

## STUDENT PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF DIGITAL COMIC IN LEARNING VOCABULARY: A CASE STUDY AT ONE TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this qualitative research are to explore how EFL learners perceive the use of Digital Comics in learning Vocabulary and explain how Digital Comics are used for learning Vocabulary. In doing the research, the researcher used a case study approach for the design to provide a rich source of data on individuals' experiences. Four participants participated in this research and they met the inclusive criteria for the research, including the Active students of Universitas Jambi in English education Study program who used Digital Comic beyond the Classroom, students who used Digital Comic in English version (not in Bahasa), and willing to voluntarily participate in the research. In collecting the data, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews. The researcher used the Qualitative Data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1984) to analyze the data from participants. Miles and Huberman (1984) identified three subsequent steps in data analysis: Data reduction, Data display, and Conclusion. The results indicated that four themes in how EFL learners perceive the use of Digital Comics in learning Vocabulary were identified, including, 1) Comic as Entertaining Media; 2) Flexibility of Digital Comic; 3) Affordable cost of Comic use, and 4) Positive Attitude towards Digital Comic Engagement. This Research also revealed that there were five identified strategies used by EFL students in learning vocabulary through Digital Comic, including, 1) Learning through Visuals; 2) Guessing the Word; 3) Integration with Language Apps; 4) Students acquire informal vocabulary; 5) Note taking; 6) Word practicing in daily activities.

**Keywords :** *Learning Vocabulary, Digital Comic, EFL Students*

### INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the rapid development of technology has made it an inseparable part of human daily life. Technology has also provided sufficient convenience in every aspect of human life. An example is the transfer of information, which impacts the most influential technology (Akarsu and Dar, 2014). During the early 2010s, there was a significant change in people's habit of reading through traditional print media, and they began to switch to reading through electronic media on cell phones (Shimray et al., 2015). That is why someone can get and disseminate information quickly with unlimited time and can be accessed anytime and anywhere.

Technological developments that have replaced printed media with electronic media have made it easier for humans to explore things on the internet only through smartphones.

Furthermore, it also affects reading habits. Information and knowledge transformed into digital form make it easy to access. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Shen (2006) shows that English as Foreign Language (EFL) students' reading habits have transformed from paper-based to internet-based reading. Consequently, these changes are likely beneficial to English Learning, particularly Vocabulary, as English learners can easily access their learning material or another tool that can be used for English learning.

Vocabulary is an inseparable aspect of a language, especially in English. Learning Vocabulary is essential for learners who want to succeed in learning a foreign language. According to Richards and Renandya (2005), Vocabulary is a core component of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, mastery of a person's Vocabulary is very influential in communication. Dellar and Hocking (2002), stated that there is no significant improvement in someone's English when he or she spends most of his or her time learning grammar. However, learning more words and expressions can result in a significant improvement. One can say very little with grammar, but without words, one cannot say anything. These statements demonstrate the importance of Vocabulary in language learning.

in some cases, learning Vocabulary becomes problematic. This happens because English learners lose interest in learning Vocabulary. Based on research conducted by Wulandari and Lestari (2019), English learners perceive Vocabulary as one of the most challenging things in learning English. This happens because they have difficulty interpreting the Vocabulary, which is very large and varied. According to the problem, the solution that can be done to overcome the issues is presenting something extraordinary and having things that make English learners interested in learning Vocabulary (Csabay, 2006).

An example of the solution that can be chosen is using digital comic applications. Based on a study by Khoiriyah (2010), Comic Strip facilitates and assists students in learning Vocabulary through visual media (pictures) or illustrations. Another study by Efendi (2021) showed that English learners enjoy learning Vocabulary through digital comics since it has an illustration that helps them understand the storyline even without looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary.

There are several previous studies related to this research. Efendi (2020) Found that, English learners can develop their vocabulary by reading Webtoons, and they have good perceptions regarding Webtoon (one of Digital Comic application) as a tool for English vocabulary mastery. Erya and Pustika (2021) found that, the students were more interested and were motivated to improve their reading comprehension skills by using Webtoons. Selong et al. (2020) Revealed that, media comic strips are helpful to students. English lecturers are suggested to receive

students' responses towards using comic strips in creative teaching. Another similar study is the research conducted by Cimermanová (2015) found that, using Webcomics with their reading strategies increased participants' motivation, vocabulary knowledge, and reading strategies.

The purposes of this research are to explore how EFL learners perceive the use of Digital Comics in learning Vocabulary and explain how Digital Comics are used for learning Vocabulary. Many studies reported that using Digital Comic strip applications is beneficial to English learning, particularly Vocabulary (Khoiriyah, 2010). Most of them reported findings that exposed teachers' points of view. Meanwhile, the other studies that discussed English learners' perceptions of using a Digital Comic application in learning vocabulary are relatively limited. Therefore, regarding the existing literature and research gap, this study aims to investigate students in the English department at Universitas Jambi about their perceptions of using digital comic applications in learning Vocabulary. The results of this study might be becoming other references focusing on English learners' perceptions on the use of the digital comic application.

## **METHOD(S)**

In doing the research, the researcher used a case study approach for the design to provide a rich source of data on individuals' experiences. Four participants participated in this research and they met the inclusive criteria for the research, including the Active students of Universitas Jambi in English education Study program who used Digital Comic beyond the Classroom, students who used Digital Comic in English version (not in Bahasa), and willing to voluntarily participate in the research. In collecting the data, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews. The researcher used the Qualitative Data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1984) to analyze the data from participants. Miles and Huberman (1984) identified three subsequent steps in data analysis: Data reduction, Data display, and Conclusion.

This research was conducted in the English Education Study Program of Jambi University. This study was carried out from August until the middle of September 2023.

The researcher limited the participants by employing purposive sampling with a Convenient Technique in selecting participants. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkasim (2016), Purposive sampling is the purposeful participant selection based on the subject's characteristics. In addition, the Convenient technique was used because the researcher has limited access to the population of interest. The researcher was choosing 4 students based on the criteria of the research. The reason why the researcher only took 4 participants was because this research focused more on in-depth exploration of a case and/or a phenomenon regardless of the quantity. In selecting the

participants, there were some criteria taken into consideration; First, the Active students of Universitas Jambi in English education Study program who used Digital Comic beyond the Classroom. Second, students who used digital Comic in English version (not in Bahasa). Third, Students who are willing to be involved in this research. Researcher used semi-structured interviews in this study. Semi-structured interviews were thought to be suitable for the research objectives. Because it allows the interviewer to get deeply into the participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a specific theme.

In general, the qualitative analysis leads to data analysis as a necessary step after data collection. Sandelowski (1995) defined Data analyses in qualitative studies as breaking up and breaking down the data to analyze the data in a new way. The researcher used the qualitative data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1984) to analyze the data from participants. Miles and Huberman (1984) identified three subsequent steps in data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

1. Data reduction is selecting, simplifying and categorizing the collected data (Miles and Huberman, 1984). The researcher transcribed data from interviews during the first stage of data reduction in the data reduction process. In the next step, only data findings that relating to research problems are reduced. Meanwhile, the data that is not related to the research problem is discarded.

2. According to Miles and Huberman (1984), data display is an organized collection of information that allows drawing conclusions and action. Data display can be in the form of Narrative Text, pictures, graphs, and tables. The purpose of data display is to combine information so that it can describe what happened. In this research, the Researcher created a narrative text to display the data.

3. After make the data reduction and data display, the researcher was prepared the conclusion. Following researcher make conclusions that supported by strong evidence at the data collection stage based on the data that has been reduced and presented. Conclusion is the answer from the formulation of problems and questions that have been expressed by researcher since the beginning.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study was conducted to answer the research questions regarding student's perception of using digital comics in learning vocabulary and how the students use digital comics in learning

vocabulary. This following discussion will examine the findings by relating to the theoretical framework and some related studies.

### **1. Entertainment was being Student reason on using Digital Comic at beginning**

The first finding will be discussed regarding students' reasons for using digital comics. Based on a study conducted by researcher, it became evident that entertainment is a prominent factor driving their access to digital comics. The four participants were smartphone users with a digital comic application installed, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere. This is in line with Swandi (2020), who stated that many students love comic stories because they are very entertaining. Also, the millennial generation is known to pay great attention to digital media.

### **2. Flexibility that student get from accessing Digital Comic**

The second finding that will be discussed is regarding flexibility and accessibility. After conducting interviews with participants, researcher found that digital comics were media that can be accessed easily. Students can access digital comics anywhere because integrated with smartphones. According to Swandi (2020), Smartphones as digital media and communication have made it easier for many people to access information and entertainment, including stories in the form of digital comics. Based on these findings, digital media on smartphones makes it easy for students to access media such as digital comics.

Apart from that, all participants agreed to prefer digital comics to printed ones because they are easier to access and more flexible. This finding is strengthened by research conducted by Rina (2020), the advantage of digital comics compared to printed comics is that digital comics have borderless capabilities (not limited by patterns and layouts), so comics can be made without borders, shape, such as widened or elongated. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that printed comics were the medium that must be used in physical form. Printed comics must be purchased first at a bookstore or shop that provides printed ones. This is different from digital comics, which are applications connected to a smartphone that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. That is the reason all participants in this research prefer to use digital comics as a medium that is easy to access and flexible.

### **3. Student Great Attitude towards Digital Comic engagement**

After the researcher conducted research, it was found that there was a great attitude towards engagement experienced by participants when using digital comics. Participants in this research, who were EFL Learners, claimed that they felt a feeling of enjoyment and fun that emerged when reading digital comics. According to Erya and Pustika (2021), students are interested in something digital, online, and unique. Digital Comic makes students feel interested, interested,

and happy. Related to research conducted by researcher, all participants in this study claimed that they chose to use digital comics because of their interests and without coercion from other people.

Furthermore, feelings of interest also arise due to digital comics with interesting stories and visuals that make participants learn new vocabulary in a fun way. This finding is strengthened by previous research conducted by Tiemendsma, according to Tiemensma (2009), the language in comics or Digital Comic, which is usually brief and much simpler than it is in other types of texts, contributes to recalling the vocabulary that students have learned. All these elements promote students' engagement and motivation to learn vocabulary. In addition, Efendi (2020) defined that, the provided illustration and the storyline can encourage English learners to develop the reading habit as they are motivated to continue reading and get involved with the content and they will be eager to know how the story will be ended.

#### **4. EFL Student used Visual Elements in Digital Comic to learn Vocabulary**

Learners to develop the reading habit as they are motivated to continue reading and ..., Moving on to the second research question regarding How the students use digital comics in learning vocabulary. As EFL learners who access Digital Comics in the form of an English version, of course, they have challenges in understanding the storyline of digital comics due to the discovery of vocabulary that they have not encountered before. One method used by participants is to learn vocabulary through visuals. Digital comics are media that contain visual elements in them. One of the primary advantages of using digital comics is their ability to provide rich visual contextualization. In a comic panel, each visual element contributes to the overall narrative.

EFL students can gain a deeper understanding of a word's meaning when it is presented within a relevant visual context. According to Csabay (2006), comics are one of the didactic resources that play an important role in learning vocabulary since the combination of their elements (images and text) helps learners memorise and remember a word, expression, or concept more easily. In addition, Efendi (2020) defined that, Students are enjoy learning vocabulary trough Digital Comic since it has an illustration that helps them to understand the storyline even without looking up the unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Visuals are often more memorable than text alone. EFL students can easily recall words and their meanings when they are associated with striking images. The use of colorful, expressive images in digital comics helps in anchoring new vocabulary in the students' memory.

### **5. EFL Student used Word Guessing Technique after look at the Visual**

The next finding from how they learn or get new vocabulary is the word guessing technique. The following finding is how they learn or get new vocabulary through the word-guessing technique. Researcher discovered that EFL learners using word guessing in digital comic. When learners see new words in comics, they can guess what they mean based on the pictures and the story. Nevertheless, word guessing is not found to be effective as a vocabulary acquisition strategy for EFL learners through digital comics, it is crucial to consider the reasons and implications for this outcome. Cimermanova (2014) stated that, Limited vocabulary can be discouraging and pupils are demotivated to read, yet successful reader uses reading strategies. Guessing can be based on prior knowledge and context.

### **6. The Integration with Language applications to get validity from Word Meaning**

Online dictionaries offer EFL learners' immediate access to word definitions and pronunciations. This instantaneous support is invaluable when encountering unfamiliar words within digital comics. According to Mochtar et al. (2009), Using the dictionary to learn English words was the most preferred strategy. Learners can readily look up the meanings, listen to pronunciations, and grasp the correct usage, all of which enhance comprehension and promote accurate pronunciation.

ESL learners commonly consult dictionaries to check spelling, look up the meaning of unfamiliar words, and confirm the meaning of partially known words. EFL learners using online dictionaries within the context of digital comics are encouraged to take a more independent and self-directed approach to vocabulary acquisition. They become proactive in seeking out word meanings and utilizing resources to enhance their learning, which can promote autonomy and self-efficacy.

In addition, efendi (2020) Stated that some English learners are still dissatisfied by not knowing the related meaning of the unfamiliar words they find in digital comics. They still want to look up the word and find the corresponding meaning in a dictionary or translator machine.

### **7. EFL Student acquiring informal vocabulary through Digital Comic**

The interviews revealed that students commonly encounter informal vocabulary in digital comics. According to Park (2007), Informal English is the language spoken by most people every day. It's also widely used in emails and letters to friends. Informal Vocabulary is also more relaxed about grammar rules than formal English, using simpler grammatical structures and loosely connected sentences and phrases (Park, 2007). In this Case, informal vocabulary in



digital comics is characterized by a more relaxed, colloquial, and everyday language. This type of language is often employed in scenes character dialog, humor, or moments of daily activity.

#### **8. EFL Student used Note taking strategy to maintain their Vocabulary**

The method EFL learners use after discovering new vocabulary in digital comics is to make a note containing a list of the new vocabulary. The practice of note-taking by EFL learners while engaging with digital comics to acquire vocabulary introduces a systematic and personalized approach to language learning.

Note-taking while interacting with digital comics can significantly enhance vocabulary retention. For instance, Mokhtar et al. (2017) Stated that taking notes invites learners to create their own personal structure for newly learned words and affords the chance for additional exposure during review. In addition, Jin and Webb (2021) Stated that If students encounter unknown words and cannot infer their meanings, they might be less likely to write them down. Thus, it is evident that vocabulary notebooks are beneficial to ESL learners. It offers a structured method for learners to record and review new words encountered within the comics. The process of writing down and organizing information reinforces memory and promotes better recall.

#### **9. Word Practicing in daily activity was the Strategy to maintain Vocabulary that EFL Learners get from Digital Comic**

Conversations with friends provide a dynamic and supportive learning environment in which the use of newly acquired language is not only encouraged but actively promoted. According to Mokhtar et al. (2017), Activation strategies are strategies ESL learners use to interact with other people in order to discover or practice new words. The process of discussing vocabulary within the context of these discussions helps learners understand the different meanings of word usage and cements the terms in their memory. Furthermore, it contributes to the transition from the controlled environment of language learning materials to actual situations, including active language usage.

Furthermore, these conversations can lead to forming a community of learners who support, motivate, and inspire one another. Mokhtar et al. (2017) stated that ESL learners should realize that the input alone is not enough if they cannot produce an output; activation strategies provide the venue to test their competence. The sense of belonging to a community that shares common goals and interests in language and digital comics creates a positive feedback loop, further enhancing the language learning journey.



## CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of the interviews reveal that participants in this research had Greatperception toward using digital comics as a tool for vocabulary learning. Digital comics have proven to be a medium that has easy accessibility, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Moreover, based on these findings, it can be concluded that by combining Text and visuals in Digital Comics, EFL Learners can create a vocabulary-rich environment that not only aids in vocabulary acquisition but also makes the learning process enjoyable and insightful.

For future research, this research should be used as a reference for other researchers who are interested in investigating the same topic related to The influence of digital comics on students' vocabulary learning. Furthermore, Researcher suggest future research should investigate the effectiveness of various digital comic genres (e.g., superhero, historical, educational) in various language learning contexts. So, that might help determine which genres are most engaging and educational for students. Furthermore, comparative research between digital comics and traditional teaching methods should be conducted to assess the benefits and drawbacks of using digital comics in vocabulary learning. This can inform instructional decisions.

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