

The Use of Webtoon Media to Improve Reading Comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa

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Abstract

This study assessed Webtoon's efficacy as a digital teaching tool for raising eighth-grade students' reading comprehension at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa. Using a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test, a quantitative research approach was used within a single group. Thirty-five eighth-grade students were purposively sampled as participants. The study was conducted across six meetings, comprising a pre-test, four treatment sessions that used Webtoon based narrative texts, and a post-test. The performance of the students was evaluated using a 20-item reading comprehension test with multiple choices both before and after the educational intervention. A Shapiro–Wilk normality test and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used to analyse the collected data because the data were not normally distributed. The findings demonstrated a considerable reading comprehension improvement following the use of Webtoon, with an average score rising significantly from 76.00 to 96.86 between the pre-test and post-test. Furthermore, The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test analysis yielded statistically significant results differences between the two sets of scores ($Z = -5.212$, $p < 0.05$). The effect size calculation ($r = 0.881$) also reflected a strong practical effect. Overall, the findings supported the effectiveness using Webtoon as an online teaching resource designed to enhance pupils' reading comprehension and suggested its integration into English language teaching to facilitate more interactive and engaging reading instruction.

Keywords: Webtoon, Reading Comprehension, English Language Teaching

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui efektivitas Webtoon sebagai media pembelajaran digital dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pemahaman siswa kelas VIII di SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain quasi-experimental berupa pre-test dan post-test dalam satu kelompok. Sebanyak 35 siswa kelas VIII dipilih sebagai partisipan melalui teknik purposive sampling. Penelitian dilaksanakan dalam enam kali pertemuan, yang terdiri atas pre-test, empat sesi perlakuan menggunakan teks naratif berbasis Webtoon, dan post-test. Kemampuan siswa dievaluasi menggunakan tes membaca pemahaman yang terdiri dari 20 soal pilihan ganda yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan uji normalitas Shapiro–Wilk dan uji Wilcoxon Signed-Rank karena data tidak berdistribusi normal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan membaca pemahaman setelah penggunaan Webtoon, dengan nilai rata-rata meningkat dari 76,00 pada pre-test menjadi 96,86 pada post-test. Selain itu, hasil analisis Wilcoxon Signed-Rank menunjukkan adanya perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik antara kedua skor tersebut ($Z = -5,212$, $p < 0,05$). Perhitungan effect size ($r = 0,881$) juga menunjukkan adanya pengaruh praktis yang kuat. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian mendukung efektivitas Webtoon sebagai media pembelajaran digital dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca pemahaman siswa dan menyarankan penggunaannya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk menciptakan pembelajaran membaca yang lebih interaktif dan menarik.

Kata kunci: Webtoon, Membaca Pemahaman, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension was recognized as an essential aspect of English language learning that allowed students to understand, interpret, and assess written information effectively. This skill plays a particularly important role for students in junior high school in Indonesia since the English curriculum introduced a range of text types, such as descriptive, narrative, and recount texts. In reading activities, students were expected not only to identify vocabulary and grammatical structures but also to determine main ideas, interpret both explicit and implicit information, and construct meaning from texts. (Snow, 2002) stated that reading comprehension involved both extracting information from written language and actively constructing meaning through interaction with the text. According to (Grabe & Stoller, 2019) successful reading comprehension depends on the integration of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and appropriate reading strategies. This theory underpins the present study in examining how Webtoon supports students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the development of students' reading comprehension should have been one of the main objectives of junior high school English teaching.

However, in classroom practice, reading instruction at this level often faced several challenges. A lack of vocabulary, low reading motivation and a reluctance to engage with traditional reading materials made a number of difficulties faced by students in understanding English texts. The activity of reading are frequently perceived as monotonous, especially when teaching media rely heavily on textbooks without sufficient visual or contextual support. As a result, students may become less engaged during reading lessons, which can affect their comprehension and learning experience (Martinez-Lincoln et al., 2021). In addition, (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988) stated that prior knowledge played a major role in determining students' ability to comprehend written texts.

In the past, English reading instruction mainly depended on textbooks, printed texts, and teacher-centered classroom explanations. While these approaches provide a clear and organized framework for learning, they often limit students' active participation during reading activities. Consequently, many learners become less interested and may consider reading tasks repetitive or unengaging. With the advancement of educational technology, current teaching practices increasingly promote the use of digital tools and interactive learning media to support more student-centered instruction. For this reason, incorporating innovative digital media into reading lessons is recommended, as it can enhance students' motivation and contribute to the development of their reading comprehension.

The advancement of digital technological tools had encouraged English teachers to integrate technology-based learning resources into their in-class instruction. Among the available digital platforms, Webtoon offers considerable potential to support reading instruction because it presents stories through a combination of sequential illustrations and written language. As a mobile-based digital comic application, Webtoon provides students with easy access to reading materials while offering an enjoyable reading experience that aligns with their familiarity with digital technology. The integration

of visual illustrations with written narratives can assist students in understanding story content, interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary, and maintaining their interest throughout reading activities. (Widiyarti et al., 2021) argue that Webtoon can facilitate students' reading comprehension by presenting texts in a visually meaningful format. Similarly, (Afandi et al., 2025) reported that digital comics such as Webtoon positively contribute to students' reading comprehension and receive favorable responses from learners. These findings are in accordance with (Khotimah et al., 2022) concluded that Webtoon functioned as an engaging instructional medium that was capable of improving both students' interest and their comprehension during reading activities.

Various studies have explored the implementation of Webtoon in the process of learning English as a foreign language, especially on reading instructions. (Rosdiana, 2022) through a quantitative study, reported that Webtoon contributed to improving students' reading comprehension scores. Nevertheless, the study mainly emphasized learning outcomes and provided limited discussion of how Webtoon was implemented as a newly introduced instructional medium within regular classroom activities. (Prahastiwi & Kamil, 2023) also adopted a quantitative approach, demonstrating that using LINE Webtoon enhances learners' motivation. However, the study focused primarily on students' motivation rather than specifically examining improvements in reading comprehension. Moreover, (Rafida et al., 2023) showed that, as evidenced by a notable increase from the pre-test score, children who learnt through Webtoon obtained a much higher post-test score. Despite these encouraging results, the study focused primarily on the effectiveness of Webtoon under experimental classroom conditions instead of examining its application as the main reading resource in everyday classroom instruction. Next, (Wulan Elok Wahyu Lestari et al., 2025) found that Webtoon had a positively affected students' reading achievement. However, the study primarily focused on the effectiveness on Webtoon, as shown by students' test scores, and it provided limited discussion of their implementation as a structured reading medium in English classroom instruction. Moreover, (Harpain et al., 2022) used a qualitative method and found students had a positive response to the Webtoon as a tool for learning. This study focused more on students' perceptions and did not measure the effectiveness of Webtoon in improving reading comprehension. Finally, (Utama, 2024) also conducted qualitative research and reported that students enjoyed learning through the Webtoon application; similarly, it did not provide measurable data related to students' reading comprehension improvement.

Although these six studies regarding the application of Webtoon as a digital tool in English learning, most of them focus on general outcomes such as motivation and overall achievement, and some were conducted in learning environments where digital media had already been implemented. In addition, qualitative studies tend to emphasize students' perceptions rather than providing measurable data on reading comprehension improvement. Therefore, a quantitative study is still needed that specifically examines the Webtoon application's effectiveness in enhancing students' reading understanding, particularly in a classroom where it is first used as instructional reading material and directly integrated into reading comprehension activities.

This study examined the use of the Webtoon digital application to teach English reading skills at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa, a school where it had not previously been used in English lessons. The focus was on eighth-grade students, with the following research question addressed: How does using the Webtoon application improve students' reading comprehension? Accordingly, the following research hypotheses were formulated: The null hypothesis (H_0) proposed that no significant difference existed in students' scores for reading comprehension between the test taken before and after the implementation of the Webtoon application. Whereas the alternative hypothesis (H_a) proposed that there was a significant difference.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design since the study involved only one experimental class and no control group. The students completed a pre-test before receiving the treatment and a post-test after four treatment sessions using the Webtoon application. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test scores was used to determine the effectiveness of Webtoon in improving students' reading comprehension. According to (Creswell, 2018) stated that this design could be used to measure the effect of a treatment by comparing outcomes before and after it was given.

The study was carried out at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa and concentrated on eighth-grade students. This study's sample was Class VIII-2, which consisted of 35 students. Based on several considerations, sample selection was determined using purposive sampling. First, based on the preliminary study conducted with the English teacher, class VIII-2 had a relatively homogeneous level of English proficiency compared to other classes, which allowed for more consistent measurement of students' reading comprehension. Second, the class showed a moderate level of achievement based on previous English learning assessments, making it appropriate for observing improvement after the treatment. Third, the class conditions and schedule were considered supportive for implementing the treatment effectively. In addition, the class had not previously used Webtoon as a learning medium in English instruction. (Etikan, 2016) stated that purposive sampling was suitable when respondents were selected on the basis of particular characteristics that is aligned with the goals of the study.

The study was carried out from May 11 to May 19, 2026, and was carried out in six meetings. The first stage of the process involved administering the pre-test, the second to the fifth meetings were used for treatment, and the sixth meeting was reserved for the post-test. Throughout the treatment phase, Webtoon was used as the main learning medium to support students' reading comprehension. Each lesson began with the researcher explaining the learning objectives and introducing the narrative text that would be discussed. Students were then asked to read the selected Webtoon episodes independently. During the reading process, they focused on identifying the main idea, locating specific information, recognizing unfamiliar vocabulary, and understanding the chronological order of the events presented in the story. After completing the reading activity, students participated in a guided discussion about the text and responded to a set of reading comprehension questions. The researcher provided

clarification, explanations, and feedback whenever necessary to strengthen students' understanding of the material. At the final meeting, a post-test was conducted to evaluate the extent of students' improvement in reading comprehension following the use of Webtoon as the instructional medium.

The multiple-choice reading comprehension test was the primary tool employed in this investigation. There were twenty items in each test and completed within 45 minutes. The items were adapted from earlier related studies (Rafida et al., 2023; Wulan Elok Wahyu Lestari et al., 2025) and modified to match the students' proficiency level. The test assessed reading comprehension using a variety of indicators, such as recognising the main topic, highlighting specific information, understanding vocabulary in context, drawing conclusions and identifying the structure of the text.

Both the pre-test and post-test included 20 multiple-choice questions, with four answer choices (A, B, C, and D) provided for each item. Before the treatment was implemented, the pre-test was administered to assess students' initial level of reading comprehension. After completing the treatment, the post-test was conducted to examine the improvement in students' reading comprehension ability. Both assessments evaluated the same reading comprehension skills, including identifying the main idea, locating specific information, interpreting vocabulary in context, drawing inferences, and recognizing the generic structure of narrative texts. Although different sets of questions were used in the pre-test and post-test, both tests were developed with an equivalent level of difficulty and were intended to measure the same learning objectives.

Data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was used to analyze the data distribution, and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare pre-test and post-test results as the dataset was not distributed normally. Effect sizes were analysed using a significance level of 0.05. (Field, 2018) explained that The paired-samples t-test substitute should be the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test when the normality assumption is violated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

The use of descriptive statistics to undertake the analysis students' reading comprehension scores both before and after Webtoon was introduced as a learning tool. The analysis covered the number of participants, mean test scores, standard score deviations, minimum and maximum scores. The pre-test and post-test descriptive data are shown in Table 1.

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

Test	N	M	SD	Min	Max
Pre-test	35	76.00	12.53	35	85
Post-test	35	96.86	4.39	85	100

As illustrated the average pre-test score for the students was 76.00 in Table 1, reflecting students' reading comprehension before Webtoon was introduced as a learning medium. The ratings

varied from 35 at the lowest to 85 at the highest. After the intervention, the mean score increased to 96.86. Furthermore, the standard deviance decreased from 12.53 to 4.39, suggesting that students' scores were more consistently high after the introduction of Webtoon.

The study revealed that reading comprehension scores increased after the intervention. The higher mean score showed that they scored higher compared to the pre-test in the post-test. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation suggested that students' achievement became more consistent after learning through Webtoon media. Overall, these descriptive findings offered preliminary evidence that Webtoon had a positive contribution to students' reading comprehension before the inferential statistical analysis was conducted.

Normality Test

The data did not follow a normal distribution, according to a Shapiro-Wilk test, since the sample size was less than 50. This technique was deemed suitable for such small samples by (Razali & Wah, 2011). The results revealed that the significant levels for both the pre-test and post-test were below the 0.05 threshold at 0.000. This indicated that the data failed to meet the normal distribution assumption.

Because the normality assumption was not fulfilled, the t-test for paired samples was inappropriate for the data analysis. (Pallant, 2020) stated that the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is an appropriate unparametric alternative used to draw comparisons between two related samples when data exhibits a non-normal distribution. Consequently, this test was performed to evaluate the significance difference among reading comprehension scores of pupils before and after the test.

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

The presence of a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores after Webtoon media was introduced for educational purposes was ascertained using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Tables 2 and 3 display the test results.

Table 2. Ranks of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00
Positive Ranks	35	18.00	630.00
Ties	0	—	—
Total	35	—	—

As reflected in the positive ranks in Table 2, all 35 students obtained greater post-test results compared to pre-test results. None of the students had the same score on both tests, nor did any of them score lower on the post-test than on the pre-test.

These results showed that all participants improved after Webtoon was introduced as a learning medium. The absence of negative ranks and ties further suggested that the treatment consistently contributed to better reading comprehension performance among all students involved in the study.

Table 3. Test Statistics of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Statistic	Value
Z	-5.212
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

The test statistics in Table 3 showed that the threshold value of 0.05 was exceeded by the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000. The null hypothesis (H_0) was thus rejected in light of the statistical findings, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

Statistical analysis confirmed a difference of significance between students' scores on the test of reading comprehension before and after the intervention. This finding demonstrates that using Webtoon media for learning significantly improves students' reading comprehension and produces measurable learning gains.

Effect Size Result

Effect size analysis identified the treatment effect magnitude on the basis of Wilcoxon signed-rank result. Effect size, according to (Cohen, 1988), assessed a treatment's practical significance in addition to its statistical significance. The following formula was used in this investigation to determine the effect size:

$$r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}}$$

where:

- r = effect size,
- Z = the standardized test statistic obtained from the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test,
- N = the total number of participants.

Based on the Wilcoxon test results, the effect size was calculated as follows:

$$r = \frac{5.212}{\sqrt{35}}$$

$$r = \frac{5.212}{5.916}$$

$$r = 0.881$$

The result of the effect size calculation is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Effect Size Result

Statistic	Value
Z	5.212

N	35
Effect Size (r)	0.881
Interpretation	Large Effect

The calculated effect size was 0.881. According to (Cohen, 1988) classification, an effect size greater than 0.50 is considered large. Therefore, using Webtoon media for learning produced a strong practical influence on students' improvement in reading comprehension.

This large size of the effect indicated an increase in post-test scores that was not only of statistical significance, but actually meaningful in an educational context. These findings indicated that Webtoon media contributed substantially to the enhancement of students' reading comprehension performance and served as a useful teaching tool for English reading exercises.

Discussion

The results of this investigation showed that Webtoon improved reading comprehension, as shown by a mean score increase from 76.00 to 96.86. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test reported a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the statistical significance cutoff of 0.05. A significant effect size suggests that the intervention had a substantial educational impact.

The improvements in students' reading comprehension could be attributed to Webtoon's features as a digital reading platform that combines visual and textual information. The use of illustrations, dialogue and sequential storylines made an easily understandable text for students. The visual support provided by Webtoon helped students interpret unfamiliar vocabulary, understand the sequence of events, identify the main ideas, and obtain specific information from the reading texts. In addition, all 35 students in class VIII-2 at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa showed improvement in their post-test scores, indicating that the positive impact of Webtoon was experienced by all participants regardless of their initial reading ability. This finding suggests that Webtoon media supports students with different levels of reading proficiency and creates a more engaging learning environment.

These results are aligned with those of previous studies on the educational application of Webtoon. (Rosdiana, 2022) reported that the integration of Webtoon significantly improved students' reading comprehension, while (Rafida et al., 2023) also found notable gains in students' reading performance after learning through Webtoon-based instruction. The present study extends these findings by providing additional evidence from eighth-grade students at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa. The considerable improvement in students' reading scores indicates that Webtoon can be effectively implemented as an instructional medium across different classroom contexts to support reading comprehension.

In addition, the findings were in accordance with prior research indicating that the use of Webtoon had improved students' learning motivation (Khotimah et al., 2022; Prahastiwi & Kamil, 2023). Throughout the study's implementation, the students demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm

and active engagement with reading tasks. This finding also aligned with (Krashen, 2004), who stated that learners generally achieved better language learning outcomes when they were presented with engaging and meaningful reading materials. The attractive visuals, compelling narratives, and digital format of Webtoon likely heightened students' interest in reading English texts. As a result, children were better able to understand the content and were more inclined to engage in reading activities.

Practical contributions are offered by the findings of the present study in English language teaching. Webtoon can be utilized as an alternative digital instructional medium that helps improve students' reading comprehension by combining visually appealing illustrations with meaningful contextual narratives. Its integration into reading lessons has the potential to increase students' engagement and participation while creating a more enjoyable learning experience. As a result, students may perceive English reading activities as more interesting and less challenging. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate Webtoon into their classroom practices as part of technology-enhanced language learning to promote more effective reading instruction.

In conclusion, this study's findings suggest that Webtoon improves junior high school students' reading comprehension. Notable improvements in reading scores, a large effect size, and positive progress by all participants highlight the educational potential of Webtoon in English language learning. Based on these findings, English teachers were encouraged to incorporate webtoons into their reading comprehension lessons as an engaging and innovative teaching tool to foster students' interest in reading and support the development of their reading comprehension skills.

CONCLUSION

This study found that integrating the Webtoon application into English lessons effectively improved the reading comprehension of students at SMPN Unggul Tunas Nusa. Descriptive results showed that students' mean score increased by 20.86 points after learning with Webtoon. Furthermore, a statistical analysis determined a value of 0.000 was determined, proving that significant advancement was attained after the intervention in reading comprehension. A significant practical effect was also found via effect size analysis, suggesting that Webtoon use meaningfully influenced students' reading comprehension performance. Overall, these results suggest that Webtoon is an effective digital medium for supporting the development of reading comprehension skills in students.

Based on these advantages, English teachers were advised to integrate Webtoon into reading instruction. This suggestion was justified by Webtoon's capacity to merge visual illustrations with written narratives, allowing students to grasp reading content more easily while also enhancing their engagement and interest in reading tasks. Moreover, Webtoon created a more interactive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, which supported the improvement of students' reading abilities. Despite positive results, the study had limitations. It involved only one class of eighth-grade students and used a pre-experimental setup devoid of a control group. Consequently, the results needed to be interpreted within the context of these limitations, despite the results indicating that Webtoon effectively improved students' reading comprehension. Future research should involve more diverse and larger samples,

explore various educational settings or apply more rigorous experimental designs with control groups in order to produce stronger empirical evidence and enhance the generalizability of the findings regarding the effectiveness of Webtoon in English language learning.

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