comics may also be used to prompt discussions and guide reading. This may be further supported by answering related reading assignments. To support students' interaction with English texts that are authentic and stimulating, digital reading resources may be provided to students (especially boarding students) at digital Islamic schools. Future studies should use larger sample sizes, employ more robust designs with control groups, and examine the effects of digital comics of various text types and characteristics of reading on different skills. Future studies may examine their attitudes and motivations, and their digital literacy may also be examined, while using a comic based platform to learn English.

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