Educational Comics Based-Local Folktales and Its Effects on Reading Literacy of Rural Primary School Students

Sumarwati
Prof., Indonesian Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia, *sumarwati@staff.uns.ac.id*

Hadiyah
Assoc. Prof., Primary Teacher Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and, Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia, *hadiyah@staff.uns.ac.id*

Nani Muftihah
Student, Indonesian Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia, *nanimuftihah17i@student.uns.ac.id*

Sumaiyah Menjamin
Asst. Prof., Jabatan Bahasa Melayu, Fakultas Sastara dan Kemasyarakatan, Fatoni University, Thailand, *sumaiyah@ftu.ac.th*

Reading is a basic literacy that plays an important role in the intellectual development of students. Based on various surveys, it was identified that the reading competence of Indonesian students was very low. The research aims was to implement educative comics based on local folktale and examine its effect on increasing reading literacy of in rural rural primary school students. The research is a quasi-experimental design with pre-test-post-test non-equivalent control group design. The participants were 3rd grade elementary school students in rural Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Sampling was done by purposive sampling and cluster random sampling technique. There were 58 students in the experimental group and 56 students in the control group from 2 different elementary schools, but their qualifications were both in the good category. In learning to read, the experimental group used educational comic books containing local folktales while the control group used texts containing local folktale. Reading literacy competency data was obtained through paper and pencil tests. The data obtained were analysed descriptively and inferentially using t-test. The results of the study prove that there is a significant effect of educational comics based on local folktale on students' reading literacy competence. Local folktale supported by images is suspected to facilitate the availability of context so that the substance of the text is easier to understand. Therefore, teachers are advised to use image support in learning to cover learning losses due to the pandemic, especially in rural schools which experience many obstacles in distance learning.

Keywords: comics based-local folktales, reading literacy, rural, primary students, educational comics

INTRODUCTION

In the era of education 5.0, the rapid progress of science requires every student to have more adequate reading literacy skills in order to have sufficient insight and knowledge to be able to compete and keep up with the times (Riyadi, 2021: 110). Reading literacy ability is one of the determinants of one's success. This is because all access to information and knowledge is always related to reading & writing activities (Bayhan, 2006: 10). Afflerbach (2009: 70) states that reading literacy skills are

something that is fundamental in students' lives. Likewise, Burke, and Baillie (2011: 2) state that reading literacy skills taught from an early age can support the learning process at a higher level. Bowcher and Zhang (2020: 1) state that at some point in early learning, children need to learn how to read, and competence in reading is critical to competence in overall school education.

Several international and national surveys show the low reading competence qualifications of Indonesian students. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) held in 2018 showed that Indonesian students' scores were about 100 points lower than the OECD country average for reading, arithmetic and science. In the PISA system, a grade of 40 is equivalent to one year of study. Our children's scores of 100 points below the average indicate that their literacy, numeracy and science skills are 2.5 years behind compared to 15 year-olds in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. The average score for reading ability internationally is 487, while the average score for Indonesian students is 371, which is far below the international average score (OECD, 2019). Meanwhile, the measurements carried out by the Indonesia National Assessment Program (INAP) in 2016 (Figure 1) show that the majority of students' reading competencies are in the fair and poor categories, only 6.06% are in the good category (*Pusat Penilaian Pendidikan* 'Center for Educational Assessment', 2016). The results of subsequent measurements still show that there are 70% of students whose reading abilities are below minimum competency (Center for Educational Assessment, 2018). This data supports Solihin's et al. (2020) conclusion that Indonesia is in a reading literacy emergency situation.

Figure 1
Results of measuring students' reading competence

The low ability to read will affect the ability to write because these two language skills are closely related. The writing ability of students in Indonesia as quoted from Yusuf (2005) that based on the results of research in developed countries such as America, the occurrence of writing difficulties in students reaches 15%, while in developing countries such as Indonesia it reaches a higher number. In 1997, the Research and Development Center for Education and Culture (Balitbangdikbud) conducted a study on the writing difficulties of elementary school students in four provinces. It resulted in data that 10% of children had difficulty writing, 9% had difficulty reading, and 8% had difficulty counting. The Ministry of National Education (Gipayana, 2004) presented a number of survey data from the International Education Achievement (IEA) regarding the literacy skills of Indonesian children that about 50% of sixth grade elementary school students in the six provinces assisted by the Primary Education Quality Improvement Project (PEQIP) could not write.

The phenomenon of the low reading competence of Indonesian students shows the difficulties faced by students in reading activities. If it is related to the opinion of Akyol (2019) that effective reading must include the principles of fluency, strategy, motivation, continuity and meaning building,

Indonesian students have difficulty in one or several of these. The results of Akda and David's research (2021) found that the difficulties in reading Indonesian texts in lower grade primary school students in Riau were recognizing letters, understanding word meanings, reading fluency, and reading comprehension skills. Subakti, Ikhsan, Turnu, and Saldam. (2021) found that the difficulty of low-grade students in Samarinda in reading was not yet fluent in connecting words into sentences into a unified meaning. Tusfiana and Tyanasari (2020) the main difficulty of primary school students in Madiun in reading is the factor of concept formation on the content of reading. It can be stated that the source of students' difficulties in reading is giving meaning to words, sentences, or the whole text.

The difficulties experienced by students in various regions in Indonesia may be related to the position of Indonesian as a second language especially in the lower grades they are also at the stage of learning to recognize letters and text rules. This can be attributed to the findings of Genesee et al. (2012) that in second language learners, reading difficulties are generally at the word level and text level. For Indonesian students in rural areas, the difficulty in reading Indonesian texts is greater than for students in urban areas. This can be related to the gross enrollment rate of children in rural areas who attend preschool education is 44.6% (bps.go.id). Thus, most children in rural areas start learning Indonesian and reading at the primary school level. In fact, Indonesian has been introduced to children who attend preschool education. Therefore, it is natural that children in rural primary schools have difficulty reading more Indonesian texts than children in urban areas. The same condition also occurs in lower grade primary school students in rural areas of Karanganyar Regency.

For students who have reading difficulties, of course, continuous improvement of reading competence must be provided through Indonesian language learning. Therefore, based on the results of their research, Iheakanwa, Obro, and Akpochafo (2021) suggested that students' reading interest be strengthened by providing and equipping school libraries and that reading competence should be given adequate attention in learning activities. Meanwhile, according to the results of the research, the combination of text and visuals can be an alternative solution to develop the motivation and reading ability of low-grade students in primary schools (Emosda, 2017; Kurniawati, RT, & Koeswanti, HD 2020; Nurul, A. & Abas, N. (2022). In line with these findings, Roslina (2017) conducted an experiment to test the effectiveness of picture story books on improving students' reading skills and perceptions about the use of story books in teaching reading.

Based on the studies above, it can be concluded that picture story books contribute to increasing students' text comprehension competence and interest in reading. This can be related to Walker's (2012) findings that children's books that provide appropriate context and adequate illustrations can optimize children's enjoyment of using the book. Meanwhile, according to Klanten and Hellige (2012), books with context-appropriate illustrations can also influence young children's cognitive abilities in receiving messages. By considering theoretical reviews and empirical data from various research results, the difficulty of learning to read for low grade students in rural areas of Karanganyar Regency can be improved through the use of illustrated text media, especially in the form of educational comics based on comics with local folktale. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to accommodate students' interest in picture story books through providing their closest context, namely local folktale.

Reading Literacy

The definition of literacy has changed from time to time. Changes in literacy skills are in accordance with changing social, economic and cultural conditions. The definition of literacy is adjusted to the features of the language, education, institutional and cultural context that is applied (Freebody, 2007). Literacy is defined as practice and related to social things that have to do with knowledge, language, and culture (UNESCO, 2003). Literacy in various forms is connected with knowledge (Szabo et al., 2014). UNESCO in the book Literacy Education in School (2007) defines literacy as more skills in reading and writing. A person who cannot read and write is said to be illiterate. Literacy is "the ability

to read and write or sometimes referred to as "literacy" or literacy" (Suwandi, 2019). Literacy is the ability to read and write (Kern, 2000). Literacy is a series of reading, writing and arithmetic skills acquired through the learning process both at school and outside of school (UNESCO, 2006). Reading literacy is a skill that a person has in perceiving a reading (Graff, 2006). Therefore, to measure reading literacy skills, a reading comprehension test is carried out.

Comics as Reading Literacy Media

Viewed from the aspect of modality, comics are a medium of visual communication, namely communication that uses the basic elements of visual language, specifically images, as its main strength in conveying communication (Lauer, 2009). Comics can be interpreted as a series of pictures, each in a box, which is a series of one story. The pictures are generally accompanied by speech balloons and sometimes accompanied by narration as an explanation. In this regard, comics can be understood as a simulation of images and texts arranged in rows per scene to later become a story (Nurgiyantoro, 2015). The collaboration between text and images that compose into a storyline is the power of comics (Topkaya & Dogan, 2020). Images make the story easy to absorb, text makes comics easy to understand and storyline makes the message or information you want to convey easy to follow and remember. Comic is a form of art that has elements in its creation. The elements contained in comics are intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements. According to Nurgiyantoro (2015), intrinsic elements are the elements that build the literary work itself. The intrinsic elements of a comic are the elements that directly participate in building the story. Intrinsic elements in a comic include the theme, plot, setting, characterizations, point of view of characterization, and others.

METHOD

This research was conducted in the form of a quasi-experimental pretest posttest non-equivalent control group design because it aims to test the effect of treatment by considering the initial competence of both groups.Thus, the research procedure (Table 1) was as follows: (1) the experimental and control groups were given a reading pretest; (2) the experimental group was given treatment in the form of learning to read with comics based on folktale, while the control group was not given comics; and (3) the experimental and control groups were given a post-test.

Table 1
The pretest post-test non-equivalent control group design

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment	O_1	X	O_2
Control	O_1	-	O_2

The research location is primary school in Karanganyar Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The research was conducted in rural areas, namely in the Tawangmangu and Jumapolo sub-districts which are located close together and the folktale that became the comic material came from the two sub-districts. The research was carried out from March to July 2022.

Population and Sample

The population is grade 3 students in Tawangmangu District and Jumapolo District. Class 3 was chosen as a participant because this grade was identified as having the most obstacles in developing reading and writing literacy because during the Covid-19 pandemic for 2 years learning was carried out remotely (Pascoe, et al., 2022). From the results of interviews with education officials of Karanganyar Regency, information was obtained that due to distance learning cannot be implemented properly students' reading competence in rural areas is categorized as low so that it affects the mastery of all subjects.

Based on data at the Karanganyar Regency Education Office, primary schools are divided into 3 qualifications, namely good, moderate, and poor. Therefore, the research sample was set at 4 schools with moderate qualifications, with details of 2 primary schools in Tawangmangu District and 2 primary schools in Jumpolo District. Through lottery, the experimental group (grade 3 SD Negeri 5 Tawangmangu and SD Negeri 1 Jumapolo) and the experimental group (grade 3 SD Negeri 3 Tawangmangu and SD Negeri 3 Jumapolo) were obtained. The number of students in the experimental group was 58 and the number of control group students was 56 (Table 2). Thus, the sampling technique applied was purposive sampling and cluster random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select elementary schools that fall into the moderate category. Cluster random sampling was used to select 4 elementary schools as samples and determine which schools were the experimental and control groups.

Table 2
Experimentak and control group

Group	Tawangmangu District	Jumapolo District
Experiment (58 students)	SD Negeri 5 Tawangmangu (30 students)	SD Negeri 1 Jumapolo (28 students)
Control (56 students)	SD Negeri 3 Tawangmangu (27 students)	SD Negeri 3 Jumapolo (29 students)

Instruments

Instruments for monitoring learning

Learning for the implementation of the experiment was carried out 4 times, each 2 hours of lessons (2 x 35 minutes). There are four local folktale materials taught to students at four different meetings. Therefore, at each meeting, students read different folk tales. To monitor the implementation of learning, observations were made using observation guidelines in the form of a checklist for the two groups. In the experimental group, the observations focused on the suitability of the steps for learning to read using comics media containing folktale. In the control group, the observation focused on the steps of learning with the media of text containing folktale. The reading technique applied to both groups was SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, review). The learning stages were as follows: (1) skimming the descriptions and dialogues in the folktale; (2) make questions about what, who, where, how, why; (3) read aloud; (4) answer questions guided by the teacher; and (5) reread the parts that have not been understood. The language characteristics of comics (experimental group) and text (control group) were the same.

Data collection instrument

The data of this study were the pretest and posttest scores of reading literacy skills in the form of interval data. To collect the data, 4 reading test instruments were used which were implemented in 4 lessons, both before and after reading comics (experimental group) or text (control group). Each test instrument contains 8 multiple-choice questions and 2 short questions with a correct answer weight of 10 so the score ranges from 0-100. The score of each student obtained from 4 tests was then calculated on average so that the research data consisted of the average pretest score and the average posttest score. To test the content validity of the four test instruments, the test was carried out by three primary school education experts. The results of the validity test showed that the content validity of the four test instruments was declared valid.

Data Analysis Technique

From the pretest, which was obtained from calculating the average results of the four pretests, it was used for the balance test as one of the requirements test with the t-test formula. The posttest data, which was obtained from calculating the average results of four posttests, was used to test the

hypothesis. The posttest data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out by measuring the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. Inferential statistical was carried out using the independent sample t-test formula, which was to test whether there was a significant difference in students' reading literacy competence in the experimental and control groups. Before performing inferential statistical analysis, normality, homogeneity, and balance tests were performed. The analysis of the data was carried out using SPSS 18. If the t-test analysis showed significant results, then the Cohen's d effect size test was carried out to measure the magnitude of the treatment effect.

FINDINGS

As described above, the data analysis was carried out descriptively and inferentially. Before presenting the results of the descriptive analysis, in Table 3, the distribution of the average scores of the four pre-test and post-test reading literacy competencies of experimental and control group students is presented.

Table 3
Students' pre-test and post-test score distribution

Experimental Group			Control Group		
Score	f		Score	f	
	Pre-tes	Post-test		Pre-tes	Post-test
100	0	2	100	0	0
95	0	2	95	0	1
90	1	7	90	1	2
85	2	11	85	3	5
80	9	16	80	5	9
75	18	8	75	12	10
70	14	7	70	19	15
65	5	5	65	8	8
60	9		60	8	7
TOTAL	58	58		56	56

The data in Table 3 above shows that the distribution of pre-test data for the experimental and control groups is balanced, namely the lowest score is 60 and the highest score is 90. However, the highest post-test score achieved by students in the experimental group was 100, while the lowest score was 65. The highest of post-test score in the control group was 90, while the lowest score was 60, which was obtained by 7 students. In the experimental group, a score of 80 was obtained by students with the highest percentage, namely 27.9%. In the control group, a score of 70 was obtained by students with the highest percentage, namely 26.8%.

Results of Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Post-test

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of post-test reading literacy skills in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics analysis result

Group	Experimental Group	Control Group
N	58	56
Lowest score	65	60
Highest score	100	95
Mean	83.2	72.05
Mode	80	70
Std. Dev.	2.33	3.41

The data in Table 4 shows that the average score of the experimental group is higher than the control group, which is 83.2 > 72.05. Thus, there is an average difference of 10.07. Based on the mode data, it can be stated that the score that appears most often in the experimental group is 80 which is owned by 16 students, while in the control group, the score that appears the most is 70 which is owned by 15 students. Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis, it can be stated that the reading literacy competence of the experimental group students is superior.

Results of Inferential Statistical Analysis of Post-test

The inferential statistical formula used to test the hypothesis is a t test, so it is necessary to carry out a prerequisite test which includes tests of normality, homogeneity, and balance. Normality test is to ensure that the distribution of data in the experimental and control groups is normal. Homogeneity test is to ensure that the variation of the data in the two groups is homogeneous. The balance test was carried out to ensure that the experimental and control groups had a balanced initial competence.

The results of the data normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk statistic with SPSS 18 are presented in Table 5. The distribution of data is declared normal if the coefficient of significance (Sig.) > 0.05.

Table 5
Normality test result

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Score	Experimental Group	.132	58	.158*	.735	58	.097
	Control Group	.181	56	.192	.806	56	.113

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Based on the results of the normality test in Table 5, the Shapiro-Wilk coefficient of significance (Sig.) in the experimental group was 0.097, while the control group was 0.113. Both coefficients are greater than 0.05 so that it can be stated that the distribution of the experimental and control group data is normal.

To test the homogeneity of variance of the experimental and control groups, Levene's test was used. If the results of the analysis obtain a Lavene significance coefficient (Sig.) greater than 0.05 (5%), it can be stated that the variation of the two groups is homogeneous. The results of the posttest data homogeneity test conducted with SPSS 18 are presented in Table 6.

Tabel 6
Homogeneity test result

Score			
Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.022	1	112	.097

The results of the analysis in Table 6 show that the Levene Statistical significance coefficient (Sig.) is 0.097 or greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be stated that the variation of the posttest data of the experimental and control groups is homogeneous.

To perform the balance test, the pretest data for reading literacy competence was used by applying the t-test formula. If the coefficient on the significance of the t test is greater than 0.05 (5%) it can be stated that the initial ability of the experimental and control groups is balanced. The results of the analysis by t-test are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Balance test result

t test	Degree of freedom	t obs	T table	Sig
Experiment & control group	112	1.07	1.96	0.083

The coefficient of significance in Table 7 is 0.082 or greater than 0.05. The results of the analysis show that the initial abilities of the experimental and control groups are balanced or there is no difference.

From the implementation of the prerequisite test, it can be concluded that (1) the posttest data analysis showed that the experimental and control group's posttest data were normally distributed and the variations were homogeneous and (2) the pretest data analysis showed that the experimental and control groups' initial abilities were balanced. Because the three prerequisites have been met, the null hypothesis "there is no difference in reading literacy skills between the experimental group (educational comic media containing folktale) and the control group (text media containing folktale)" can be tested. The statistical formula used is t test and the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Independent samples t-test result

T test	Degree of freedom	t obs	T table	Sig
Experiment & control group	112	7.28	1.96	0.00

The results of the t test in Table 8 show that the coefficient of significance is eleven 0.00 or less than 0.05 (5%) or 0.01 (1%). Thus, it can be stated that the null hypothesis (H0) which reads "there is no difference in reading literacy ability between the experimental group (educational comic media containing folktale) and the control group (text media containing folktale)" is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted.

Because the test results show that there is a difference or an effect, it is necessary to measure the size of the effect. To obtain the magnitude of the effect of comics on reading competence, measurements were carried out using the Cohen formula. The calculation is as follows.

$$d = \frac{M_{group1} - M_{group2}}{\sqrt{(SD^2_{group1} + SD^2_{group2})/2}}$$

From the calculation of effects using Cohen's formula, Cohen's d coefficient is 2.34, so it can be concluded that the effectiveness of comic media is quite large. Associated with the average score, the experimental group is larger (83.2) than the control group (72.05) so it can be determined that the experimental group is higher. This shows that comic media have a significant effect on improving students' reading literacy skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that there is a significant effect of using educational comics containing folktale on the reading competence of grade 3 elementary school students in rural Karangnyar Regency, Indonesia. This means that there is a difference in reading competence between the group whose reading material only consists of text and the group whose reading material is equipped with illustrations or pictures. The existence of images that make it easier for students to understand the substance of the text can be linked to the finding of Alimatun and Zharkasih (2020) that images can function to clarify the context. Besides that, this finding supports Ratminingsih and Budasi (2018) that the existence of local culture, namely folktale that surrounds students, can support contextual learning because the context of the story is close to students' lives. In addition, the

combination of images and text in educational comics is also very helpful for students to understand the text (Wang, et al., 2023). This is in line with the findings of Malu (2013) that words and pictures alone are not enough to understand the story, so the interaction between visual and verbal interactions can clarify it.

Basically, students in rural areas are familiar with the narrative elements of local folktale which are presented in comics, but their presentation in Indonesian texts becomes an obstacle to understanding them because the daily language they use is Javanese. This can be attributed to the gross enrollment rate (APK) for kindergartens in Indonesia only reaching 60.40% and it is dominated by urban residents. However, almost 70% of children in villages do not go through kindergarten education (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) so that rural children's learning experience begins in elementary school, including learning Indonesian. In fact, during the Covid-19 pandemic, education in rural areas experienced high learning loss, including reading and writing literacy education (Pascoe, et al., 2022). Therefore, the presence of images that support the context in comics can help students understand the text. During reading activities, when students do not recognize the meaning of a vocabulary, the pictures provided in the story book can guide students to understand its meaning.

This finding is correlated with Blamey, et al. (2012) and Dowdall, et al. (2020) that story books and picture story books are good for vocabulary development in second language. This can be related to the explanation of Strouse, et al. (2018) that in picture books, children may discover new vocabulary, but the presence of pictures that support the context in which these words are used can help their understanding of these new words. Even research by Oktarina, et al. (2020) and Schoppmann, et al., (2023) proves that picture books can increase young learners' motivation to prefer reading. Picture books can visualize parts of reading, including parts that are difficult to understand due to linguistic complexity, for example new vocabulary, difficult vocabulary, and long sentences. The pictures in these comics can help students to represent concepts formed through Indonesian words and sentences that make it difficult for them to understand reading for students who are not-native Indonesian speakers (Sumarwati, Sukarno, Anindyarini, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Grade 3 students in rural areas are categorized as beginner Indonesian language learners because they experienced learning loss as a result of distance learning for 2 years (grades 1 and 2) during the COVID-19 pandemic, including in learning to read. Comics that present text and images can make it easier for students who are learning Indonesian compared to text without images to understand the content of the text. The use of local folktale and pictures can help students understand new vocabulary or complex linguistic elements. This can be related to various findings that the use of local conditions and images makes it easier for students to build context. It is recommended that teachers in rural areas utilize the local environment and multimodal media to improve student literacy

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