THE USE OF COMIC BOOK AS A MEDIA IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY MASTERY

Desi Purnama Sari
Sofyan Abdul Gani
Saiful Marhaban

Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Improving vocabulary mastery of students requires creativity in finding some strategies in order that students are motivated to memorize the vocabulary. This research aimed to use a comic book to improve students’ vocabulary mastery through reading comprehension. The researcher focused on the use of Snow White comic book in improving students’ vocabulary mastery. The data were collected by doing tests. The tests were divided into pre-test and post-test to see the students’ ability on their vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment, and a questionnaire was used to see the students’ responses toward the approach. The samples are the students of MAN 2 Montasik Aceh Besar, consisted of 40 students who were divided into experimental class and control class. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics through SPSS Version 22. The result of hypothesis testing of this research showed that students’ vocabulary mastery was significantly improved. The students’ responses toward the use of comic book to improve their vocabulary mastery were positive and the students showed their interest in reading. Therefore, the use of comic book to improve students’ vocabulary mastery through reading comprehension is suggested to be used by teachers to help students in learning and memorizing vocabulary.

Keywords: vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, Snow White comic book.

*Corresponding author, email: desi153@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

In this era, students may gain as much information as they want easily by reading any text that can support their learning. In school, reading skills and gaining information from texts written in English constitute an important element of the establishment of the English curriculum of secondary and tertiary schools in Indonesia. Furthermore, reading texts in UASBN or *Ujian Akhir Sekolah Berstandar Nasional* (National Standard School Final Examination) for English subject was never absent. Therefore, in order to understand the reading texts, students should have good reading skills.

In answering the questions about reading texts in UASBN, students have to comprehend the meaning of every question and text. It means that the students’ reading comprehension skills are the key to solve this problem. Students should have enough vocabulary to interpret the questions and answer them correctly. Additionally, if the students can understand the whole words in the question sheet, it will be much more useful for them to easily get a high score.

The situation above indicates that the students need to improve their vocabulary mastery in line with the process of improving their reading comprehension. If the students cannot understand the vocabulary, it will be difficult for them to comprehend the text they read. Therefore, to help the students solve the existing problems in reading, the writer decided that the students should be assisted in developing their vocabulary mastery to solve the problem in the difficulty to understand a reading text as a result of limited vocabulary range.

To have a good reading skill, the students were asked to understand as many vocabularies as possible related to a text. The less vocabulary they know, the more difficult for the students to understand the contents of the text they are reading. Therefore, it is a teachers’ responsibility to help their students in improving their vocabulary mastery. A common way done by some teachers to improve the students vocabulary mastery is by asking students to translate many words in a story from a book or other texts and memorize it as many as possible. This is a not creative way to learn. What students need is a fun learning but still a focused learning process. Thus, teachers should choose an appropriate and enjoyable way to teach students on the purpose of improving their vocabulary mastery.
Vocabulary is one of the most important things in learning a language. Alqahtani (2015) stated that vocabulary learning is an essential part in foreign language learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or in classrooms.. Cameron (2001) also stated that vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language.

According to the explanation mentioned before, teacher has a significant rule to bring out a fun learning process to the students in class. So, teacher should try to get students read and develop their skills that are aimed to improve their ability in comprehending texts. The teacher should be a good facilitator in creating and building an effective reading class. As the researcher have mentioned, one way to make the class more interesting is by using a fresh and interesting material such as a comic book, to the class. Furthermore, by using a comic book, the students can see the images as clues to comprehend the text they read. This also can be a fun way to teach reading comprehension and it also can shorten the time the students need to comprehend the text.

The comic book that the researcher chose to use in this research is the Snow White comic book. Concerning syllabus of curriculum 2013 for senior high school students, the tenses that should be taught to the first grade students are present in Snow white comic book. Those are simple present tense, simple past tense, and simple perfect tense. Except for simple perfect tense, both present tense and past tense were present in the book. Snow White is also one of the most popular children literature that has been created as a movie by Walt Disney Company in 1937. The words that were used in the comic book were not hard to comprehend for MAN 2 Montasik students, but it is also not that simple either. Therefore, this comic book is suitable to be used in conducting this research.

Many researchers such as Darsalina, Syamaun, and Fauzia (2016) focused their research on the application of comic strips in improving students’ vocabulary at reading. They conducted experimental research with a quantitative approach. The data obtained from pre-test and post-test was quantitative data. The selected sample were 21 students of eighth-grade students in SMP 8 Banda Aceh. The finding of the research showed that the students’ scores in the post-test appeared higher than the students’ scores in the pre-test. It indicated that the students have had an improvement after the application of using comic strips as an aid in the teaching and learning process to improve
students’ vocabulary mastery. Thus the conclusion is comic strips improved learners’ vocabulary competency in learning reading.

A study on the use of comic books as a media in teaching process was also conducted by Rokhayani and Utari (2014). The research focused on the use of comic books as the media in teaching English to improve their students’ vocabulary mastery at SMP 2 Bae Kudus, the participants were 30 learners of the second grade. The researchers conducted action research and got a positive finding. It revealed that the mean score of the pre-test was 68.27. Meanwhile, the minimum standard achievement point or KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum) of the school for English subject was 75 which means that there were many students that did not pass the KKM. But then the mean score of the students in post-test increased gradually after the treatment. In the first cycle, the students got 76.97, and then it increased to 85.10 in the second cycle. The conclusion is it is positive that comic books can help students to improve their vocabulary.

Other researchers such as Ahmadi, Sadighi, and Gorjian (2017), and Zahra (2016) who conducted a research focused on the use of comics in improving students’ vocabulary mastery, discover a significant difference in the students’ score before the treatment and after the treatment of using comic books. The scores were improved after the treatment. It was indicated by the score of post-test which was higher than the pre-test. Therefore, all the researchers who had been mentioned before have come to agree that comic books can serve a particularly useful instructional function in improving students’ vocabulary mastery. Moreover, reading comics also can motivate reluctant readers as well as engage and stimulate their passion.

All the researchers that have been mentioned have proved that their findings were in line with one another. They have found positive results related to the use of comic books in many places at different schools to improve students’ vocabulary mastery through reading comprehension. However, none of these researchers conducted the same research at a remote area such as in Aceh Besar, especially at MAN 2 Montasik Aceh Besar where the students were not interested in English and they do not even used Indonesian Language at their school. The students’ English level is also very different from the students in the capital city. Therefore, this is one of the reasons that the researcher conducted this research in different area; a countryside, Aceh Besar, especially at MAN 2 Montasik Aceh Besar which is not in a capital city and most of the students are not from a city with large numbers of
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population such as Banda Aceh. Most of the students live in Montasik region.

Regarding to the previous explanation, the previous studies had conducted researches at some schools in city. However, the English skill of students from remote area was different from the students in a big city. Therefore, the researcher is going to test the theory on the use of comic books in teaching reading comprehension to improve students’ vocabulary mastery in a remote area, at MAN 2 Montasik, Aceh Besar, that no one have conducted the same research at this school. This was a good choice because schools in the remote area usually escape from the attention of society and they are shortage of students.

The comic book that the researcher chose was the Snow White comic book as a media in teaching. The researcher expected that comic books not only be used as a valuable teaching aid for the students at MAN 2 Montasik in mastering English vocabulary, but it also can improve students’ motivation and interest in English as much as they are interested in reading comic books in their daily life.

In order to determine the theoretical framework of this study, the research hypothesis is formulated as the following:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students who are taught reading comprehension by using comic books and those who are not taught reading comprehension by using comic books.

Hₐ₁: There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the students who are taught reading comprehension by using comic books and those who are not taught reading comprehension by using comic books.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comic as a Media to Improve Vocabulary Mastery

Enhancing vocabulary by using comic book as a media of teaching can be a good strategy for teachers in order to help their students to study. Whether the students are young learners or adult learners, as long as they can understand how to read a comic book, it will be possible to increase their vocabulary by using comic books. Moreover, they also can increase their creativity in imagining and predicting because even if they do not understand the dialogue balloons, the pictures can help them in interpreting it.
However, successful results of teaching vocabulary by using comic books have been done in many states by a number of researchers who have been mentioned in previous chapter. Arast and Gorjian (2016) have proved that comic books can help students in enhancing their vocabulary mastery. Not only the significant improvement of the students’ vocabulary, but they also asserted that the treatment of using comic books may create a good atmosphere in teaching and learning process because the students can see lot of fun pictures to increase their interest.

According to Sanjaya (2017) there are some activities that should be done in conducting the research; (1) after giving the pre-test, the researcher shares the comic book to the students, (2) ask students to pay attention to the images, (3) do brainstorming about the story of the comic book, (3) the researcher asks the students about any difficult vocabulary from the comic book and explains it to students, (5) let the students read the comic book and discuss it with their partner in group, (6) the researcher asks students to tell the story in front of the class, (7) ask other students to do correction, (8) lastly, the researcher gives the post-test.

It is a bare planning that the researcher did toward this experiment. The planning can be situated accidentally to the condition of the students in the class to make it under control by the researcher. The explicit explanation of the activity in the class will be stated in the lesson plan.

Reading Comprehension

According to Flynn and Stainthorp (2006), reading is the product of decoding and comprehension which means that reading is a result from the ability to decode the printed words and to comprehend the language. When reading a text, a reader is changing the written form of letters that combining together to be a form of sound that has meaning. In relation to this theory, Nunan (1999) stated that reading is a set of skills which is required to make sense and derive meaning from the printed words. In other words, reading is an activity done by a reader in the process of looking at a series of written symbols. In reading, a reader uses his/her brain to convert the symbols into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something.

On the other hand, some researchers asserted that reading comprehension is a complex process involving interaction of many components, they are readers’ background knowledge, readers’ reading
strategies, the text, readers’ interest in topic, and readers’ knowledge of the text type. Those components are interacted to one another in comprehending a printed text. So, reading comprehension is an activity to process a certain written text intended to understand the text and to gain the information or a certain goal of the text that the reader needs. It started from the literal meaning of the text up to interpretative meaning of the whole text. (Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007)

**Vocabulary Mastery**

Studying English vocabulary for Indonesian becomes a challenge faced by everyone from every level of learners. Those who learn English as a foreign language are called EFL students (English as a Foreign Language). EFL learners in senior high school should possess sufficient vocabulary to master English at the level of a high school student. Students who possess insufficient vocabulary will have difficulty mastering English well because vocabulary is the foundation of language. As asserted by Susanto (2017) that a learner with insufficient vocabulary size will not perform well in every aspect of language itself. They need to challenge themselves to improve their vocabulary and the challenge will be different according to the level of English they have been achieved.

According to McCarten (2007), EFL learners who know the most frequent 2,000 words will be able to understand almost 80 percent of the words in an average text. It indicates that an EFL learner should know at least 2000 words of English. It seems not many compared to the words that native speakers know, which is around 12,000 – 20,000 words of English regarding to their level of education. But before the teaching and learning process, a teacher must consider what words are frequently used in the number of 2000 words to know what vocabulary the students should learn and how to learn it.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research used the quantitative method in the form of quasi-experimental design. As stated by Sugiyono (2015), quasi-experimental design is a study aimed at discovering the influence of a particular treatment. The treatment which influenced the students’ vocabulary mastery was the use of comic books as a media in teaching reading comprehension. The group which was given the treatment was an experimental group. While in the control group, the students used
narrative texts in the teaching and learning process, they did not use comic books, and they only used their textbook to help them in learning. Pre-test/post-test design was applied to measure the effect of treatment. Pre-test and post-test were given for both of the groups; experimental group and control group.

Research Participants
This study was conducted in an Islamic senior high school, MAN 2. The school is located in Montasik village, Aceh Besar. The population in this study was the entire class of first-grade students of MAN 2 Montasik. There were 4 classes for first-grade students. Two classes were chosen as sample, class 1 IPA-1 and 1 IPA-2, which consisted of 20 students for each class. Class 1 IPA-1 was chosen as experimental group and class 1 IPA-2 was chosen as control group.

Research Instruments
The instrument which was used in this research was a test. The tests consisted of pre-test and post-test. There were 20 questions in pre-test which consisted of 10 questions of matching words with their meaning, 5 questions of matching words with their antonyms, and 5 multiple choice questions. The vocabularies that were asked in the questions are not focused only on a particular type of vocabulary. There are questions about noun, adjective, and also action verb.

After having the treatment, the students were given a post-test. This test also consisted of 20 questions. All the questions are the same with the question in pre-test. The only one thing that makes it different is that the questions were given to the students after they get the treatment so that they were familiar with the vocabulary in the questions (Merç, 2013) Then, the students were asked to return the answer sheet at once together after 45 minutes.

Technique of Data Collection
To collect the data, the researcher gave some pre-tests, applied a treatment to the samples, and gave the post-test. The pre-test was given in the first meeting of both experimental and control classes before the students get the treatment. The answers of the students were collected after 45 minutes and it became the data that the researcher used to see the students’ initial ability of vocabulary mastery. Then, the students in the experimental class was taught by using the Snow White comic book as a media in teaching, and the students in the control class was taught
by using the narrative text of *Snow White* story. The teaching process was carried out in six meetings. In the sixth meeting, which was the last meeting, the post-test was given to both classes after they get the treatment. The students’ answers in the post-test became data that the researcher used to see the differences in students’ abilities after they got the treatment.

**Technique of Data Analysis**

In analyzing data from pre-test and post-test, the researcher used IBM Statistic SPSS Version 22 with some steps. First, the researcher determined the normality and homogeneity of the test. Next, the difference of the students’ scores in pre-test and post-test between experimental and control groups were analyzed by using procedures such as mean, standard deviation, and t-test after it was assured that the data were normal and homogenous.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

First of all, the researcher calculated the normality and homogeneity test of the data presented as below:

**Table 1. Statistical summary of normality test on pre-test of the experimental and control groups**

| Group  | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | Shapiro-Wilk |
|--------|---------------------|--------------|
|        | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Control | 0.227     | 20 | 0.058 | 0.874     | 20 | 0.064 |
| Experiment | 0.180     | 20 | 0.087 | 0.918     | 20 | 0.090 |

Table 1 shows the result of normality tests on pre-test of both experimental and control groups. It is calculated by using SPSS. Based on the data above, it shows that \( x^2 \) count of the experimental group is 0.91. It means that the value is higher than the level of significance (0.05). In other words, \( H_0 \) is accepted, and the experimental group has normal distribution. Furthermore, the table also shows that \( x^2 \) count of the control group is 0.058. It is also higher than the level of significance. It means that the control group also has a normal distribution.

Next, in order to prove the hypotheses that the score from pre-test of experimental and control groups are homogenous, the homogeneity
test for both the experimental and control groups was also analyzed by using SPSS. It is presented as below:

**Table 2.** Statistical summary of homogeneity test on pre-test of the experimental and control groups

| Score                                | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig.  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Based on Mean                        | 0.391            | 1   | 38  | 0.536 |
| Based on Median                      | 0.629            | 1   | 38  | 0.433 |
| Based on Median and with adjusted df | 0.629            | 1   | 31.120 | 0.434 |
| Based on trimmed mean                | 0.362            | 1   | 38  | 0.551 |

The data are considered normal if the significant value is higher than $\alpha = 0.05$. The table shows that all significant values of pre-test from both the experimental group and the control group based on mean score, median, and with adjusted df, and on trimmed mean are clearly higher than the $\alpha = 0.05$. In conclusion, the data were homogenous. Since the data were both normal and homogenous, so the treatment process of using the comic book to improve students’ vocabulary mastery which had been carried out indicated that both groups are similar, although they are not identical.

After confirming that the test is normal and homogenous, the researcher began to analyze the data. T-test was done in order to find out the significant difference between two variables. In this case, the researcher intended to find out the significant differences between the students’ scores after post-test in the experimental group and the students’ score in control group. In doing so, the researcher used SPSS version 22. The t-score of the test is presented in the following table.
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Table 3. Statistical summary of independent sample T-Test on post-test of the experimental group and the control group

| Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | T-Test for Equality of Means | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 0.055 | 0.816 | 3.130 | 38 | 0.003 | 7.00000 | 2.23607 | 2.4733 | 11.5266 |
| Equal variances not assumed | 3.130 | 37.30 | 0.003 | 7.00000 | 2.23607 | 2.4705 | 11.5294 |

The calculation in Table 3 is aimed to discover whether or not the use of comic books influenced students’ vocabulary mastery. It was also specially designed to investigate whether or not the students who were taught reading comprehension by using comic books achieved better performance compared to those who were not taught reading comprehension by using comic.

In consequence, a null hypothesis (Ho) and an alternative hypothesis (Ha) were determined, they are:

(Ho) : There is no significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the students who are taught by using Snow White comic through reading comprehension and those who are not taught by using Snow White comic.

(Ha) : There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the students who are taught by using Snow White comic through reading comprehension and those who are not taught by using Snow White comic.

The criteria of evaluating these hypotheses are:
If $p - value > 0.05$, $H_o$ is accepted and $H_a$ is rejected
If $p - value < 0.05$, $H_o$ is rejected and $H_a$ is accepted

Table 3 shows the result of the independent sample T-test of the post-test of the experimental group and control group. The table
indicates that the p-value is 0.003 which means it is less than the level of significance 0.05. Based on the criteria designed above, it denotes that $H_a$ is accepted. In other words, there is a significant difference in the students’ vocabulary mastery between those who were taught reading comprehension by using comic books and those who are not. It was because the students in the experimental group which were taught by using comic books as a media in teaching got higher scores than the students’ scores in the control group.

**Discussion**

From the situational result obtained from experimentation process, the researcher learned that the students from experimental group could comprehend the story of Snow White easier than the students from control group. It is because the students had many clues related to the story. The clues are the pictures in the comic book. It helped the students to guess the correct meaning of the text in the bubbles. The pictures in the comic book facilitated the students a connection between the actions of the characters in the pictures and the vocabulary that they were trying to understand.

When the students face a difficulty to understand the text in the comic, the students may analyze the pictures which consisted of information related to the text written in the box. The images as the clues deliver an important information about the story. The images tell the meaning of the words for the students so they can understand better. The images as the clues in reading make the students understand the story even without reading the text. It’s called visualization.

The students who practiced reading comprehension by using the comic book also looked more excited than the students who did not use the comic book. They were excited to see pictures, they even started reading before the teacher finish distributing the comic books to all the students in the class. It indicated that using comic books in the teaching and learning process is a fun way for students to improve their vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the use of images from comic books is to make the students more motivated to study and it was a positive effect on their learning process. It was one of the reasons why the students in the experimental group could get higher scores in the post-test than the students in the control class. Therefore, the images in the comic book as clues for students in comprehending the story is an important item in this research.
Generally, the findings of the previous research, which was conducted by Darsalina et al. (2016), Sanjaya (2017), Ahmadi et al. (2017), and Zahra (2016), have similarities with the finding of this study, in which the students in the experimental group experienced improvement on their vocabulary mastery after the treatment is given. Through the use of comic books, the students were trained to interpret the meaning of the words they read by looking at what the picture in the comic book demonstrates. Thus, they were able to obtain the meaning of the words and get specific information from the story in the comic book.

Similar findings were also reported by Susanti (2014) and Suwastomo (2016) who found that using comic books as a media in the teaching and learning process, showed that the students were able to comprehend vocabulary in the story easily, and they were interested to learn English more. In other words, the students are motivated to learn English because using comic books make the learning process enjoyable.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion
Based on the explanation presented in the previous, the researcher draws conclusion as follow:

There is a significant difference on the students’ vocabulary mastery between the students who are taught reading comprehension by using comic books and those who are not taught reading comprehension by using comic books. It was proved by the T-score. In this case, the p-value is 0.003 which means it is less than the level of significance 0.05. Based on the criteria designed above, it denotes that $H_a$ is accepted. In other words, there is a significant difference on students’ vocabulary mastery between those who are taught by using comic books and those who are not taught by using comic books. Therefore, increasing vocabulary mastery by using comic books can be an alternative to be applied in the teaching and learning process.

Suggestions
There are some suggestions that can be put forward related to the use of comics through reading comprehension to improve students’ vocabulary mastery.
1. Based on the research finding, the use of comic books in teaching reading comprehension to improve students’ vocabulary mastery should be considered as an alternative technique to be used by English teachers in the teaching and learning process since it is effective to improve students’ vocabulary mastery.

2. The teacher should choose an appropriate comic book to be used by students and the teacher should read the comic book first before the teaching process start to avoid the presence of inappropriate pictures and inappropriate words.

3. The words which are used in the comic should be considered as words that students often use in their first language. The teacher should prioritize to ask the English words that will be used often by students after they study.

4. Last, the use of comic books in improving students’ vocabulary mastery can be considered as the main focus in teaching reading comprehension as a subject matter. Thus, it is recommended to other researchers also to focus on other English skills to be taught in classroom. Moreover, it is expected to be a reference for further studies with different media.

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