

Digital Comics in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: The era of education that is influenced by the industrial revolution 4.0 is characterized by the use of digital technology in the learning process, including language learning. Digital comics, then, become an advantageous instructional media in order to improve students' skill in English as well as their motivation. This exploratory study examines English teachers' views of the use of digital comics on learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). A 20 item survey questionnaire was distributed to 30 English teachers from different schools in Banten Province who have applied comics as teaching aid in English classroom. The questionnaire comprised of three main constructs: a) teacher's perceptions of using ICT in teaching English, b) teacher's perceptions of the advantages and limitations of using digital comics in EFL classroom, c) teacher's perceptions of applying digital comics in teaching EFL. Findings showed that more than 85% per cent of the respondents have positive views on the implementation of digital comics on teaching and learning English. Teachers view that teaching and learning English using digital comics promotes positive learning environment for the students, enhances students' interest, and makes language learnt in context.

INTRODUCTION

Presently, we are facing an era that so called industrial revolution 4.0 in which every sectors of human life cannot be separated from ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Education, one of the vital sectors, is applicably reformed to be digitalized in order to help students who are classified as digital generation to enhance their skills and knowledge.

As one of teaching media that involves the implementation of ICT, it is generally believed that digital comics can be valuable media in aiding language teaching activities. Comics give the opportunity to expose the language in context in which learners are able to acquire it meaningfully. It is in line with Nation and Macalister (2009) who stated that to build a favorable teaching and

learning environment, the layout of the content should attract the learners. As Berkowitz & Packer (2001) pointed out comic books as motivational tool that can be used in a variety of teaching and training settings.

A comic, as identified by Oxford Dictionary, is an art form that features a series of static images in fixed sequence, usually to tell a story. In spite of traditional comic, digital comics can be read on a screen, created by application, and modified by using computer tools. To create digital comics, teachers nor students should not be able to draw, he/she could use photos or pictures, modified panels, and make balloons of dialogue dealing with the material that are being taught based on the curriculum by using computer tool, such as the application of comic life. For the purpose

of this study, digital comics are defined as comics that are created by using application on a computer. This study was conducted to explore the teachers' perceptions of using ICT and digital comics in English language teaching.

The following three specific research questions were posed in order to achieve the purpose of the study:

1. What are teacher's perceptions of using ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in English language teaching?
2. What are teacher's perceptions of the advantages and limitations of using digital comics in EFL classroom?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions of implementing digital comics in teaching EFL?

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

The Use of ICT in English Language Teaching

Nowadays, it goes without saying that ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is one of advantageous tools in English classroom as it offers huge benefits. Both teachers and students prefer to employ ICT in facilitating the learning and teaching process to make it more effective and efficient. Furthermore, Kozma (2003) claimed that teachers and students are using ICT as part of larger changes in the roles and activities of the classroom. He further explained that in the large majority of cases, teachers were engaged in advising and guiding students, students collaborated with other students to search for information, design or create products, and publish or present their results.

Moreover, N. Selwyn (2011) stated that technology-based education is seen to provide a more conducive way than "traditional" schooling to facilitate the informal, collective, and communal forms of learning that many educationalists believe to be important.

In agreement with N. Selwyn and Neo, Marianthi, *et al.* (2002) argued that computer technology will make the whole process a lot easier. Hartoyo (2012) added that in education, technology is quite familiar because the use of computer technology such as e-learning opens the possibility of a long learning process with various types. Accordingly, McDougald (2009) identified that ICT is becoming more important in the teaching learning process in the L2 language classroom. There is no doubt that the role of the teacher is of paramount importance in the process of integrating ICT into the classroom.

In accordance with the previous researches, Newhouse (2002) pointed out that accessibility to wide sources of information allows learners to take an active role in the learning processes instead of depending merely on the teachers as the sole source of knowledge. These integrated features of ICT can help students to obtain an abundant sources and unlimited type of learning activities.

Digital Comic as a Tool in Teaching English

Essentially, the goal of teaching English is to help students to be able to communicate in English. Senthamarai and Chandran (2015) believed that in a communication process, context plays a very important role without which a discourse becomes meaningless. Therefore, this is principally significant in English classroom to present realistic samples of real communication. Media, as a pedagogical resource, then, is enforced to portray a real communication into the classroom.

In regard to generate a meaningful teaching and learning English, Courtis (2008) argued that digital comics can create a meaningful learning environment which allows students to relate material to their own lives and take an active role in their learning. For instance, as students

may choose to act out a text, photograph the events and actions and create a comic from photograph. Versaci (2001) appealed that pictures and text mutually tell a story. In this “interplay of the written and visual” comics “put human face on a given subject” resulting in emotional connection between students and characters of a comic’s story.

Some other scholars, in addition, argue that comics as one of motivational media of learning for it offers contextual and interesting learning environment. Drolet (2010) believed that comic books and strips have been suggested as classroom material due to their broad appeal to almost any age group or learner level because they depict real dialogue and culture. Furthermore, Chiera-Macchia, A., & Rossetto, M. (2011) claimed that visual learning is the best learning—it lets the students to be creative while learning: exploring ways to begin guided writing in second language learning through the use of comics. In addition, Yang (2003) stated that due to human’s natural attraction to pictures, comics can capture and maintain the learner’s interest. In term of comics as an interesting pedagogical aid, in his book entitled *Using comic art to improve speaking, reading and writing*, Bowkett, S. (2011) proposed that “Using Comic Art” not only motivates children to read more widely, but also enables them to enjoy a richer imagined world when reading comics, text based stories and their own written work.

According to Bledsoe (2010), recent studies show that teachers believe that it is easier to teach writing, grammar, and punctuation, as well as scientific concepts, using materials that students are fully invested in, such as printed or digital comic books. Furthermore, he claimed that comic life software, as one of advantageous application of creating digital comic, offers a new publishing medium as it can be printed, emailed to parents or posted as a website easily.

Even though this review has precisely demonstrated that the implementation of digital comics in English classroom enormously facilitate the learning process as it offers numerous advantages, such as language can be learnt in context, the interest and motivation of students will be enhanced, students’ creativities can be more explore, as well as students’ collaboration will be revealed, this research does not attempt to justify that every teachers feel that using ICT in general and particularly digital comics as the finest teaching media in language teaching and learning. Instead this research focuses on how are teachers’ perception on the implementation of ICT and digital comics in English Classroom

METHOD

This study aimed to explore the teachers’ perceptions of using digital comics in teaching English. Therefore, to collect the data, a survey questionnaire was administered to 30 teachers of English. The respondents are the teachers who had been exposed by the use of digital comics and had applied it in their classroom. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The questionnaire consists of three sections and 20 items altogether.

The first section of the questionnaire comprised of five items designed on the basis of five- point Likert scale of agreement to get information about the respondents’ perceptions on using ICT in English. The second section consisted of five items to collect information about the respondents’ perceptions on the advantages and limitations of using digital comic in EFL classroom. The third section included ten items to get the respondents’ perceptions of applying digital comic in teaching EFL. All the questionnaire items were designed on the basis of 5-point Likert Scale of agreement with values as follows:

Table 1: Value of Agreement

Agreement	Value
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Uncertain	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

After deciding the range of value, we need to know the criterion score of each agreement. The following formula is used to know the criterion score.

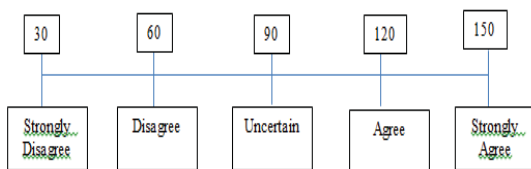
Criterion score = score of scale x total respondent.

Table 2: Criterion Score

Formula	Scale
$5 \times 30 = 150$	Strongly Agree
$4 \times 30 = 120$	Agree
$3 \times 30 = 90$	Uncertain
$2 \times 30 = 60$	Disagree
$1 \times 30 = 30$	Strongly Disagree

Then, the rating scale can be inferred as follows:

Figure 1: rating scale



After having the rating scale, it is important to decide the ranger of the rating scale in order to have the interpretation of each agreement.

Table 3: Range of Rating Scale

Score	Scale
121-150	Strongly Agree
91-120	Agree
61-90	Uncertain
31-60	Disagree
0-30	Strongly Disagree

After calculating the value of each statement and finding out the interpretation, the percentage can be found by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Total gained score}}{\text{Total highest score}} \times 100$$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

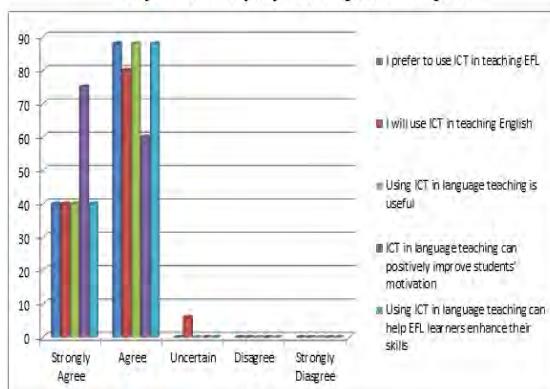
Teachers' perceptions on using ICT in teaching English

The items in the first section required the respondents to indicate their perceptions on using ICT in teaching EFL. Table 4 and graphic 1 show, most of the respondents (85%) showed a precise positive perception towards using ICT in teaching English. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that the use of ICT promotes students motivation as well as their skills in English. In addition, the teachers decided that using ICT in English classroom is a preference. It indicates that the implementation of ICT in English classroom has a beneficial effect both for teachers and students.

Table 4: Teachers' perception on using ICT in teaching EFL

NO	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Interpretation	%
1	I prefer to use ICT in teaching EFL	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
2	I will use ICT in teaching English	40	80	6	0	0	126	Strongly Agree	84%
3	Using ICT in language teaching is useful	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
4	ICT in language teaching can positively improve students' motivation	75	60	0	0	0	135	Strongly Agree	90%
5	Using ICT in language teaching can help EFL learners enhance their skills	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%

Graphic 1: Teachers' perception on using ICT in teaching EFL



Teachers' perceptions of the advantages and limitations of using digital comics in EFL classrooms

The items in the second section required the respondents to indicate their attitudes on the advantages and limitations of using digital comics in EFL classrooms as shown in table 5 and graphic 2. The finding shows that more than 80% of the respondents believed that the use of digital comics in EFL classrooms can create a meaningful learning environment as well as it appeals and encourages students to learn English creatively.

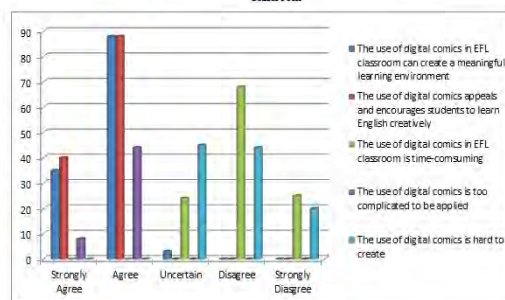
Meanwhile, in term of the limitations of using digital comics in EFL classrooms, majority of the

respondents believed that the use of digital comics in EFL classroom is too complicated to be applied. Perhaps, this is due to the technical aspect that teachers have to deal with when using a technological tool in their classrooms. Most of the schools in Banten province are limited in learning aids, such as computer. This indicates that the use of digital comics is just limited to teachers who teach with limited technological tools in their classroom. In the other hand, less than 50% of respondents feel uncertain if creating digital comics is time-consuming and hard to create. It is perhaps the teachers rarely practice creating digital comics by themselves so that they do not know exactly how it goes on.

Table 5: Teacher's Perceptions of the Advantages and Limitations of Using Digital Comics in EFL Classroom

NO	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Interpretation	%
1	The use of digital comics in EFL classroom can create a meaningful learning environment	35	88	0	0	0	126	Strongly Agree	84%
2	The use of digital comics appeals and encourages students to learn English creatively	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
3	The use of digital comics in EFL classroom is time-consuming	0	0	24	34	5	63	Uncertain	42%
4	The use of digital comics is too complicated to be applied	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
5	The use of digital comics is hard to create	0	0	45	22	4	71	Uncertain	47%

Graphic 2: Teacher's Perceptions of the Advantages and Limitations of Using Digital Comics in EFL Classroom



Teachers' perceptions of applying digital comics in teaching EFL

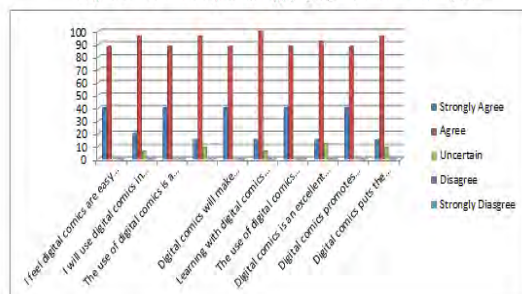
The finding as illustrated in Table 6 below and Graphic 3 shows that the respondents have a positive attitude towards applying digital comics in teaching EFL. Majority of the

respondents (85 %) feel that digital comics are easy to use, are positive way to attract learners' interest, will make target-language culture can be more understandable, promotes target-language through students-centered work, and promotes students-directed learners. Meanwhile, most of the teachers (79 %) agreed digital comic is an excellent way to highlight specific grammar or vocabulary items. Moreover, the majority of the respondents (80 %) agreed that learning English by building comic strips is a way to motivate EFL learners and it puts the language use in real communication. In addition, 81 % of the respondents also agreed that learning with digital comics will make language learnt in context and digital comics will be used in their English classroom.

Table 6: Teacher's Perceptions of Applying Digital Comics in Teaching EFL

No	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Interpretation	%
1	I feel digital comics are easy to use	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
2	I will use digital comics in teaching English	20	96	6	0	0	122	Strongly Agree	81%
3	The use of digital comics is a positive way to attract learners' interest	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
4	Learning English by building comic strips is a way to motivate EFL learners	15	96	9	0	0	120	Strongly Agree	80%
5	Digital comics will make target-language culture can be more understandable	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
6	Learning with digital comics will make language learnt in context	15	100	6	0	0	121	Strongly Agree	81%
7	The use of digital comics promotes target-language through students-centered work	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
8	Digital comics is an excellent way to highlight specific grammar or vocabulary items	15	92	12	0	0	119	Agree	79%
9	Digital comics promotes students-directed learners	40	88	0	0	0	128	Strongly Agree	85%
10	Digital comics puts the language use in real communication	15	96	9	0	0	120	Strongly Agree	80%

Graphic 3: Teacher's Perceptions of Applying Digital Comics in Teaching EFL



CONCLUSION

The findings obviously indicated that teachers have positive attitudes towards using ICT in teaching English

and most of them agreed that the application of ICT promotes students motivation as well as their skills in English. This kind of attitude essentially appropriate with this digital era where technology cannot be separated from teaching and learning activity. For the advantages of digital comics, majority of the respondents agreed that the use of digital comics in EFL classrooms can create a meaningful learning environment as well as it appeals and encourages students to learn English creatively. In the term of limitations, the respondents perceived the use of digital comics in classroom as too complicated to be applied in the English classroom. This may be due to several factors, especially the technical factors such as lack of access and lack of training. Yuwono (2005) reported that teachers are seldom able to vary their teaching as they have limited choice of materials and lack of resources especially in schools in municipalities with very limited budgets and financial constraints. Such issues also revealed in Hidayati (2012), it stated that some of the problems faced in English classroom are limited facilities and resource for teaching. Since the use of digital comics requires computer tools, it seems too complicated to be implemented in a classroom. If teachers intend to use it, they have to bring the students to the computer lab or ask the students to bring theirs. Although majority of the respondents realized about the advantages and limitations of using digital comics in EFL classroom, they precisely agreed that the digital comics are one of favorable teaching aids in English teaching and learning for its potential benefits to open access for both teachers and students to a contextual teaching and more pleasurable learning environment.

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