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Unveiling Behavioral, Cognitive, And Affective Responses of Junior High School Students to Digital Comic for Vocabulary Learning

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is an essential aspect of language learning, especially English. So, to attract students' interest in learning vocabulary, innovation in vocabulary teaching is needed. One innovation is using digital comics in learning. This study examines the stages of implementing digital comics in vocabulary learning and the responses produced by students towards vocabulary learning using digital comics. This research uses a qualitative method with the case study as the research design. The participants who contributed to this study were the 8th grade students consisted 6 students with the criteria of the 2 students with good English skills, 2 students with moderate English skills, and 2 students with low English skills. The data was collected with observation and interview, then the data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The findings show that there are several stages in implementing digital comics in vocabulary learning, including: (1) pre-reading activity, (2) application of digital comics in learning, (3) collaborative activity, and (4) reflection. In addition, the students also have a positive response to vocabulary learning using digital comics. With the help of visualization contained in digital comics, students feel more enjoyable and interested, actively involved in learning, improve students' concentration and critical thinking, and understand the text and unfamiliar words more easily.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary mastery takes very important roles to the communication building. If students have a good understanding and mastery of vocabulary, it will make it easier for them to master the other four basic language skills. This is because the main focus of language learning is on words, where vocabulary occupies the most

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important component in language learning (Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022). Moreover, a good command of vocabulary can influence students, making it easier for them to get information from foreign language texts (Poai, 2020). Vocabulary is undoubtedly essential to language learning, especially for beginner learners. Therefore, learning English, especially in vocabulary mastery, must be considered and designed as well as possible to obtain satisfactory results.

Vocabulary learning, in general, is just where learners have to read a lot of the target language to get much new vocabulary. However, if the students just instructed to read a lot of reading text, that will make learners feel bored quickly, and also decreasing their motivation to learn new vocabulary. Nation (in Sahrini & Wardah, 2021) also stated that teachers should teach only a few words at one time because it can make students feel stressed and confused, making it difficult to understand the material. Therefore, there is a need for innovations in English vocabulary learning that can make students more motivated and excited during learning.

The use of digital comics is alleged to be one of the good media in increasing students' learning motivation and improving students' language skills, imagination, and cultural experiences (Vassilikopoulou et al., 2011; Pujiastuti, 2019; Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran, 2022). Using digital comics in learning is an effective medium for improving students' vocabulary mastery. Csabay (2006) states that visualizing digital comics can make it easier for learners to remember and repeat words well. McCloud (1993) also states that visualizing comics makes delivering information easier for the brain to accept and understand. In addition, with an authentic storyline, short sentences, and interesting visualization, students will feel more enjoyment and greatly desire to continue reading (Yanto & Umah, 2023).

Using digital comics in learning English makes students more actively involved because digital comics offer more interactive and creative learning in improving vocabulary mastery. Animation, sound, and hyperlink elements make students more actively involved in the learning process and make learning much more fun (Juliana, 2021). Wu et al., (2022) also stated that learning digital comics can make it easier for students to understand learning materials, hone their critical thinking skills, and increase their curiosity about learning. In addition, digital comics are easy to access and practical for young students because they can be accessed anywhere and anytime only through mobile phones. Wang (2016) states that digital comics have better advantages than conventional media because they are more interactive and practical and do not spend much money because they can be accessed only through a smartphone.

The use of digital comics in English Language Teaching has also been previously examined by several researchers. Efendi (2019) and Hidayah (2023) examined students' perceptions of using digital comics in vocabulary learning. Castillo-Cuesta & Quinonez-Beltran (2022) focused on the impact of digital comics on students' vocabulary acquisition. Also, they analyzed students' perceptions of digital comics as a learning medium in the classroom. Azizah & Hamid (2022),

Juliana (2021), and Surya et al. (2020) where research focuses on investigating the use of digital comics in vocabulary learning and their usefulness in increasing students' interest in reading English texts. Poai (2020) examines comic strips' usefulness in English language learning. Rianti (2019) focuses on using comics as a medium to improve vocabulary and student motivation in learning English.

Based on the background explanation above, it can be concluded that there is a slight gap which need to be fulfilled. This research will fill the gap and focus on how to implement digital comics in vocabulary learning and how students respond to vocabulary learning using digital comics. This study aims to examine the stages of learning using digital comics in vocabulary learning and what responses students produce after learning using digital comics takes place.

2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study as the research design. The research was conducted in one of the junior high schools in Bekasi Regency, Indonesia. The participants in this study were the 8th grade students consisting of 6 students, with the criteria of 2 students with good English skills, 2 students with medium English skills, and 2 other students with low English skills. The selection of the participants was recommended by the English teacher and adjusted based on the students' performance/ achievement during English learning in class.

The researchers used observation and interview as data collection techniques. Observation was used to record the stages of learning by using digital comics in the classroom and the responses that students produced during learning. Meanwhile, interviews were used to obtain students' responses in more depth after learning by using digital comics. The data then analyzed using thematic analysis stages from Braun & Clark (2006), with several steps: (1) familiarizing with the findings data, (2) coding the findings data, (3) determining the themes of the findings, (4) reviewing the themes of the findings, (5) describing and giving a fixed name to the themes of the findings, and (6) composing a report of the findings.

3. Results and Discussion

The results and findings presented in this study were obtained through comprehensive observations and interviews which served as the main data collection methods. Each data obtained was carefully analyzed to be used in answering all research questions.

1. The Implementation of Digital Comics in Vocabulary Learning

The findings were obtained from the researchers' observations of learning activities over two meetings.

a. First Meeting

In the first meeting, the teacher opened the lesson with greetings, asked about the student's well-being, and recorded the students' absences. The teacher-reviewed last week's learning about Recount Text and explained the new material, namely Narrative Text, including definition, purpose, structure, and examples in daily life. After explaining the material, the teacher instructs the students to create a discussion group of five members and gives them a worksheet as a written narrative text. Students are given 45-50 minutes to discuss, then collect the discussion results at the teacher's desk. The lesson ends with a reflection on the material and instructions for the next meeting, where students are asked to bring a handphone with the WebToon application installed.

b. Second Meeting

In the second meeting, the teacher again opened the lesson by greeting, asking for news, and noting absent students. The teacher reviewed last week's learning and ensured students fulfilled the previous instructions. The teacher then instructed the students to form a discussion group of five members. After that, the teacher explains the procedures for using WebToon, starting from creating an account, changing the content language from Indonesian to English, and finding reading reference content. The teacher asked the students to find a "Little Rain" comic.

Based on finding above, this study found several stages in implementing digital comics in vocabulary learning, including pre-reading activity by providing an understanding of the text material first, applying digital comics in learning, collaborative activity, and reflecting on learning. The stages of implementing digital comics in this class align with the research conducted by Taka, (2022), which includes providing students with an understanding of text material (pre-reading activity), integrating digital comics in learning, group discussion activity, and reflection. On the other hand, Utomo & Ahsanah (2020) also reported that implementing digital comics can be done in several stages, such as integrating digital comics into learning, students choosing comics that attract their interest, focusing on the aspects they want to develop, and collaborative activity.

2. Students' Response to Vocabulary Learning Through Digital Comic

At this stage, the findings are obtained from observations and interviews conducted with several students after they had learned to use digital comics.

a. Students' Affective Response Learning Vocabulary Through Digital Comic

The observation data shows that the students enjoy and like learning with digital comics, and prefer using it over conventional methods. This is supported by the interview data that has been translated.

1) Students' Enjoy the Learning Process Using Digital Comic

Students stated that using digital comics makes learning more enjoyable while learning in class.

OW: *“Yes, learning becomes more enjoyable and fun.”*
(Interview data 3)

The data also stated that students stated that learning with digital comics made them feel happier.

DR: *“My feeling when learning vocabulary using digital comics is that I feel happy because by using digital comics I understand a little more about some English vocabulary.”*
(Interview data 6)

DR stated that he was happier learning using digital comics because he could understand English words better. The data also found that students feel more excited during the learning process.

SEN: *“At first, I thought it would be troublesome and difficult to read. But, it turns out that digital comics are very exciting and fun. It was more fun, because there were songs, and the theme was very detailed.”*
(Interview data 4)

SEN stated that learning becomes much more exciting because songs have an interactive element. Interview data also stated that learning using digital comics feels more interesting. SEN also stated:

SEN: *“Yes, because with digital comics everyone can learn English in an interesting and not boring way.”*
(Interview data 4)

SEN also stated that learning using digital comics is more interesting and less boring.

2) Students' Find Preference Media Used in the Learning Process

Based on the interviews, the students stated that they prefer and choose to study using digital comics.

BGGRT: *“At first ... it was fun, so starting from the stories, the plot, and then there were additional songs too. So, I feel like I like it more, it's more fun.”*
(Interview data 2)

BGGRT stated that she prefers learning digital comics because they are more interactive and interesting. The findings also state that students prefer learning using digital comics over conventional methods.

GDP: *"It's better in digital form, because digital is more comfortable. If it's a book, it feels ... dizzy and you have to buy it first."*

(Interview data 1)

GDP stated that she prefers learning digital comics over conventional methods because it feels more comfortable and practical.

Based on the findings above, students showed different responses, such as feeling more enjoyed, happy, interested, and excited while learning with digital comics. This aligns with Poai (2020) findings that reported digital comic-assisted learning can make students feel more relaxed and enjoy learning, so they do not realize they are in the middle of learning activities. Visuals and interactive elements contained in digital comics also make students enjoy learning more and not quickly feel bored during learning. This also aligns with Yanto & Umah (2023), which found that visuals, good storylines, and short sentences in digital comics can increase students' interest in continuing to read. The findings also state that students prefer learning digital comics because they are more practical and easy to access. Wang (2016) also stated that one of the advantages of using digital comics in learning is that it is more practical and does not spend a lot of money because it can be accessed only through a smartphone.

b. Students' Cognitive Response Learning Vocabulary Through Digital Comic

Observations showed that students understood the text and unfamiliar vocabulary better with digital comics, also it can developed students' critical thinking skills by taking notes and looking up the meaning of unfamiliar words in Indonesian. This is supported by interview data that has been previously translated.

1) Help Students Enrich their English Vocabulary and Better Understanding of the Text

The findings stated that digital comics helped students acquire much new English vocabulary.

BGGRT: *"It really helps to increase vocabulary."*

(Interview data 2)

BGGRT stated that using digital comics in learning helped her improve her vocabulary.

The data also stated that students understand the text better when learning digital comics. This is because digital comics help students

learn a lot of new English vocabulary, which increases their understanding of the storyline in the text.

DN: *"I can understand more when reading English texts with comics."*

(Interview data 5)

2) Develop Students' Critical Thinking in Finding an Unfamiliar Words

When encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, students were found to translate foreign words that they did not know, in addition to being helped by the visual illustration contained in digital comics.

SEN: *"First of all, I will look for the meaning of the word. I look it up using a dictionary or with Google, and I re-read the comic until I understand the contents of the comic."*

(Interview data 4)

SEN stated that she would look up the meaning of words she did not know using a dictionary or Google Translate, then re-read the comic until she understood the context of the storyline.

Based on the findings above, digital comics encourage students to understand the text and learn new vocabulary better. This is because, with the help of visualizations contained in digital comics, students can understand words they do not know without needing to open/ look up the meaning in the dictionary. This is in line with Efendi (2019), who found that visualization in digital comics helps students understand the vocabulary and storyline without needing to translate the word. This is also in line with McCloud (1993), who reported that visualization in comics makes it easier for the brain to receive information, and it makes it easier for readers to understand the text. In addition, the many variations of language and vocabulary in digital comics can enrich students' vocabulary. Students also find it easier to understand and comprehend words when they learn using digital comics. In line with Csabay (2006), visualization and short sentences in digital comics can help students remember and understand words better. Students were also found to develop their critical thinking skills by noting many vocabulary words they did not know and looking up their meanings through a dictionary or Google Translate. Hidayah (2021) also found that recording unfamiliar words can strengthen and improve students' understanding of the vocabulary.

c. Students' Behaviour Response Learning Vocabulary Through Digital Comic

The observation findings state that students become more active and concentrate during learning by using digital comics. This is in line with the findings of the interview data obtained.

1) Engaged Students to be More Active in Learning Process

Interview data states that students actively participate in learning activities.

OW: *“Yes, I became quite active in the discussion. Because, I often put some important ideas about the questions presented.”*
(interview data 3)

OW stated that he became more actively involved by providing important ideas in the discussion. In addition, students also become more active in asking friends and teachers when they have difficulties during learning.

SEN: *“When I have difficulties, I will ask the teacher and friends who understand the material better.”*
(Interview data 4)

SEN stated that she will ask the teacher about her difficulties or a friend who understands the material better.

2) Encourage Students' Concentration in Learning Process

Interview data also found that students concentrated more on the text when learning with digital comics.

DN: *“I did not face any distractions while using digital comics, I just focused on reading the comics. However, when the class is noisy I find it difficult to concentrate.”*
(Interview data 5)

DN stated that she was more focused on reading text using digital comics, but if the class is noisy, she can lose focus.

The research findings also state that using digital comics in learning makes students produce positive attitudes and be more active during learning. Students become more actively involved in learning by asking many questions to friends or teachers about things they do not know. This is in line with Juliana (2021), who found that using digital comics that contain interactive elements makes students participate more actively in learning. The findings also state that students can more easily concentrate on the text when using digital comics. This aligns with students' affective response, where the interactive elements in digital comics make them not quickly feel bored during learning. This is in line with Ruta et al. (2021), who found that learning using digital comics makes it easier for students to concentrate than conventional methods because it can help increase their motivation and interest in learning.

Based on the findings and discussions, implementing digital comics in vocabulary learning can produce positive student responses. In addition, it was found that each student's response is connected and influences the other. The positive feelings that students feel during learning can also affect their attitudes. Furthermore, the positive attitude generated by students can also affect positive student performance. It can be confirmed that using digital comics in learning, especially vocabulary learning, can motivate students and provide positive results/performance towards learning activities.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis that has been done, the researcher can conclude that there are several stages in using digital comics in vocabulary learning, which include: (1) pre-reading activity, (2) application of digital comics in learning, (3) collaborative activity, and (4) reflecting on learning. Using digital comics in vocabulary learning affects three primary student responses: affective response, behavioral response, and cognitive response. Based on the findings and discussion, it is stated that students produce positive responses to these three aspects of response. The use of digital comics in vocabulary learning can make learning more fun and enjoy, encourage students to be more active and increase students' concentration, also make it easier for students to understand the text as well and help students acquire many new vocabulary and develop their critical thinking in finding unfamiliar words. Digital comics with interactive elements (e.g., visualization, sounds, interesting storylines) make students more motivated and engaged in learning, thus making learning less monotonous. Also, the variety of language and vocabulary in the digital comic can help students enrich their vocabulary.

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