

## **Enhancing Speaking Skills through Comic Strips in the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya**

<sup>1</sup>Femailia Aldaka, <sup>2</sup>Fajar Susanto, <sup>3</sup>Suparman

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya

<sup>3</sup>SMPN 1 Surabaya

**\*Corresponding Author**

Email: [femailiaaldaka@gmail.com](mailto:femailiaaldaka@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This study aims to investigate the enhancement of the students' speaking skills after implementing comic strips as a learning media. The subjects of this study were seventh grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya, totaling 35 students in a class. This research was a Classroom Action Research (CAR) which was carried out in two cycles. The researchers conducted the Pre-Cycle before implementing the comic strips. There were four phases carried out in cycle 1 and cycle 2: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The difference occurred in the implementation of cycle 2. Observation and speaking practice tests were two methods the researchers used to collect data in this study. The KKM in English subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya is 85. The results of this study showed that there were 10 students, or 28.5% of students, who achieved test scores above the KKM. In cycle 1, there were 23 students, or 65.7% of students, who passed the KKM, and in cycle 2 there were 30 students, or 85.7% of students in class VII B, who scored above the KKM. Thus, comic strips are effective in improving students' speaking skills.*

**Keywords:** *classroom Action Research; comic strips, English classroom; Speaking*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is a required subject at all educational levels. To effectively communicate in today's globalized world, students must be proficient in English (Alfarisy, 2021). Nearly all aspects of human activity demand the use of English, from programs that only offer instructions in English to the countless scholarly publications used as references in a variety of areas. Global diversity is actually one of the competences that students are supposed to attain under the new curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which is well-known for its six graduate competency requirements, or what is generally referred to as the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*. Thus, Indonesian students continue to believe that mastery of the English language is necessary to develop a high degree of tolerance and to be ready to cooperate and compete with individuals from other countries (Yonata et al., 2022).

Being able to communicate effectively in English is essential for working together and competing with foreigners, that is why studying English in Indonesia aims to equip students with this skill. Students must become proficient in the four fundamental English language skills of speaking, reading, writing, and listening even while they are in school. Speaking, which is one of the four competences and is a part of productive language, is frequently seen as the best way for students to convey their ideas, but it is also deemed to be the most challenging and complex ability to master (Rusmawan *et al.*, 2021). There are several explanations for the belief that speaking is the hardest talent to master.

According to observations made in the class by the English researchers, a lot of students struggle with speaking English because, in addition to being a challenging skill to master, they find it challenging to articulate their ideas and thoughts verbally because of a restricted vocabulary. When combined with their lack of experience speaking English in front of the class – both individually and in groups – it makes students less self-assured and less motivated to pick up the language. It is evident that this presents a challenge for English instructors, and they are required to come up with solutions that will assist the large number of students who struggle to articulate their ideas verbally in front of the class and other people (Rusmawan et al., 2021).

Using comic strips as educational materials is one approach. Eisner (1985) defined comics as a narrative portrayed by a sequence of sequential images and text. Meanwhile, comics are images that convey information or evoke certain reactions from viewers, according to McCloud (1994). Thus, it can be said that comics are made up of words and visuals combined to represent a certain event. Comic novels and comic strips are the two categories into which comics fall (Novitasari, 2020). Comic books and comic strips are not the same thing since comic books normally have several characters and serial plots, but comic strips have four panels or less, making it harder to link one comic strip to another (Maulana & Fitriawati, 2018). According to Wijaya, Suwastini, Adnyani, & Adnyani (2021), comic strips that incorporate both words and images can be helpful for learning English and have several other advantages.

Using comic strips as a learning media in English subjects clearly has many positive impacts on students. Rengur & Sugirin (2019) claim that the classroom will seem just as enjoyable when appealing graphics and engaging narrative are combined with instructional activities. In addition to creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, comics can also increase students' attention and foster a positive attitude towards learning (Wijaya et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to earlier study by Suseno (2020), employing comic strips as a teaching tool for English classes would provide students fresh, enjoyable experiences and facilitate the acquisition of new vocabulary and grammar as well as the improvement of their speaking abilities from a poor to a good level.

The benefits of using comic strips as a learning media are described above, and the researchers applied these benefits to the process of learning to speak. The following are actionable measures that can be taken: (1) The teacher presents a digital comic strip which contains conversations asking for and giving information regarding directions to a place. Representatives of two students are asked to read the dialogue in the comic aloud. Then, students are asked to answer several questions related to the comic strip orally. (2) The teacher presents random pictures with gaping dialogue. Students are asked to complete the dialogue and arrange the pictures to make a complete and coherent comic strip. (3) The teacher provides several situations related to asking and giving directions somewhere. In groups, students make a comic strip based on the situation prepared by the teacher. Then, in groups, students present comic strips belonging to other groups in front of the class. The comic strip owner group will provide feedback in the form of comments related to the suitability of their friends' appearances with the comics they make.

Researchers use comic strips as learning media on transactional text content about asking and providing directions to a place in order to help students learn

English and enhance their speaking abilities. The researchers carry out this study entitled "Enhancing Speaking Skills through Comic Strips in the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya". The aim of this study is to characterize the degree to which using comic strips might enhance students' speaking abilities. Teachers may utilize the research findings to improve the resources they use to carry out teaching and learning activities in the classroom. It may also serve as motivation for more research projects.

## **METHOD**

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) using a descriptive qualitative methodology. There were two cycles in this research: cycle 1 and cycle 2. Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting are the four processes that make up the Kurt Lewin model, which is the most fundamental and was employed by the researchers in each cycle of classroom action research. Both cycles were conducted by the researchers at SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya, focusing on one of the seventh grade classes as the research sample. Class VII B had 33 students, 18 of whom were female and 17 of whom were male. The data used in this study was the speaking practice score that was obtained before and after implementing the comic strip learning media. Data was collected directly from students during the learning process in the classroom in order to prove that the use of comic strip learning media can improve students' speaking skills. The researchers collected data using speaking skills tests and observation.

To assess students' speaking ability, the researchers used an assessment rubric that had been adapted from the speaking skill assessment rubric that had been made by (Palengai, 2022), as follows:

Table 1: Speaking skill assessment rubric

No	Aspects	Weighting	Score	Criteria
1	Fluency	40	4	Natural delivery
			3	Hesitate, pause once or twice
			2	Hesitate, pause more than twice
			1	Speak so little and always pause
2	Grammatical Accuracy	40	4	Use correct sentence patterns
			3	1-2 incorrect sentence patterns
			2	3-4 incorrect sentence patterns
			1	5 or more incorrect sentence patterns
3	Pronunciation	20	4	Correct pronunciation
			3	There are incorrect pronunciations but still easy to understand
			2	to understand
			1	There are incorrect pronunciations and difficult to understand Cannot be understood

To calculate the percentage of classes that pass the passing criteria or KKM, where the KKM for English subjects at SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya is 85, the researcher uses the following formula:

$$P = \frac{\sum x}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Class percentage

$\sum x$  = Total students who pass the KKM

N = Number of students in one class

The researcher decided that the indicator of success in using comic strip learning media was 80% of 35 students who could get a score of  $\geq 85$ .

## RESULTS

The results of the study showed that the implementation of comic strips as a learning media can improve students' speaking skills. The increase that occurred was due to the completion of two cycles in this study, with the following results:

Table 2: Students' speaking score Pre-cycle, Cycle 1, Cycle 2

No. Absen	Pre-Cycle	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1	70	70	85
2	60	65	75
3	80	85	85
4	90	90	95
5	75	85	90
6	80	85	90
7	90	90	95
8	80	85	85
9	80	85	85
10	70	85	85
11	60	60	75
12	50	65	60
13	80	85	85
14	80	80	85
15	75	80	85
16	90	90	95
17	60	70	85
18	75	85	85
19	60	60	85
20	70	60	85
21	70	70	85
22	60	70	75
23	75	85	85
24	80	85	85
25	90	85	90
26	80	85	85
27	85	85	85
28	90	85	90
29	60	85	85
30	85	85	85
31	85	90	90
32	90	90	95
33	90	90	95
34	50	60	60
35	75	85	90

### The Result of Pre-Cycle

In this cycle, the researchers only observed English teachers. The researchers also conducted an interview of the English teacher regarding the constraints that the students had regarding their ability to speak English, as well as discussing what strategies could be used to solve the existing problems.

Based on observations made by the researcher in Class VII B, it was found that many students had difficulty expressing their thoughts through spoken language due to their lack of vocabulary, and they also felt less confident because

they rarely spoke in front of other people. This is what caused them to hesitate, so that only 10 students got speaking practice scores above the KKM, and 25 students got scores below the KKM. In this cycle, there were 28.5% of students who passed the KKM before any action was taken. Therefore, the researcher decided to implement strip comics as an action to solve the problem.

## **The Result of Cycle 1**

### **a. Planning**

To solve the problems experienced by students, the researchers planned to teach them to use comic strips as a learning media. In this study, the researchers also acted as the teacher who taught the class. Therefore, before entering the classroom, the researchers have planned the learning to be carried out by compiling teaching modules, preparing learning media, and student worksheets (LKPD), teacher observation sheets, and assessing students' speaking abilities.

### **b. Acting**

The actions applied focus on improving students' speaking skills by using comic strip learning media. The teaching modules that have been prepared are carried out by the researcher while the English teacher is a collaborator so that he assists the researcher in observing during the teaching and learning process that occurs in class. At the beginning of the first meeting, the researcher greeted the students and checked the attendance list. The researcher then started teaching by showing a video about the rooms in the school. After watching the video, the researcher explained the material and asked the students to repeat the pronunciation of the room in English. The researcher and students then interacted with each other.

After the teacher explained the use of the rooms in the school, the students were asked to watch a video regarding directions and give or ask for information regarding directions in English. Then they were asked to work on worksheet (LKPD 1) individually. This worksheet contained comic strips with conversations about asking and giving information regarding directions, and the students were asked to answer several questions in them. After that, the students were asked to present their answers orally in front of the class.

Before ending the day's learning, the researcher did a brief reviewing of the material using the question and answers method and made conclusions. The researcher also mentioned what activities they would do in the next meeting, and then ended the day's meeting.

### **c. Observing**

In this cycle, students feel enthusiastic because, in addition to using video learning media, they also receive comic strips as learning media. This has led to an increase in the value of students' speaking practice, as evidenced by the number of students who scored above the KKM (totalling 23 people) and those who scored below the KKM (totalling 12 people). In Cycle 1, there were 65.7% of students who passed the KKM using comic strip learning media.

### **d. Reflecting**

In this cycle, the researcher has analysed that there are still many students who got score below the KKM because they feel less confident speaking in front of the class alone. Therefore, the researcher will continue this research in cycle 2 to solve the problems identified in order to achieve the best results.

## **The Result of Cycle 2**

### **a. Planning**

Based on the results in Cycle One, the researchers realized that comic strips could improve students' speaking skills. However, there were still many students who felt less confident to speak for themselves in front of the class. To address this issue, the researcher revised the second cycle of teaching modules that had been prepared previously, in accordance with the observations and reflections that had been carried out in Cycle One.

Before entering the class, the researcher prepared teaching modules to be implemented in the action stage, such as compiling revised teaching modules, preparing learning materials, learning media, and student worksheets that had been revised to be worked on in groups.

### **b. Acting**

The researcher opened the class by greeting and checking the attendance list. They asked the students how they were doing. Then, they reviewed the room materials at school as well as asking and giving directions. Several questions were asked to remind the students of their knowledge.

After reviewing the material from the previous meeting, the researcher asked the students to make groups consisting five people in each group, so that seven groups were formed in a class. After the groups were formed, the researcher asked the students to work on Student 2's worksheets (LKPD 2) in groups, and presented their results orally in front of the class when their work was finished. In the next activity, students who were still in the same group were asked to work on LKPD 3 activity 1. In this activity, they were given several situations and asked to make a comic strip based on the situation that had been previously selected.

At the next meeting, each group will collect the comic strips they have made, then the researcher will exchange the comics with other groups, so that the other groups can present the conversations in the comic strips belonging to other groups they are currently bringing. When presenting dialogue on comic strips in front of the class, the group who was comic strip owners should pay attention to the pronunciation, intonation, and facial expressions of each group member in front of the class, and provide feedback as to whether their pronunciation, intonation, and facial expressions match their imagination while making the comic.

### **c. Observing**

In this second cycle, researchers still used the same learning media, namely comic strips, in the hope that the results of the students' speaking practice tests would increase. After carrying out this second cycle, the researcher found an increase in the results of the students' speaking practice tests; this can be seen from the enthusiasm of the students while participating in learning, as well as evidenced by the increasing number of students who got scores above the KKM, namely 30 people, and 5 people who got a value below the KKM. With this, it can be said that in this second cycle, 85.7% of students passed the KKM using comic strip learning media.

### **d. Reflecting**

Researchers found an increase in students' speaking abilities. The increasing number of students who passed the KKM in cycle two proves that comic strips can improve students' speaking skills.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this study, the researchers found that using comic strips as learning media could enhance the students' English speaking skills at SMP Negeri 1 Surabaya. Based on observational data and speaking practice tests taken during the research, the researcher found several findings that could address the problems in Chapter One. The researcher found that students had low speaking ability due to several factors, such as lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding of how to use the expressions that had been taught, and lack of confidence to speak in front of the class.

Before the research was conducted in Class VII B, students seemed passive during the learning process. The majority of students just silently listened and teacher's only answered students a few questions. Based on the explanation above, it is advisable to use comic strips as learning media, as it is considered effective in improving students' speaking skills.

In his study titled "Teaching Grammar to Young Learners Using Comic Strips and GTM and the Impact on Their Speaking Skills," Suseno (2020) said that he discovered that utilizing comic strips to teach English grammar improved the speaking abilities of the students

Based on the analysis of the mean scores of the speaking practice tests, it can be concluded that the use of comic strip learning media in learning English can improve students' speaking skills. The improvements that occurred were in adding vocabulary, understanding how to use the right expressions, making sentences with the correct grammar. The improvement of students' speaking ability can also be seen from the differences in speaking practice test scores in the pre-cycle, cycle 1, cycle 2. Based on table 2, it can be concluded briefly that the ability of students has increased. From the pre-cycle with the percentage of students who passed the KKM as much as 28.5%, this number increased in cycle 1 to 65.7%, and experienced another increase in cycle 2 to 85.7%. This means that the implementation of comic strips can improve students' ability to speak English.

The conclusion of the value of students who pass the KKM will be displayed in the form of a percentage diagram as follows:

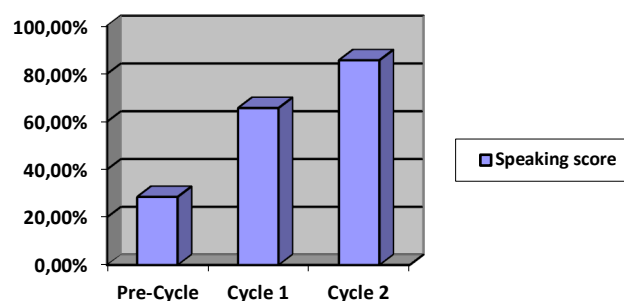


Figure 1: Histogram Percentage Speaking Score

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that comic strip as learning media can be used to enhance the ability of junior high school students to speak English in the material of asking and giving directions. The use of comic strips is considered effective in improving students' speaking skills, as evidenced by the increasing number of students who have scored above the KKM since the implementation of comic strips in cycles 1 and 2. In the pre-cycle, only 28.5% of students passed the KKM, while in cycle 1 it increased to 65.7%, and in cycle 2 there were 85.7% of students who passed the KKM.

Based on these results and conclusions, the researchers advise teachers to use comic strips for their learning media as well, as they can increase students' enthusiasm and learning motivation, as well as being effective for improving students' speaking skills. On this basis, it is recommended that future research should focus on assessing the speaking ability of students in grade 8 and 9 through the use of comic strip as a learning media.

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