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The Influence of Visual Literacy in Improving Reading Comprehension of Grade 8 Students at SMPN 01 Buay Madang

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Abstract

Visual literacy is important in understanding a language text. One of the characteristics that might improve students' comprehension of reading materials is visual literacy, which includes the capacity to comprehend and interpret visual features like pictures, graphs, and diagrams in text. The use of visual literacy media has become an increasingly important topic in education, especially in the context of students' reading comprehension at the junior high school level. This article aims to find out how visual literacy affects 8th grade reading comprehension at SMPN 01 Buay Madang. This research method uses qualitative methods by using a qualitative descriptive approach and data collection tools in the form of observation, and documentation. The results showed that: (1) there is a significant difference between students who use visual literacy media and those who do not; (2) visual literacy media can help students understand texts more easily and quickly because of the visual elements included in the text that explain the information; and (3) students who use visual literacy media have better comprehension skills and are more adept at applying information when compared to students who only use text without any visual elements. This suggests that visual literacy can be an effective strategy to increase comprehension, especially in digital learning contexts where visual aids are more prevalent. This study offers recommendations for a curriculum that focuses more on the use of visual literacy in classroom instruction with the aim of helping students understand the material more thoroughly and raising the standard of instruction in schools.

Keywords: visual, literacy, students, reading

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the core components of education is developing reading abilities, which encompass not just comprehending written material but also the capacity to decipher pictures and other types of communication (Putri, 2020). In this regard, the idea of visual literacy is one that is gaining more and more attention in the classroom, particularly in attempts to enhance reading comprehension. It has been demonstrated that visual literacy, which is the capacity to comprehend, evaluate, and interpret information presented through pictures, symbols, graphics, and other visual media, significantly affects how people process information (Arbel et al., 2020). In the midst of the digital revolution that has affected various aspects of life, especially education, visual literacy is still emerging as a key component that improves reading comprehension. This is based on the fact that more and more information is presented visually, whether through mass media, the internet or classroom teaching. This highlights the importance of incorporating visual literacy into teaching to improve student comprehension, which is not only based on verbal or written language skills, but also on the ability to explain visual elements that are often used or even to illustrate the points being made. Globalization and the quick speed of technological development have made us live in a time when information is digital, interactive, instantly manipulable, and visual (Özsoy & Saribaş, 2021).

In this digital age, where information is more often presented visually, understanding images and symbols has become increasingly important. Many texts today use diagrams, photos, videos and infographics that serve to clarify or enhance the intended meaning of the text. The study concludes that visual literacy can help readers better understand and comprehend the information they read because images and visuals can provide context that enhances the text and facilitates understanding of complex concepts. Visual literacy is not just focused on understanding the aesthetic elements of a picture; it also focuses on the ability to connect a picture to text, create more detailed illustrations, and increase readers' comprehension of complex information (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). The purpose of this study is to investigate how visual literacy can enhance reading comprehension, particularly in the setting of classroom instruction. A deeper comprehension of visual literacy can aid students in making more holistic connections between knowledge offered through text and images, which is in line with the growing usage of visual media in instructional materials.

On the other hand, reading comprehension among students, especially at the junior secondary level, is still a big challenge. Grade 8 students often face difficulties in understanding complex texts, especially if the text contains a lot of data or information accompanied by pictures or diagrams (Samson et al., n.d.). Therefore, it is important to develop learning strategies that integrate visual literacy as an approach that can help students connect text and visual elements to improve their reading comprehension. Another advantage of this research is that it can develop and introduce the concept of visual literacy to students as a very important skill in the digital era. Visual literacy which involves the ability to read, analyze and interpret images and visual symbols will help students be better prepared for a world of information that is increasingly dominated by visual media. Thus, this research can play a role in equipping students with visual literacy skills that are not only useful in learning but also in everyday life. This research is expected to provide alternative learning methods that are more innovative by utilizing visual media. The use of visual literacy in reading learning can be an interesting and fun approach for students, thus increasing their motivation and engagement in the learning process (Eutsler, 2021). Teachers can enhance their students' learning experiences by using visual literacy. For instance, graphs, diagrams, and infographics can be used to show intricate processes, connections between ideas, or facts in the teaching of science, history, or arithmetic. Students will be able to comprehend material more thoroughly and methodically as a result (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2015).

2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring a deeper understanding of the effect of visual literacy on improving grade 8 students' reading comprehension. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand complex phenomena in a holistic learning context, as well as gain richer insights through analyzing students' narratives and interactions with visual literacy-based learning materials. Observation and documentation are part of the data collection process. The researcher made direct observations of the learning process in the classroom, especially when using visual literacy-based materials (e.g. infographics, images, videos, graphs and diagrams) in reading instruction.

This observation aims to understand how visual literacy is applied in practice, how the interaction between students and visual materials takes place, and how students interact with each other in that context. And Documentation includes the collection of teaching materials used during the lesson, such as pictures, graphs and text combined with visual elements. In addition, documentation also includes field notes that record the researcher's observations and reflections during the observation process. Transcription was done verbatim after the observation data was collected. To find evidence of how visual literacy functions in reading learning and its impact on students' reading comprehension, the observation notes were read and scrutinized thoroughly. Next, the transcripts of the observation notes were categorized according to the elements relevant to this study (Kaya, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Visual literacy is defined as the ability to interpret, negotiate, and create meaning from information presented in the form of images. This concept extends traditional literacy, which typically focuses on reading and writing text, to include the understanding of visual media. In the current digital era, where visual media—such as pictures, videos, and graphics—play a big part in communication, visual literacy is becoming more and more important. By enabling people to critically analyze and assess visual information, it improves critical thinking abilities (Guo et al., 2020). In a world where images, graphics, and other visual media are abundant, the ability to comprehend and analyze visual information is crucial. Facts and information are conveyed through visual symbols, such as statistical charts, advertisements, and traffic signs. Individuals may find it difficult to interpret the information without a clear visual aid. Visual literacy helps students develop their critical thinking skills. By encouraging them to analyze and evaluate images and other visual media, students can learn to not only absorb information passively but also to question and analyze it. This is important in the educational context as students must create a keputusan based on the information they have received. The use of visual aids in education increases students' conceptual understanding and understanding. Material presented through images or videos is frequently easier to understand than text alone. (Özsoy & Saribaş, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of visual literacy on the understanding of eighth-grade students at SMPN 01 Buay Madang. The study's findings indicate that students' comprehension of reading has increased after being exposed to instruction that integrates visual elements. Reading comprehension tests conducted before and according to the materials used in class showed significant differences in students' comprehension scores. In general, students who are exposed to educational materials that contain visual elements are better able to comprehend the text that is being read, particularly when it comes to understanding complex concepts and statistics. The average reading comprehension test score increased significantly after using visual elements. This research shows that visual elements help students connect information found in written language with clearer and more specific mental images. Students also said that they felt more motivated and excited to

participate in class when visual aids were used. They believe that material presented with illustrations, graphs or diagrams is easier to understand and more interesting.




The fact that visual literacy significantly improves students' reading comprehension is one of the main conclusions of this study. The information presented in the text is more clearly represented by visual components such as images. Students can connect the ideas in the text with tangible visual representations and understand and recall knowledge more easily because of these depictions. In this case, visual literacy serves as a tool that clarifies complex information. With such visualizations, students can see directly how information is interrelated, which helps them to understand it better (Darmayanti et al., 2024). Visual literacy enhances students' interest and involvement in the learning process in addition to their reading comprehension. Many students say that when learning is enhanced by visual components, they become more engaged since the content is simpler to comprehend and less dull. Pupils that are engaged are more likely to actively follow along with the lesson, which naturally helps them achieve better learning results. By adding visual components, the text becomes more engaging and varied, which can also lessen monotony. Students' retention of the material can be improved by using visualization to make the learning environment more engaging and enjoyable.

It has been demonstrated that visual literacy is highly helpful in enhancing comprehension of texts that are difficult or contain a large amount of factual information. Students' reading comprehension can be greatly enhanced by including visual literacy into the curriculum. As a result, using visual aids like images, graphs, and diagrams may be a very successful tactic, particularly when learning more factual or technical materials. This method helps students create a clearer mental image of the content they are reading and makes it easier for them to organize the knowledge they are gaining (Dong et al., 2022). Though it has been shown to be useful in enhancing understanding of more technical and data-driven materials, visual literacy has a higher positive impact on understanding of fictional or narrative texts. The reader's imagination can be enhanced by pictures and illustrations in narrative texts, but students' verbal and analytical abilities are more important for gaining a deeper comprehension of the plot, characters, and topics. For best outcomes, visual literacy should be applied according to the sort of text being studied, even though it can be useful in some texts (Eutsler, 2021).

All things considered, this study demonstrates that visual literacy is a useful strategy for raising pupils' reading comprehension. Teachers may make it easier and more fun for students to acquire, comprehend, and remember knowledge by using visual components in their lesson plans. Thus, it is crucial that teachers incorporate visual literacy into their lesson plans, particularly when working with materials that are difficult or demand in-depth comprehension. Using visual literacy can be a calculated move to make learning more efficient and interesting for pupils (Gabowitsch & Topolska, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that visual literacy has a significant impact on improving students' reading comprehension in grade 8. The use of visual elements such as pictures, graphs and diagrams helps students understand more complex material more easily. Visual literacy-based learning also makes students feel more interested and motivated to continue learning, which has an impact on increasing their engagement in lessons (Fávaro et al., 2022).

However, this study also found that there are some problems in integrating text and visuals. Some students faced difficulties connecting the information from the pictures with the text. This suggests that teachers should help students interpret visual media more.

Overall, visual literacy not only improves students' understanding of how to read but also teaches important skills for interpreting data in the digital age. Therefore, visual literacy should continue to be encouraged in learning, with particular emphasis on better ways to combine images and text. In addition to improving students' academic understanding, visual literacy also prepares students for a world that increasingly relies on visual media.

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