

# THE USE OF SHORT COMICS AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of using short comics in teaching of narrative writing at one Islamic Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia. By conducting an experimental study, the subjects of the study were divided into two groups, group 1: using short comics, and group 2: conventional method. For analyzing the data, t-test was utilized by using students' writing score in all elements namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The findings indicated that there is a significant difference on the students' writing score between the control and the experimental groups. The value of t-obtained (2.38) is greater than t-table (2.0639) with the degree of freedom (*df*) 24 at 5% significance level. It means there is a significant effect of using short comics in teaching writing.

**Keywords:** *short comics, an experimental research, narrative writing*

## INTRODUCTION

English is a main subject in all level of schools in Indonesia. As a main subject, it has certain goals in education. Some of those goals are that the students have a skill in English. Skill is an ability to do something in a good way (Hornby, 1984:804). There are four skills in English. They are speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Those four skills are supported by some other competences such as vocabulary, grammar, structure, pronunciation, spelling, etc.

From those all four skills, writing sometimes becomes the most complicating skill in English. In doing this skill, students have to have some competences like vocabulary, structure, grammar, and also a competence to combine all those kinds of competences into a written text. This last consideration makes students get difficulties in writing and writing is a skill that most students do not want to do. They think that it is difficult to have writing. There are so many elements needed in doing a writing test. The students have to know the vocabulary they have to use. They also need to know how they can arrange the words into a good sentence. Besides those, the students have to combine the idea and topic they take well. They are thinking about the way they can unite their ideas. They have to make those paragraphs coherence.

Writing is also a way of gaining control over your ideas and getting them down on paper (Wingesky, 1992:1). Good writing conveys a meaningful message and uses English well, but the message is more important than correct presentation. If we can understand the message or even part of it, the student has succeeded in communicating on paper and should be praised for that. For many adult ESL (English as A Second Language) learners, writing skills will not be used much outside class. This does not mean that they should not be challenged to write, but we should consider their needs and balance the class time appropriately.

Writing is a difficult skill because in this skill students have to mix and match so many functions of different competences. Those competences are vocabulary, diction, unity, coherence, structure, grammar, and accuracy in writing the words. Each of those competences has important functions in building the written text.

Vocabulary takes part as the basic competence needed. Its function is to translate what we want to express something into English from Indonesian. If we want to translate sentence into English from Indonesian, we need grammar and structure as well vocabulary. Grammar and structure in English is different from Indonesian structure. In English, we know tenses with this parts and formulas. But in Indonesian, we just play in the words choices. This regulation makes us think twice if we want to translate Indonesian into English.

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Writing process forces us to translate our mind (Indonesian basic) into English to produce written text in English. After doing those two processes, finding vocabulary and rearranging the structure in the right way, we need to check our diction. Diction is a process in choosing the best word to say what we want to express in the right context. Sometimes we find the word that is not appropriate to use in a context of a sentence. We may find a word that can be replaced by a better word to make the sentence expresses the correct meaning.

Checking unity and coherence will be our next project to form a good writing. Unity and coherence in writing process are two main elements in forming a good writing. These two parts have function to tie the theme, topic, main idea, and also the supporting sentences. As we see, a good writing has to have a complete idea. Those ideas can be explained by supporting idea that is expressed by supporting sentences. Those all elements, main idea and supporting sentences, have to fill the coherence and unity in order to make the readers understand what the writer wants to give.

Some students may feel that they get trouble if their teacher gives them project to write. Those all things mentioned before may be their nightmare to have a writing class. Even for the students in low level school, like elementary school and junior high school. It is possible if they will get difficulties in writing process. Their limited English knowledge may be the main factor in getting those difficulties. This condition may be different from the students in senior high school. The students in this level have gotten more knowledge than the students in lower level.

Those conditions and difficulties in elementary and junior high school make the teacher have to think once more to implement the writing skill in class. Teachers try to find alternative way to give this skill to the students. Facing this challenge, teachers have to have breakthrough to give. Many medias have been used to find the enjoyable learning English especially in writing. Using any literature may be the way out of this problem.

Literature is a type of writing that includes poetry, novels, plays, and short stories. Literature has so many kinds inside. Children in Indonesia know well many kinds of literature. Some of the famous

literature here is novel, *cergam* (pictured story), *cerbung* (continued story), and comic (some like a *cergam*). The children here used to read them. In every magazine in Indonesia, there are so many contents given in interesting form. The students may be interested in the form or the appearance at the first time. Although they do not know the meaning of those contents indeed. It will be attractive if the package is interesting.

Comic is one of books that famous in children. Comic has a formation like a pictured story. All the events in the story are drawn and there we can also find the dialogue that is done by the characters in this book. Comic came from Japan in the first time. But now, there are so many comics from all over the world. Indonesia has so many titles of comics that also good enough, the appearance and the content.

Teachers can take advantages from this kind of source. Using comics, teachers can attract the student's curiosities. Students will be interested in reading comic. Teachers can next stimulate the students to make their own writing using those comics to help them. The students may arrange a writing using the vocabulary exist in this comic. The students also may be able to create a writing based on the story in a comic.

The students can use this comic as their source to get the plot of their writing. The teacher can help them to arrange their idea into a good writing. A good writing must have some criteria like we discuss in the previous paragraph. From the comic, students can take many things that can help them in writing process. Vocabulary and plot are some of many things students can use. So, comics can help teacher to stimulate the students to write.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher formulates the research problem as follow, "Is short comics effective in increasing students' writing skill especially in narrative text?"

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

In this study, the researcher uses experimental research. The experimental research is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomenon (Ary, et al., 2010). It uses manipulation

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and controlled testing to understand causal processes. Generally, one or more variables are manipulated to determine their effect on a dependent variable.

Experimental control attempts to predict events that will occur in the experimental setting by neutralizing the effects of other factors. In this research, the researcher tries to find the differences between the implementation of conventional method of teaching and using short comics as the media to stimulate the students. The researcher uses two groups in conducting this study. They are experimental and control group. The experimental group is the sample of research that was treated by giving comics in its treatment. Control group is the sample of research that has no comics in their writing class and also its treatment. The researcher divides those two groups using random system.

### **Population and Sample**

In this research, the population is the first level students in one Islamic Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia. This research takes 26 students from the population specifically from class 7A as sample. The researcher divided the sample into two groups, 13 students as experimental group and 13 students as control group.

The researcher used random number to decide the experimental group. From the random numbers, the researcher took number 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25, 26 as experimental group. For the control group, the researcher used the 13 rest students from attendance list after the experimental students taken. The control group students are number 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 19, 22, 24, 27, 28.

### **Research Instrument**

The only instrument in this research is test, post-test. The researcher gave the post-test to all of sample (both control and experimental group) after the experimental group got some treatment. The material of the post-test was the same in experimental and control group. The goal of this test is to know the progression both control and experimental group.

The test used in this research consists of instructions. The first instruction is to get the students find out the topic of the story in comics. The next instruction is to have the students make a writing based on the comics.

To make this research objective, the researcher uses two raters to give value based on the standardized scoring system. After getting the score of two raters, the researcher collect and analyze it. The reliability of the test is based on the assessments of two raters. The standard that said if a test in this research reliable or not is when the score given by the two raters are still in one category or in one level lower or higher category.

The researcher scored the test taker (samples of research) result by reading their writing. Then the researcher gives scores to their writing.

**Table 1 Scoring System**

<b>Content</b>		
30-27	Excellent to very good	Knowledgeable, substantive, etc
26-22	Good to average	Some knowledge of subject, adequate range, etc.
21-17	Fair to poor	Limited knowledge of subject, little substance, etc.
16-13	Very poor	Does not show knowledge of subject, non-substantive, etc
<b>Organization</b>		
20-18	Excellent to very good	Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated, etc.
17-14	Good to average	Somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, etc
13-10	Fair to poor	Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, etc
9-7	Very poor	Does not communicate, no organization, etc.
<b>Vocabulary</b>		
20-18	Excellent to very good	Sophisticated range, effective word/ idiom choice and usage, etc.
17-14	Good to average	Adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured
13-10	Fair to poor	Limited range, frequent errors of word/ idiom form
9-7	Very poor	Essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary
<b>Language Use</b>		
25-22	Excellent to very good	Effective complex construction, etc
21-19	Good to average	Effective but simple construction

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17-11	Fair to poor	Major problems in simple/ complex construction, etc
10-5	Very poor	Virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, etc
<b>Mechanics</b>		
5	Excellent to very good	Demonstrates mastery of conventions, etc
4	Good to average	Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, etc
3	Fair to poor	Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc
2	Very poor	No mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, etc.

The scoring system in the test is determined by a certain rule. The way to score is divided into five elements. They are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Each of those elements has different value in scoring as featured in Table 1. Based on the rule in the table, the highest score of the test is 100. The lowest score is 34.

**Try Out**

Try-out is a tool to check the test. Whether the test is proper or not to be tested in a level of school, it has to be tested first by doing a try-out. The researcher tries the test in 7E class at one Islamic Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia, the same school as the population exists. 7E is a regular class, and it is different from super class program. The try-out was held on 14 April 2011. It was held to know whether the test is reliable or not. If the test is reliable, so it can be used as post-test.

That try-out consists of some instruction to produce a writing text. The try-out is a form of test which is similar to post-test in research. There are 28 students participated in this try-out.

**Treatment**

The treatment between experimental and control group is different in the media and the method applied. The experimental group was treated by using short comics, while the control group was treated by conventional method.

The procedure of the treatment is divided into five stages. They are opening, giving comics, starting to write, evaluating, and closing. Every stage has certain duration and also certain aims. The complete

stage and the activities of each stage, also the aims of them are showed in the table below.

**Table 2 The Procedure of the Treatment in Experimental Group and Control Group**

No	Stage	Activity	
		Using Comics in Writing	Conventional Method
1	Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher says greeting and students answer the greeting</li> <li>- Teacher attracts and stimulate the students' attention using picture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher greets students and students answer it</li> <li>- Teacher tells the class what lesson they will get that day</li> </ul>
2	Giving stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher changes the picture given and gets the students guess and answer the question about the picture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher asks the students about material</li> </ul>
3	Giving instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives the comics as the material for writing class</li> <li>- Teacher explain to the students how they can use comics to help them create a writing text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives the writing material and students listen to the teacher</li> <li>- Teacher gets the students to do the task</li> </ul>
4	Students' exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives time to students to have a writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives chance to the students to write based on the instruction given</li> </ul>
5	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives instruction to the students to exchange their work with their friends and make their own correction after reading the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher gives the key answers</li> </ul>
6	Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing what the class has learnt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reviewing what the class has learnt</li> </ul>

**Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the researcher uses t-test. The writer uses this formula to know the effect of using the comics in increasing the students' writing skill in the first level of one Islamic Junior High School in Kediri, Indonesia. The level of significance used in this research is 5%. The result will be significant if the t-statistic is the same or higher than t-table.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To know whether using comics is effective or not, the researcher uses test as the instrument of this research. The data from the test was calculated using t-test formula. From the calculations, the researcher can find several data. The general score is the total score of all elements (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics) in assessment.

**Table 3 The Mean Score of the Experimental and the Control Group**

Aspect	Experimental Group ( $\bar{x}$ )	Control Group ( $\bar{y}$ )
General Score	78.85	73.08
Content	23.35	21.77
Organization	16.04	14.85
Vocabulary	22.58	21.58
LanguageUse	19.54	17.88
Mechanics	3.69	3.65

To know whether using comics is effective or not, the researcher used t-test formula to know the significance of this research. The degree of freedom in this research is 24. The alpha used is 5%. In t-statistics table, the significant level of 24 (degree of freedom) and 5% ( $\alpha$ ) is 2.0639. From the result findings, it can be found that the data for general score of this research is 2.38. It means that t-obtained has higher value than t-statistic. The interpretation of this outcome is that the use of using comics in increasing students' writing skill has significant effect toward the students' achievement.

**Table 4 The Hypothesis Testing for General Score**

t-table 5%	Significant Value	Hypothesis	Decision
2.0639	2.38	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) There is no significant effect of using comics in increasing writing skill	<b>Rejected</b>
		The alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) There is a significant effect of using comics in increasing writing skill	<b>Accepted</b>

After finishing all calculations, the researcher can state all results of this research into table 5.

**Table 5 the Hypothesis Testing for Each Aspect in Writing**

Item Tested	<i>t</i> -table	<i>t</i> -calculation	Note
Content		2.26	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted
Organization		2.09	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted
Vocabulary	2.0639	2.43	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted
LanguageUse		2.21	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted
Mechanics		0.2	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) cannot be rejected
General Score		2.38	Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted

From the result findings, the researcher found a significant different value between experimental group and control group. The mean of experimental group is 78.85. The mean of control group that gets no treatment is 73.08. So, the gap between them is 5.77. It means that students' achievement is better in experimental group than in control group.

Based on the result findings, it can be said that the first grade students of the school can understand the content of comics well. This basic competence can also help them to explore that media more to produce writing text. They are able to find the main idea in that comics and also develop the story arrangement. The first and main factor to do it well is that their motivation is increasing. Stimulation using pictured story can stimulate their mind in developing a topic in writing. By getting a comic as stimulation, they can also find a new thing from it. They can take the vocabulary, expression, formula of grammar, and also quote the sentence in it. This method in writing class is suitable in this level of education. They are still in changing process from kids into adult one. Students in this age will be easy to receive this method. So, their

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motivation and imagination can also help them increase the achievement in writing.

Although this research was proved that using comics in teaching writing having significant effect in increasing students' writing skill, but there is a criticism for this research. If we take 70 as the passing grade criterion, there will be one student who fails to pass the lesson because there was a student getting 65.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the writer can conclude that using short comics in increasing students' writing skill in the first level of the school is effective. From the result of post-test from both group, experimental group and control group, there is a difference in mean. The experimental group has higher value than the control group. In further calculation, the value of significant ( $t$ ) from the research (2.38) is greater than  $t$ -table (2.0639) with the degree of freedom ( $df$ ) 24 at 5% significance level. It means there is a significant effect of using short comics in teaching writing.

From the conclusion above, the researcher has some suggestions. The first is for English teachers, especially who is teaching writing to use interesting technique in writing class in order to attract the students' interests in writing class. When the students' interests are increasing their spirit will increase too, so, the goal of the class can be achieved easily. The teacher can use short comics as innovation in teaching English especially in writing a narrative text.

The second is for the students who are studying writing. For the students who have difficulty in writing process, try to use media in order to brainstorm mind. When they feel bored and confused in writing class or they get trouble in starting to write, by using this method, with the help of comics, students can be stimulated well.

The last is for the next researchers. The result of this research can be used as a reference to them who is interested in further development of this matter. It is also expected that the next research in the same study will use larger population to make the research more credible.

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