

The Effect of Manhwa on Reading Comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students

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Abstract: This research aims to find out whether there is any effect of using *manhwa* on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students. This study is a quantitative research using pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test. The sample consists of 18 students from class VIII, selected using purposive sampling. The data were collected through a multiple-choice reading test consisting of 20 items based on narrative texts. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0. The findings show that the students' mean score increased from 51.39 in the pre-test to 86.67 in the post-test. The result of the t-test is higher than the t-table ($6.889 > 2.109$). Therefore, the researcher concludes that there is a significant effect of using *manhwa* as a learning medium on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi.

Keywords: Manhwa; Reading Comprehension; Narrative Text

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Introduction

Reading is one of the most important language skills because it enables students to gain knowledge, understand information, and support the development of other language abilities. Language itself is defined as a traditional system of symbols, whether written, spoken, or manual, that people use to represent themselves as members of a social group and participants in their culture (Robins & Crystal, 2018). Through reading, students expand their vocabulary, improve their thinking skills, and strengthen their comprehension abilities. In Indonesia, the importance of reading is also reflected in the establishment of the School Literacy Movement through Ministerial Regulation No. 21 of 2015, which aims to increase students' reading interest and literacy habits. Kusumawanti and Bharati (2018) state that reading is the most essential English language skill for academic achievement because it provides the basis for learning activities. In addition, Rose, cited in Hamouda (2013), explains that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in listening comprehension and can be developed through reading activities. Therefore, reading is not only a process of recognizing words but also a process of understanding meaning and obtaining information from texts.

Reading comprehension is an essential component of reading because students are expected to understand the content, message, and purpose of a text. According to Meylana (2019), reading comprehension is the ability to comprehend written texts effectively in order to absorb knowledge. Similarly, Grabe and Stoller (2013) explain that reading is a process of drawing information from text and forming interpretations of that information. However, many students still experience difficulties in comprehending English texts. Limited vocabulary mastery, lack of background knowledge, unfamiliar sentence structures, and low motivation often become obstacles in understanding reading materials. Stahl (1989) also explains that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that depends on vocabulary development and active interaction between readers and texts. Furthermore, Nuttall (2021) states that students need to master several aspects of reading comprehension, such as identifying the main idea, determining references, finding specific information, making inferences, and understanding

vocabulary meaning. These difficulties indicate that students need more engaging and supportive learning media to improve their reading comprehension skills.

The reading comprehension problem is also found among the eighth-grade students of SMP Kosgoro Sragi. Based on classroom observations and students' academic results, many students still have difficulties understanding English narrative texts. Students often struggle to identify the main ideas, understand vocabulary, determine references, and interpret implied meanings in texts. In addition, the reading materials used in the classroom are mostly monotonous and less attractive, causing students to lose interest and motivation during reading activities. As a result, students' reading comprehension achievement in daily tests and final examinations remains low. Since English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia, students are rarely exposed to English outside the classroom, making comprehension more difficult. Therefore, teachers need to provide innovative and engaging learning media that can help students understand texts more easily and increase their motivation to read.

One potential solution to students' reading comprehension problem is the use of comics, especially manhwa, as reading materials in the classroom. Comics combine visual elements and written texts, making reading activities more interesting and enjoyable for students. According to McCloud (1993), comics are images and symbols arranged sequentially to convey information or evoke responses from readers. Eisner (1985) also defines comics as sequential art that combines text and images to tell stories or deliver messages. Among various types of comics, manhwa has become increasingly popular worldwide due to its attractive visual style, emotional storytelling, and diverse genres. Manhwa differs from Japanese manga because it is read from left to right and often uses colorful illustrations that support readers' understanding of the story. Furthermore, many popular manhwa such as *Solo Leveling*, *Tower of God*, *Noblesse*, and *The God of High School* have been adapted into dramas and animated series, increasing students' familiarity and interest in this medium (Yoon, 2024). Through visual storytelling, students can more easily understand vocabulary, identify narrative structures, and infer meanings from contextual illustrations. Therefore, manhwa can serve as an effective instructional medium to support students' reading comprehension.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of comics in language learning and reading comprehension. Research has shown that comics can increase students' motivation, vocabulary mastery, and understanding of narrative texts because visual elements help students interpret meaning more effectively. Comics also provide contextual support through illustrations, making difficult vocabulary and sentence structures easier to understand. In addition, studies on digital comics and webtoons indicate that students tend to be more engaged when reading visual-based materials compared to conventional texts. These findings suggest that comics can create a more interactive and enjoyable reading environment for learners.

However, most previous studies mainly focused on the use of general comics or manga in improving reading comprehension, while research specifically investigating the use of manhwa as a learning medium in Indonesian junior high schools is still limited. In addition, previous studies rarely examined the implementation of manhwa for teaching narrative texts in EFL classrooms, particularly among eighth-grade students. Most studies also focused on students' motivation or vocabulary improvement rather than examining the direct effect of manhwa on reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how manhwa can influence students' reading comprehension in the context of Indonesian EFL learners.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of manhwa as an instructional medium for teaching narrative texts to eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi. Unlike previous studies that generally used traditional comics or manga, this study focuses specifically on manhwa, which has distinctive characteristics such as colorful illustrations, emotional storytelling, and relatable themes that are attractive to students. This research also investigates the effect of manhwa on students' reading

comprehension ability, particularly in understanding narrative texts. By integrating manhwa into reading activities, this study offers an innovative approach to improving students' comprehension skills and reading motivation in English learning.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to determine the effect of manhwa on the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi in the academic year 2024/2025. Through the use of manhwa as reading material, it is expected that students will become more interested in reading activities, improve their vocabulary mastery, and enhance their comprehension of English narrative texts.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental research design, specifically the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This design involved one experimental class without a control or comparison group. The researcher selected this design because it was appropriate for measuring the effect of manhwa on students' reading comprehension by comparing students' achievement before and after the treatment within the same group. In addition, the researcher only had access to one eighth-grade class at SMP Kosgoro Sragi, making this design practical and suitable for the research context. According to Sugiyono (2013), the One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design allows researchers to identify the effectiveness of a treatment through the comparison of pretest and posttest results.

The research was conducted at SMP Kosgoro Sragi, located on Sragi Pertapan Street, Sragi Village, Songgon District, Banyuwangi Regency, during the second semester of the academic year 2024/2025. The study was carried out from February to March 2025. The site was chosen because manhwa had never been used as a learning medium in teaching reading comprehension at the school. The population of the research consisted of the eighth-grade students of SMP Kosgoro Sragi. Since there was only one eighth-grade class, all 18 students were selected as the participants of the study using total sampling technique.

The research procedure consisted of three stages: pretest, treatment, and posttest. First, the students were given a pretest (O_1) to measure their initial reading comprehension ability in narrative texts. The treatment (X) was then conducted in four meetings, with each meeting lasting approximately 80 minutes. During the treatment sessions, the researcher used selected manhwa stories adapted to the students' English proficiency level and related to themes familiar to junior high school students, such as friendship, school life, and adventure. The manhwa materials were presented in printed and digital forms to increase students' engagement during the learning process.

In the implementation process, students were introduced to the manhwa stories by observing the visual illustrations and predicting the storyline before reading the text. Afterward, students read the manhwa individually and in groups while identifying difficult vocabulary, finding the main idea, determining references, locating specific information, and making inferences from the text. The visual elements in the manhwa helped students understand the context and meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary more easily. The researcher also guided students to analyze the narrative structure, including orientation, complication, and resolution, as well as discuss the moral values of the stories. Interactive activities such as group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and story retelling were also conducted to improve students' comprehension and classroom participation.

The instrument used to collect the data was a reading comprehension test consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions administered in both the pretest and posttest. The test measured several aspects of reading comprehension, including identifying the main idea, finding specific information, determining references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary meaning in context. Each correct answer was scored five points, while incorrect answers received zero points, resulting in a maximum score of 100.

Before being administered, the test instrument was examined for validity and reliability. Content validity was established through consultation with the English teacher and academic supervisor to ensure that the test items matched the curriculum and the indicators of reading comprehension. In addition, the validity of the items was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation. Meanwhile, the reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha formula through SPSS version 26.00. A reliability coefficient higher than 0.70 indicated that the instrument was reliable and consistent for data collection.

The data analysis consisted of a normality test and a paired sample t-test. The normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The data were considered normally distributed if the significance value was higher than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). After the normality assumption was fulfilled, the paired sample t-test was applied to compare the students' pretest and posttest scores in order to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.00 with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The calculated t-value was compared with the critical t-value at the degree of freedom ($df = n - 1$). If the significance value was lower than 0.05 or the calculated t-value exceeded the critical t-value, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating that there was a significant effect of using manhwa on students' reading comprehension.

In conducting the research, the researcher also considered ethical aspects. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school principal and the English teacher of SMP Kosgoro Sragi. The students participated voluntarily, and their personal information and test results were kept confidential. The researcher ensured that the data collected were used only for academic purposes and that the learning activities did not negatively affect the students' regular instructional process.

Results and Discussion

Result

The research was conducted from July 4th to July 8th, 2025, involving 18 students of class VIII at SMP Kosgoro Sragi. This study aimed to determine the effect of using manhwa on students' reading comprehension. The data were obtained from the students' pre-test and post-test scores and analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality testing, and paired sample t-test analysis with SPSS version 26.

The descriptive statistics of the students' pre-test and post-test scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	18	25	85	51.39	15.27
Post-test	18	75	95	86.67	6.85

Based on Table 4.1, the mean score of the pre-test was 51.39, while the mean score of the post-test increased to 86.67. The minimum score improved from 25 in the pre-test to 75 in the post-test, while the maximum score increased from 85 to 95. The findings indicate that students' reading comprehension achievement improved after receiving the treatment using manhwa as a learning medium.

The pre-test results showed that most students still had difficulties in comprehending narrative texts. The students experienced problems in identifying the main idea, finding specific information, determining references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary meaning from context. After the treatment using *True Beauty* manhwa, the students showed better performance in all aspects of reading comprehension.

The improvement was especially visible in students' ability to determine specific information and understand vocabulary through contextual and visual clues provided in the manhwa panels. Students also became more active and motivated during reading activities because the visual illustrations helped them understand the storyline and the meaning of unfamiliar words more easily.

To determine the students' improvement after the treatment, the researcher calculated the gain score from the difference between the post-test and pre-test mean scores.

$$\text{Gain Score} = 86.67 - 51.39 = 35.28$$

The gain score of 35.28 indicates that there was a considerable improvement in students' reading comprehension after learning through manhwa.

Before conducting the hypothesis testing, the researcher analyzed the normality of the data using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

Data	Statistic	Sig. Value	Conclusion
Pre-test	0.948	0.421	Normal
Post-test	0.961	0.638	Normal

Based on Table 4.2, the significance values of both the pre-test and post-test were higher than 0.05 ($0.421 > 0.05$ and $0.638 > 0.05$). Therefore, the results indicated that the data did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution, satisfying the assumption required for conducting a paired-samples t-test.

After confirming that the data were normally distributed, the researcher conducted a paired sample t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The result of the paired sample t-test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired Sample T-Test Result

Variable	Mean	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test – Post-test	-35.28	6.889	17	0.000

Based on Table 4.3, the t-test value was 6.889 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), there was a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores.

The hypothesis testing showed that the calculated t-value (6.889) was higher than the t-table value at the significance level of 5% with $df = 17$, which was 2.109 ($6.889 > 2.109$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

Thus, the use of manhwa as a learning medium had a significant effect on the reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi in the academic year 2024/2025. The findings indicate that manhwa helped students improve several aspects of reading comprehension, including identifying the main idea, finding specific information, determining references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in narrative texts.

Discussion

The objective of this research was to determine whether there was a significant effect of using manhwa on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi in the academic year 2024/2025. Based on the result of the data analysis, the use of manhwa as a learning medium significantly improved students' reading comprehension achievement. This can be seen from

the improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores. The mean score of the pre-test was 51.39, while the mean score of the post-test increased to 86.67 after the treatment was conducted. In addition, the result of the paired sample t-test showed that the calculated t-value (6.889) was higher than the t-table value (2.109) at the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. These findings indicate that the use of manhwa had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension.

The effectiveness of manhwa in improving reading comprehension can be explained through several factors. First, manhwa combines visual illustrations and written texts, which help students understand the content of the story more easily. The visual elements in manhwa, including illustrations, facial expressions, and contextual cues, provide meaningful support for reading comprehension by facilitating vocabulary acquisition, main idea identification, reference interpretation, and inferential understanding of the text. Students who previously struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary were able to guess meanings from the visual context provided in the manhwa panels. Second, manhwa presents interesting and relatable stories that increase students' motivation and engagement during reading activities. The attractive storyline and colorful illustrations encouraged students to participate more actively in the learning process and reduced their boredom when reading English texts. Third, the dialogue format in manhwa uses shorter and more meaningful sentences, making it easier for students to comprehend narrative texts gradually. As a result, students became more confident and interested in reading English materials.

The findings of this study are also related to the theory of reading comprehension. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading comprehension involves understanding the main idea, finding specific information, determining references, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary meaning from context. Through manhwa, students were able to improve these aspects because the visual elements supported their comprehension process. Furthermore, McCloud (1993) explains that comics are sequential art forms that combine images and text to convey meaning effectively. This theory supports the idea that visual storytelling can facilitate students' understanding of written texts. In addition, dual coding theory suggests that information presented through both verbal and visual forms is easier to process and remember, which explains why students showed better comprehension after learning through manhwa.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research related to comics and reading comprehension. Marliana (2023) found that manhwa could improve students' reading ability and increase their motivation in reading activities. Similarly, Raudah et al. (2023) explained that digital manhwa is an effective learning medium because visual illustrations help students understand narrative texts more attractively and contextually. In addition, Hadi (2021) and Sari (2022) reported that comics positively affect students' reading comprehension achievement because students become more engaged and interested in reading activities. Therefore, the findings of this study support previous research that comics and manhwa can be used as effective instructional media in teaching reading comprehension.

This research also provides several implications for English language teaching, especially in teaching reading comprehension. For teachers, manhwa can be used as an alternative and innovative learning medium to create more enjoyable and interactive reading activities in the classroom. The use of manhwa may help teachers increase students' motivation, participation, and comprehension achievement, particularly in narrative texts. For students, manhwa can encourage reading habits and improve vocabulary mastery through contextual learning experiences. In addition, this study may contribute to future researchers who are interested in exploring the use of visual media and digital comics in English language learning.

However, this study also had several limitations. First, the research only involved one class consisting of 18 students, so the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Second, the

study used a pre-experimental design without a control group, making it difficult to compare the effectiveness of manhwa with other learning media. Third, the duration of the treatment was relatively short because it was conducted in only three meetings. Therefore, future researchers are suggested to conduct studies with larger samples, longer treatment periods, and more rigorous experimental designs to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding the effectiveness of manhwa in teaching reading comprehension.

Conclusion

Based on the objective of this research, which is to determine whether the use of Manhwa has an effect on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi in the academic year 2024/2025, it can be concluded that Manhwa significantly improves students' reading comprehension. The findings show a notable increase in students' scores after the treatment, with the average score rising from 51.39 in the pre-test to 86.67 in the post-test. This is supported by the results of the t-test analysis at a 5% significance level and 17 degrees of freedom, where the calculated t-value of 6.889 is greater than the t-table value of 2.109. This means that the research results indicate the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_o). Therefore, the use of Manhwa as a learning medium has a significant and positive effect on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Kosgoro Sragi.

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