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Digital Comics as Literacy Learning in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The development of technology requires everyone to follow it. The learning process is no exception. In the development of learning, every student must have a high level of literacy. What can help literacy activities and utilize information technology is to do digital literacy activities. Digital literacy can be done without knowing time and place. This makes it easy to access information. Digital comics can be used as one of the media to optimize literacy activities, especially for elementary school students. The purpose of this research is to improve or optimize student literacy, especially in reading literacy in elementary schools. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The data collection techniques were observation and interview. The results showed that digital comics can improve student literacy in elementary schools. This can be seen based on the results of interviews and observations conducted with teachers and students who stated that digital comic media really attracted students' attention in reading literacy. Students' understanding of reading material becomes more optimal with the combination of digital-based comics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a means to the ability to think critically, be technologically literate, and be sensitive to the surrounding environment is very important because it can have a major effect on the success of student learning at school and later life in society. Students who have high literacy will usually be more capable, independent and easily follow the development of science and technology quickly. Mullis (in Hayat and Yusuf, 2010) explained that children who have good reading skills will show a more positive attitude compared to children who are lacking in reading.

The first and easy step that can increase interest in reading is to introduce digital comics to children. Children will be familiar with the world of literacy, children who like to read comics from an early age will have the desire to try reading other literary works, such as novels, short stories, magazines, encyclopedias, and others. Children will also look for other references from various reading sources and without realizing it, children will read other writings that have more complex grammar, spelling and word usage. Thus, their literacy skills will increase and all of that starts because children like reading comics. According to (Hurlock, 2020) to support reading skills is one of them with comic media.

Low literacy skills can weaken the nation's competitiveness in global competition. The low reading literacy culture in Indonesia is influenced by many factors. So in this study, digital comics were made to make it easier to improve literacy. The following benefits of comics include equipping children with limited reading skills through fun reading experiences, comics can be used to motivate children to develop reading skills, children get a good opportunity to gain insight into their personal and social problems, and comics are also easy to read and access because comics have pictures that can explain the contents of the story. Comics are learning media that also function to convey learning messages (Waluyanto, n.d.).

Reading activities need to be designed in such a way as to be fun and interesting for students, one of which is with digital comic media (Surya et al., 2020). The context of comics can be entertaining, making digital comics a reading that is not only favored by children but also by adults. Comics are media with images that present a message or information through a story and are presented in the form of a series of images, making it easy to motivate students to read, learn and easily understand learning materials at school (Sagri et al., 2018; Setyawan, 2018).

Entertainment with simple comic storytelling and presented in a humorous style, it will make it easier to capture a problem because basically comics are a unique visual communication medium that combines text and images in a creative form and has the power to convey information in a popular and easy to understand manner.

The problem that is often encountered in the field is the lack of interest in reading which can be influenced by various factors, namely external factors and internal factors. Internal factors are factors that come from within students such as lazy learning, lack of motivation to learn, loss of interest in learning and lack of interest in a reading media. While external factors come from the environment, for example, the influence of technology, games, social media which results in low interest in reading among elementary school students (Purba and Setyaningtyas, 2022; Sari et al., 2020). With the development of this era, digital comics are the right choice to make it easier for students to read because they can be accessed anywhere and this is certainly very important for researchers to make creative media in innovating that can increase student literacy in reading.

2. METHODS

Literacy is the process of reading, writing, speaking, listening, seeing and thinking (Kuder and Hasit, 2002). If a person wants to be called literate, he must have the essential knowledge to be used in activities that require effective literacy functions in society and the knowledge he achieves by reading, writing and mathematics for his own benefit and the development of society (Gipayana, 2010). In line with the opinion OECD (2003) that Literacy is defined as the ability to use written information according to the situation it faces. This ability relates to the skills of understanding, using, and reflecting on reading in accordance with the purpose of reading, namely adding and developing self-knowledge and potential to be useful in the wider community.

Comics come from the Dutch language, *Komiek*, which means comedian. While the ancient language is *komikos* which is a word formed from *kosmos* which means reveling or joking. Scout McCloud (in Waluyanto, n.d.) defines comics as images or symbols that have a certain sequence to convey information and get aesthetic responses and readers. Comics are communication messages wrapped in the form of stories so that they appear as a light story (Nurgiantoro, 2018). However, according to Azhar (2011) comics are actually more than just light and entertaining illustrated stories. Comics are a form of visual communication media that has the power to convey information in a popular and easy to understand manner. Therefore, apart from being an entertainment medium, comics have also been widely used as a learning medium in schools. Five advantages of comics if used in learning, namely; 1) comics can motivate students during the teaching and learning process; 2) comics consist of images which are media that can improve the quality of learning; 3) comics are permanent; 4) comics can arouse interest in reading and direct students to reading discipline, especially those who do not like reading; and 5) comics are part of popular culture.

The research method used is descriptive qualitative. Data collection techniques are observation and interviews with teachers and students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected from two schools in Bandung City showed that digital comics can have a positive effect on student learning. Based on the observation results, it shows that students' enthusiasm when doing literacy learning using digital comics is very good. This is certainly due to the use of digital technology in the learning process. As stated by Fitriani et al. (2022), digital literacy is the ability or proficiency of a person who involves technology, information, and communication devices or tools in various matters such as socializing, improving abilities in learning, and having a critical, creative, and inspiring thinking attitude.

Based on the results of interviews with teachers, the results show that there is a very significant effect on students' literacy skills especially after using digital comics. This happens because students can access more digital comics independently from their respective devices. In addition, digital comics can be used as a medium in delivering material that is easy to understand. Increasing students' literacy skills is of course also supported by using technological developments. Students are now more interested in using gadgets or other devices during the learning process. As stated by Sukiyasa and Sukoco (in Panjaitan et al., 2020) lessons made using visual forms such as animated images will be more meaningful and interesting, easier to accept, and more motivating (Nurgiantoro, 2018).

3.1 Digital Comics in Literacy Learning in Primary Schools

Before implementing the literacy learning process in primary schools, researchers have developed digital comics as a medium that can be used in the learning process. The comics developed contain a story that is tailored to the abilities of elementary school children. In this case, the story used is Carita Budak Pahatu. Carita Budak Pahatu is one of the stories originating from West Java. The form of digital comics that have been developed can be seen in **Figure 1**.

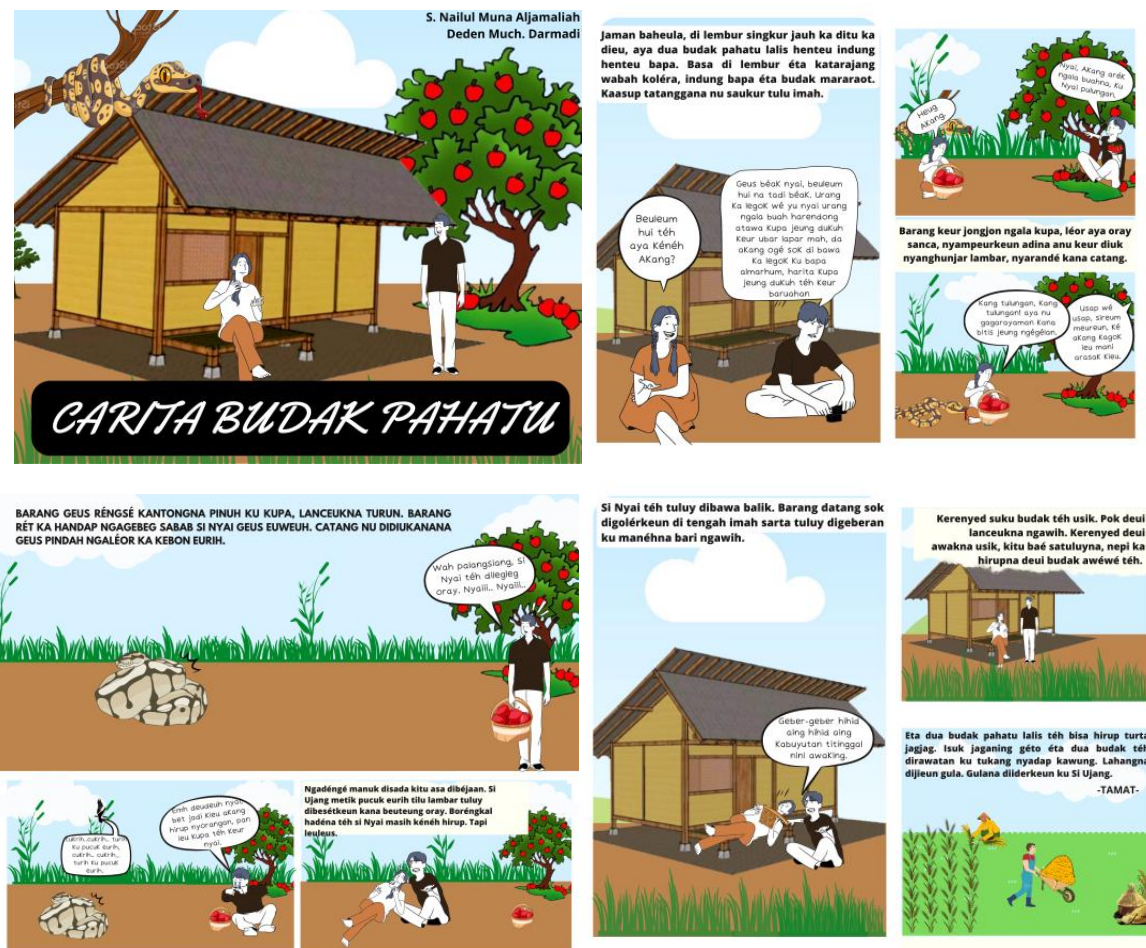


Figure 1 Digital comic carita budak pahatu.

The comics developed based on the Carita Budak Pahatu fairy tale are packed with full colors, pictures, and short writings as presented in **Figure 1**. This is done with the intention of attracting the attention of readers when reading the contents of the story of the Carita Budak Pahatu fairy tale. In the comics developed, several characters are also presented according to the characters told, including Akang, Nyai, Oray Sanca, and Burung. Apart from the content of the story, the developed comic also presents a moral message and a Sundanese language glossary. This is intended as a form of effort to provide knowledge to readers, especially in the literacy learning process. The moral message and glossary can be seen in **Figure 2**.



Figure 2 Learning section in carita budak pahatu digital comic.

Figure 2 shows a moral message and a Sundanese glossary. This can certainly be used as literacy learning material for students. After students read the contents of the Carita Budak Pahatu fairy tale, students can add Sundanese vocabulary. This is done with the intention as a form of effort in preserving the regional language, namely Sundanese. As stated by Yati (2015) that saving local languages through a communicative learning process is one way to preserve local languages which is considered quite effective. In line with that, Southeast Sholikhatin et al. (2021) also stated that multicultural-based regional language learning is applied to develop the character of the younger generation so that the preservation of regional language and literature is maintained.

Literacy is something that cannot be separated from a learning process (Graff, 2020). Literacy is a complex process that involves building prior knowledge, culture, and experience to develop new knowledge and deeper understanding (Graham et al., 2018; Abidin et al., 2021). As a student, of course, you need a good experience to support various processes in life. One way to gain this experience is by doing literacy learning (Collins et al., 1989).

As a form of support in the literacy learning process, it can be collaborated by using technological developments (Linuma, 2015). Like using digital comics as a medium in the literacy learning process. Literacy learning activities using digital comics can be used by all students without being limited by space and time. Students can access digital comics anywhere and anytime. Of course, this must be supported by the availability of devices, such as gadgets or laptops. As stated by Setyaningsih (in Wahid et al., 2021) digital comics are still images and writings that form a series of stories and are able to provide a more concrete and real picture, so that they can attract students' attention to learning and can be read on electronic devices such as gadgets, computers, and laptops.

The use of digital comics in literacy learning not only enhances students' reading interest but also encourages their critical and creative thinking skills (Frey and Fisher, 2008). Through engaging storylines and visual representations, students can more easily understand abstract concepts and relate them to real-life situations. Moreover, digital comics can foster collaboration and discussion among students as they interpret messages, characters, and moral values presented in the stories. This interactive and enjoyable approach makes literacy learning more meaningful, helping students develop comprehension, imagination, and digital literacy skills simultaneously (Bakar, 2019; Handayani, 2021; Nassim, 2018).

The use of technology can also be one of the influences in attracting students' interest in literacy learning, because technological developments are very close to the daily lives of every student. Students can utilize digital technology to support the learning process, such as searching for information and adding insight in the sense of doing digital literacy (Farida, 2019). Apart from that, the literacy learning process becomes more flexible because the material can be accessed without knowing the limits of space and time. However, there will certainly be negative impacts from excessive use of digital media. To avoid these negative impacts, the role of teachers and parents is needed in monitoring students during the literacy learning process using digital comic media.

4. CONCLUSION

Literacy learning in elementary schools using digital comics is of great interest to students. Digital comics is very interesting to be applied in elementary schools. The use of digital comics helps teachers in increasing students interest in literacy skills, students are also very enthusiastic because learning is done with a combination of technological developments used as learning media. However, there are still obstacles faced by students when learning using digital comics, when there is too much screen time for students, it will cause visual disturbances. This of course must be limited in its use.

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