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The Influence of Digital Comics in Teaching Grammar for EFL Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract*. This research aims to identify the influence of digital comic media on EFL students' grammatical knowledge during the COVID-19 pandemic. The approach used in this research is quantitative which data collection techniques used pre-test, treatment, and post-test. This research used 21 students of class VIII-C as research subjects at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban academic year 2021-2022. The results of this study showed mean score on student learning outcomes increased by 61,4%. Moreover, the results of hypothesis testing show the value of Sig. (2-tailed) was 0,000 < 0,005, so H0 is rejected. This means that the results of the research show that there is a significant impact on the use of digital comics as a medium for teaching grammar at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban academic year 2021-2022.*

Keywords - *Digital Comics; Grammar; EFL; Teaching Media*

I. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a vital component in teaching English that must be mastered by learners. Furthermore, grammar is the ability to determine the rules and principles of language to organize complex thoughts into words that can be understood and unambiguous [1]. Grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation have some unique codes. When students try to apply grammatical principles, they will use the same code as the original. Moreover, grammatical knowledge also plays an essential role in conveying comprehensible messages and avoiding misinterpretations. The success rate in acquiring a foreign language depends on the students' grammatical understanding [2]. The main objective of grammar lessons for EFL students is to train students to arrange communicative utterances based on the grammatical pattern in foreign language acquisition.

Grammar skills are essential for the development of knowledge and language skills for EFL students. However, most EFL students often have difficulty organizing ideas into context [3]. The lack of understanding of grammar rules, especially their comprehension of applying grammar into actual communicative contexts, is a factor that causes EFL students' difficulties in converting ideas into context.

Another factor that hinders the grammar mastery of EFL students is that the subject matter is not conveyed correctly. Grammar materials have too many rules & principles that differ from EFL students' mother tongue patterns, either spoken or written. The students feel bored and unmotivated towards grammar lessons because of their low-level understanding of unusual structures in foreign languages [4]. They feel confused when they compare with their familiar language structure. Therefore, teachers need to package fascinating and innovative learning in teaching grammar material.

The delivery of fascinating and innovative grammar material cannot be separated from the use of teaching media. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching grammar material at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban still uses full reading texts as media. There is nothing wrong with using full reading text as a teaching medium. However, if teachers constantly use full-text, it can trigger students' boredom. Most students assume that all foreign language learning activities have monotonous and dull tasks [5]. To avoid students' interest reduction in grammatical material, teachers must develop teaching media that encourage the students' interest in learning.

In applying teaching media to encourage the students' interest in learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, a teacher must be a facilitator who presents media that is up-to-date and integrated with the internet. In the digital era, students need high-speed access to information and complex graphics [6]. Therefore, teachers need accurate media regarding the use of gadgets and internet connections. One of the suitable media to increase students' interest and grammatical understanding is digital comic media. The application of digital comics in lessons can attract students' attention and is easily accessible [7].

Comics are pictures and text combinations arranged in panels to tell a story [8]. Although comics are commonly published in printed book form, they are also published through social media, apps, or websites. Comics that are not in print are called digital comics. The writer chose comics as a learning medium because he is interested in comics that can convey information simply visually and written. Most students who have a low interest in grammar prefer to

read comics because they contain visual appeal with less text [9]. The combination of visuals and texts in comics indirectly encourages students to learn about word structures, new vocabulary, improve literacy, and improve foreign language mastery.

II. METHOD

Based on the previous explanation, this study aims to find out the effect of digital comics to enhance the grammar of EFL students. This research was conducted at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban in the 2021/2022 academic year. Information was collected using a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. A pre-experimental research design involves only one experimental group without a control group as a comparison [10]. In this research, the writer used the one-group pretest-posttest design. The data was collected through a test that includes pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test and post-test were created with Google Forms and distributed to students through Google Classroom.The pre-test will be given before the treatment to determine the initial ability. The results after the treatment can be known more accurately because they can be compared with the condition before the treatment. This design can be described as follows:

Table 2.1. One Group Pre-Test Post-Test

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
X_1	Y	X_2

Description:
X_1 : Pre-test
X_2 : Post-test
Y : Learning using digital comic media

The population of this research was 74 students in class VIII MTs Maarif NU Ngaban. The writer used 21 students from class VIII-C as the sample for this research. The writer conducted paired sample t-test analysis to measure the effect of digital comic as teaching media. The data tested is the data of the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The data analysis involved included: (a) normality to determine whether the distribution of the data had a normal distribution or not, (b) the paired sample t-test hypothesis test was used to prove the hypothesis that had been formulated by the author. This test is used to test the null hypothesis, namely "There is no difference between the results of the pre-test and post-test". Normality tests and t-test were calculated using SPSS 25.0 software.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research discuss the influence of digital comics on the grammatical knowledge of EFL students obtained from tests in the form of pre-test and post-test. In analyzing the effect of digital comics on the grammatical knowledge of EFL students, the writer used a paired sample t-test. Before conducting the paired sample t-test, the obtained data must be tested with a normality test to ensure that the data are normally distributed. The researcher used *Shapiro-Wilk* as a normality test method because the number of samples tested was less than thirty. The results of the normality test can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.1. Normality Test Results

Shapiro-Wilk	Asymp. Sig.	Criteria	Description
0,915	0,68	> 0,05	Normal Distribution

Based on table 3.1, the obtained data show that the *Asymp Sig*. value is 0,68. The *Asymp Sig*. value is higher than the probability of 0,05. Thus, it can be concluded that the data is normally distributed. After the data is confirmed to be normally distributed, the next step is to perform a paired sample t-test. The difference in the mean scores obtained indicates that the pre-test score is lower than the post-test score. The results of the students' grammar knowledge data obtained in the pre-test and post-test results can be seen from the table as follows:

Table 3.2. Paired Samples Statistics

Test	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	52,38	21	26,059	5,686
Post-test	84,52	21	16,801	3,666

In making decisions about the formulation of hypotheses, hypothesis tests are performed. This test is based on the results of the paired sample test. This study uses the following hypothesis formulation:

Table 3.3. Hypothesis formulation

Hypothesis	Interpretation
(H$_0$) $\mu 1 = \mu 2$	There is no difference between the pre-test and post-test results.
(H$_1$) $\mu 1 \neq \mu 2$	There is a difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

In making decisions about the formulation of the hypothesis, if the value of Sig. (2-tailed) < significance level, then the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. However, if the value of Sig. (2-tailed) > significance level, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is rejected.

Table 3.4. Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
pretest-posttest	-32,143	18,136	3,958	-40,398	-23,887	-8,122	20	0,000

According to table 3.4, the paired sample test results show that digital comics have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. It shows from the value of *Sig.* (2-tailed) that is 0.000 < 0.05. Then the mean value shows a value of -32,143. The mean value is derived from the subtraction of the pre-test and post-test mean values, where the post-test value is higher than the pre-test value. As a result, the mean value in the table shows a minus result. So it is known that student learning outcomes have increased.

The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by Ridhwan et al. [4], which showed that the use of digital comics provides a significant increase in the ability and understanding of students at MTsN 1 Pekanbaru. On the other hand, the research results conducted by Yeganehpou & Hassanirokh [11] showed that the use of comic media on EFL students in Turkey did not affect their understanding but affected their learning performance.

IV. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data obtained using paired sample t-test, the authors found a significant effect of digital comics on the grammatical knowledge of EFL students in class VIII-C of MTs Maarif NU Ngaban. Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the average score of students has increased by 32,143. The percentage increase in the average student learning outcomes is 61,4%. What's more, the value of sig. (2-tailed) is 0,000 < 0,05. This value states that the null hypothesis is rejected. That means there is an influence on digital comics usage as a medium for teaching grammar at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban. In conclusion, digital comics have a significant impact in increasing the EFL student learning outcomes at MTs Maarif NU Ngaban academic year 2021-2022.

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