



# REVISTA KRONOS

## The influence of Comics in learning English language during post pandemic period

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**ABSTRACT** El coronavirus ha producido cambios en los estilos de vida y el virus se ha convertido en una parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana, especialmente para los estudiantes. Con las nuevas prácticas de enseñanza emprendidas, se están haciendo nuevas reformas en los estudiantes de las escuelas secundarias. Este artículo presenta información sobre los cambios en los hábitos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes ecuatorianos. Estudios recientes han argumentado que el uso de tiras cómicas en la enseñanza de idiomas son herramientas útiles en la adquisición de un idioma durante la situación pospandemia. El presente estudio profundizará en el uso de las tiras cómicas como medio de aprendizaje, sus beneficios y los desafíos en su implementación. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada de una de las ciudades más grandes de Ecuador con 50 participantes. Los hallazgos se basan en los resultados de encuestas y artículos relacionados con la implementación de tiras cómicas para la enseñanza de idiomas después del período pandémico. Los resultados mostraron que el uso de los comics es efectivo para la enseñanza de vocabulario y gramática, así también, los comics son usados para introducir conceptos como modales y pronombres y también para demostrar la transformación de voz directa en voz indirecta dentro de los globos de diálogo.

**KEY WORDS** Comic strips, acquisition of a language, benefits, challenges.

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## La influencia de los comics en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés durante el periodo de pospandemia

**RESUMEN** El coronavirus ha producido cambios en los estilos de vida y el virus se ha convertido en una parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana, especialmente para los estudiantes. Con las nuevas prácticas de enseñanza emprendidas, se están haciendo nuevas reformas en los estudiantes de las escuelas secundarias. Este artículo presenta información sobre los cambios en los hábitos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes ecuatorianos. Estudios recientes han argumentado que el uso de tiras cómicas en la enseñanza de idiomas son herramientas útiles en la adquisición de un idioma durante la situación pospandemia. El presente estudio profundizará en el uso de las tiras cómicas como medio de aprendizaje, sus beneficios y los desafíos en su implementación. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada de una de las ciudades más grandes de Ecuador con 50 participantes. Los hallazgos se basan en los resultados de encuestas y artículos relacionados con la implementación de tiras cómicas para la enseñanza de idiomas después del período pandémico. Los resultados mostraron que el uso de los comics es efectivo para la enseñanza de vocabulario y gramática, así también, los comics son usados para introducir conceptos como modales y pronombres y también para demostrar la transformación de voz directa en voz indirecta dentro de los globos de diálogo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** Tiras cómicas, adquisición de un idioma, beneficios, desafíos.

## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 became the great 2020 pandemic by March 2020. As a response, adjustments are being made to language classrooms, including training initiatives aimed at empowering teachers to effectively resume their tasks. In her study titled «Teaching with Technology: What is at Stake?», Furstenberg highlights the role of technology in granting learners the ability to make choices, thus fostering autonomy, empowerment, and active engagement in language learning (Furstenberg, 1997). It is important to point out that Furstenberg underscores technology's value not as a definitive solution for language teaching and learning, but as a tool that can facilitate the evolution of novel pedagogical approaches. Moreover, the author suggests that comic strips have the capacity to stimulate students' creativity.

English could be boring for teenagers in the post-pandemic situation because electronic devices present information in a short time and it is more attractive than genially presentation. Additionally, during this period, most of the learners studied in isolation at home and in an inappropriate learning environment and lack of self-discipline (Bao, 2020). However, schools and teachers should create opportunities to build students' interest in learning a target language. For this reason, the teacher becomes the main key in the classrooms in the post-pandemic situation because teachers must deliver materials, tasks, and lessons which facilitate that learners improve their minds, social factors, motivation, and creativity.

Consequently, comics are an interesting task because comics engage teenagers to continue studying a new language. Students need to comprehend the materials and the teachers share them using appropriate media which aims to make the students feel comfortable and easy to understand the materials. People use sophisticated media to do everything, including teaching and learning a second language through comics.

Finally, the present study was undertaken to elucidate the impact of comic strips on the learning of the English Language in the aftermath of the pandemic. Furthermore, the research aimed to address key research inquiries, including: What do learners and teachers know about the definition and elements of comic strips? What are the pros and cons of using comics in learning English language during post-pandemic situations? Should comics be recommended for teaching a second language in an asynchronous environment? Is there an appropriate procedure for using comic strips in the classrooms? Consequently, the present study could find a solution to improve the learning of a foreign language through comic strips in foreign language classrooms after the pandemic period. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study hold the potential to serve as a source of inspiration for educators, students, curriculum planners, content creators, researchers, and various stakeholders. These findings may encourage them to embrace the integration of comics as a fundamental element in their educational endeavors.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The covid-19 pandemic has impacted various aspects of society, with education experiencing notable transformations (Flores & Gago, 2020). According to Rahiem (2021), the shift towards remote work and learning accured swiftly, leading to a significant digital revolution in the field of education. This revolution encompassed online lectures, workshops, teleconferencing, digital open resources, online examinations, and engagement within virtual environments (Strielkowski, 2020, cited in Kapasia *et al.*, 2020). However, the post-pandemic period has brought different challenges which produce stress, depression, anxiety, and an unfavorable study environment. Learning at school can be made difficult by students and teachers.

On the other hand, the studying habits created during the pandemic period will never go away completely. The teachers have to understand and handle significant issues in the classrooms during face-to-face period after the pandemic era. Loveless (2021) said that after the outbreak, learners show minimal effort to attend classes, do homework and misunderstand topics that they reviewed in the previous level and this situation generates in students' and teachers' stress. It happens because learners attended a short period of classes, when they come back to face-to-face classes, they need to accomplish a schedule. This approach leads to condensing all study time into lengthy days, which is not always effective and often induces stress.

Consequently, utilizing comics as a tool for teaching a second language proves beneficial in enhancing language skills. This approach prevents students' disinterest, as the materials captivate their attention and provide an enjoyable learning experience. Previous research supports this notion, demonstrating that incorporating comics can heighten students' motivation to learn English (Hasanah, 2021).

According to Rokhayani and Utari (2014), printed materials remain a viable medium when an electrical connection is unavailable, offering the advantage of accessibility in any location or at any time. The inclusion of visual aids, such as images and text, aids in the dissemination of educational content from teachers to students. The success of education can be evaluated by assessing the outcomes of the teaching and learning processes themselves.

Therefore, comic strips hold readers' interest due to their sequential and humorous storytelling, combining professionally crafted visual with text. With this background in mind, the objective of this article is to introduce comic strips as an alternative method for instructing English to baccalaureate students, addressing their vocabulary limitations and English proficiency.

#### DEFINITION AND ELEMENTS OF COMIC STRIPS

Comics are well-known as comic books or comic strips. They are a popular form of sequential art that uses a combination of text and drawings to tell funny and interesting stories entertainingly and visually. The author and cartoonist Scott McCloud defines comics as «juxtaposed images and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer» (1995, p. 34).

According to McCloud (1995), there are some important elements of a comic strip that learners need to know such as panels, dialogues, graphics, plot, and gutter (see Figure 1).

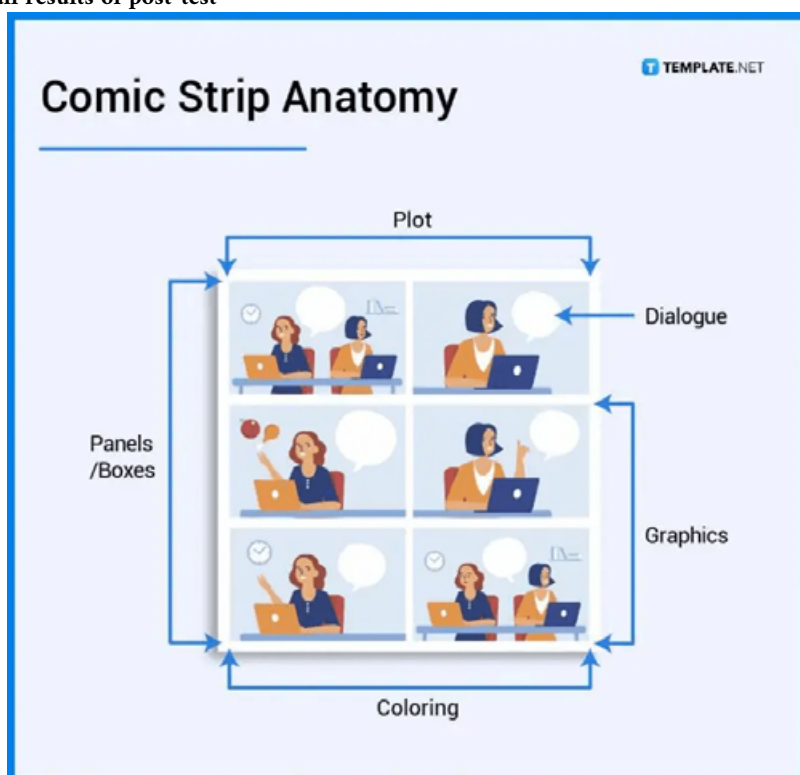
The first important element of a comic book is the image. The images in a comic can be simple or complex, but they must always be visual and tell a story clearly and effectively. Images can be freehand drawings, digital illustrations, photographs, and black and white colors, depending on the author's preference.

The second important element of a comic book is the text. Text in a comic can be used to provide additional information, develop characters, and explain the plot. In addition, the text can be in the form of dialogue among characters where they can express their thoughts or narratives.

The third important element of a comic is the sequence. It is the way that the images and text are organized to tell a story. The sequence can be linear, with the images and text arranged in chronological order, or non-linear, with images and text arranged non-sequentially. The sequence can also be manipulated to create dramatic effects or to surprise the reader.

Another important element of a comic is the frame. The frame is the border that surrounds each image in a comic. The frame helps separate the images and text and helps

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

the reader understand the sequence. Frames can also be manipulated to create dramatic effects and to direct the reader's attention.

Finally, McCloud stresses the importance of the space between panels in the comic. The space between panels, also known as «gutter», is the white space that separates images and text. The gutter is important because it allows the reader to fill in the blanks and create a visual narrative in their mind (1995).

Many students feel inspiration from the comics, and they enjoyed reading in their earlier years. Comic strips play a significant role in fostering creativity, largely due to the diverse range of genres one encounters while reading them. This exposure contributes to the enhancement of learners' drawing and writing abilities. Furthermore, these comics can also boost motivation and interest in reading a second language. Beyond their entertainment value, they facilitate comprehension of various scenarios and plotlines through the incorporation of images. In conclusion, comics are a unique and fascinating form of storytelling through the combination of images and text. The important elements of a comic include image, text, sequence, frame, and gutter. By understanding these elements, comic creators can tell stories in an exciting and visually appealing way.

#### TYPES OF COMIC STRIPS

Comics, featuring vibrant illustrations, compelling narratives, and relatable characters, possess the ability to inspire students across all age groups (Sudjana and Rivai, 2009). The inclusion of colorful visuals within comics invokes a sense of enjoyment, piquing the reader's interest and encouraging them to delve deeper into the storyline. When readers are motivated to engage with the entire comic, the underlying objectives of reading, be it for entertainment or educational purposes, become readily achievable. Particularly for children,

colorful comics prove to be a highly captivating medium. Thus, the comic strips are divided into two types: printed material comic strip and digital comic strips.

### 1. Printed comic strips

Comic strips are recognized as valuable educational media. Educators employ comic strips as both instructional content and media tools. Comics weave narratives that revolve around everyday school environments, allowing students to mimic the language spoken by the characters, thereby enhancing their English-speaking proficiency. In this context, teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring the correct pronunciation of the language, making them indispensable contributors to the language-learning process.

Printed materials continue to serve as valuable educational resources, their versatility allows for utilization in diverse settings and at any time. The incorporation of visuals, encompassing both images and text, enhances the dissemination of educational content from teachers to students. To ensure educational success through printed material comic strip, educators must fulfill four key competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional (Rokhayani and Utari, 2014). These competencies collectively strive to facilitate an efficient and impactful teaching and learning experience, both within and beyond the confines of the classroom.

### 2. Digital comic strip

As asserted by Jacobs (2013), comics are often regarded as a distilled form of text, enhanced by visual elements to facilitate comprehension for readers. In the construction of specific meanings, comics harmonize written content with visual imagery, effectively functioning as multimodal texts. Consequently, the act of engaging with comics is deemed a manifestation of multimodal literacy, transcending the confines of traditional print literacy.

The evolution of the internet, the concept of «digital comics» has also come to the forefront. Aggleton (2019), in her research, elucidates several fundamental principles governing digital comics, encompassing their defining characteristics and attributes. There are three salient characteristics that encapsulate the essence of digital comics.

- Digital form: the comic strips must exclusively exist in digital format or originate as digital-born comics, created with the intent of digital publication.
- Single panel: digital comics either comprise single-panel images or are composed of a sequence of interconnected images.
- Semi-guided Reading: comic strips should possess a semi-guided reading pathway, as they incorporate both written content (representing the guided reading pathway) and images (representing the unguided reading pathway), thereby situating comics within the interplay of these two modes.

Regarding their essential aspects, comics must incorporate visible frames, iconic symbols, and a distinctive handwriting style. Conversely, they should not be construed merely as moving images or audio recordings.

## LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

As already mentioned, the covid-19 pandemic raised many additional obstacles and challenges for students and teachers. These aspects make a difficult teaching-learning process in

the classrooms. However, there are a lot of techniques and methods that help learning a foreign language such as the translation method, bilingual method, direct method, and so on.

Thus, the teachers should create learning situations to engage in the learning of some new words. One of the basics of learning a language is learning vocabulary and it is one of the complex components that learners need to master in language learning. Cabrera, Castillo, González, Quiñónez, and Ochoa (2018) argue that vocabulary is the bridge to using and understanding the language and skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In this case, comic strips are the perfect tool to learn a language. In addition, motivation is relevant in that part of learning. Some studies demonstrate that incorporating new elements into theoretical classes helps the motivation of the student.

The achievement of learners in learning a foreign language within an educational setting is directly influenced by the effectiveness of their teacher (Gomleksiz 2001). Also, they say that the study of a language begins when the student wants to communicate something to someone, and technology could be part of this learning process. Technology is everything people do, so it should improve the teaching and learning of a language. It can help us with interactive tasks on web pages, audiovisual platforms, and software on the internet to improve our vocabulary and grammar with other learners, while sharing ideas, experiences, new words, and expressions (Chapelle, 2007).

In conclusion, integrating comic strips into the learning process enhances its significance and enjoyment. This approach fosters higher level thinking skills such as analytical abilities, achieved by comparing panels. Cabrera *et al.* (2018) and Kohnke (2018) endorse this concept, asserting that comics positively influence second language acquisition. As a result, incorporating comics empowers students to exercise creative control while experiencing a heightened sense of enjoyment.

#### LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE USING COMICS

All audiences, including discursive media, facilitate the transmission of sensitive and complex information, and genres facilitate the expression of emotions, and the understanding of specialized contents that require visual and informative personalization; for example, post-pandemic comics show the prevention rules that people need to follow. See Figure 2. This is the case for cartoons and comics, which, in addition to their creativity, expressiveness, and joviality, are also used as a means of scientific communication, especially in medicine, due to their didactic, illustrative, and didactic potential (García Sánchez and García Sánchez, 2020; Guerra-Zúñiga and Segovia-Chamorro, 2020; Lalanda, 2019; Mayor Serano, 2021; and Negrete Yankelevich, 2011) (see Figure 2).

As a result, a private school has chosen to harness the educational potential of comics as a pedagogical instrument to teach a wide array of reading techniques. These encompass deciphering the import of visual elements in media content, fostering interactive and dialogic reading practices, and honing the ability to recognize problem-solution frameworks within narrative structures. The educational framework instituted by this private school includes the development of lesson plans that advocate the establishment of a club christened «Comic». This club aims to afford students an immersive opportunity to delve deeper into the world of comics, unraveling their intricate structures and narrative techniques.

Consequently, the utilization of comics as educational tools for learning a language underscores their efficacy as didactic materials. Comics not only furnish captivating and motivating content but also offer invaluable visual support to facilitate the process of learning to read and write.

Based on this study, it can be inferred that comics hold potential for classroom application in acquiring fresh vocabulary, enhancing understanding, and fostering reading

Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

routines during the period following the pandemic. Although comics traditionally target younger readers, they present a wellspring of novel and demanding terminology for university students. The level of sophistication within a comic can markedly differ based on factors such as its title, target audience, and underlying goals. This wide array of comic genres includes adventure, fantasy, romance, humor, and superheroes, among others.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aimed to know the influence of comics on the acquisition of the English language in post-pandemic period. Hence, this investigation will employ descriptive, contrastive, and quali-quantitative approaches. The primary objective of descriptive research is to methodically gather data to depict a phenomenon, circumstance, or population. To be precise, it aids in addressing inquiries related to what, when, where, and how concerning the research subject, as opposed to the question of why. Furthermore, it aids in ascertaining the modification that arise during the implementation of any given activity.

This investigation was conducted in a private high school in Quito, Ecuador. The participants were 50 students (male and female, aged 14-16 years old) who were taking EFL classes as part of the study plan established by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. The participants received one period (90 minutes per period) of English classes per week and were enrolled in the first, second, and third year of High school baccalaureate.

In accordance with the guidelines set forth by Cambridge English in 2016, four fundamental assessment principles have been established, encompassing validity, reliability, impact, and practicality. The first principle, validity, underscores the imperative of assessments yielding scores or outcomes that faithfully reflect the true level of ability possessed by the test taker. The second principle, reliability, emphasizes the necessity for assessment results to exhibit stability, consistency, and immunity from measurement errors, ensuring that they can be depended upon as accurate representations of a test taker's capabilities.

Lastly, the practicality principle considers various logistical factors, including the availability of resources, financial constraints, time limitations, ease of administration, and the interpretability of test results. All of these assessment principles were meticulously considered in the design of the survey to ensure its effectiveness and fairness.

In addition, there was a survey which was conducted to collect the data and it was administered to 50 students from the baccalaureate level. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The survey was designed in forms given by Gmail, with three sections and 12 questions. The first section has information about the course and year of study. The second section used closed questions and the last section had open questions related to the use of comics and learners' experience using them during English classes.

Finally, this research carries out quali-quantitative methods because we want to combine the interpretation and understanding of the data. The first one is based on understanding concepts, thoughts, or experiences through a literature review that exploring and explaining definitions and theories. The second one is based on numbers and graphs through an Excel program to test and confirm theories and assumptions.

## RESULTS

To interpret the data, it was necessary to see the different results. Once the information was compared, the analysis of the results was stated. The following results were obtained from a survey applied to the students to determine the comic strips perspective on the learning a language after the covid-19 pandemic.

The first question shows the results of a survey asking baccalaureate students whether they like reading comics and the participants had two possible answers: yes and no. Most of the participants like to read comics (78.6%). However, a few students (21.4%) do not like this activity. Most of them were aware that graphic novels serve as engaging resources within classrooms, and some educators have effectively integrated graphic novels into their teaching. In a recent article, Nancy Schneider (2007) illustrates how comic books serve as a bridge to enhance the reading abilities of struggling students and establish rapport with disheartened learners. Schwartz (2002), a university professor, contends that graphic novels can act a means to «introduce students to literature they might never otherwise encounter» (p. 262).

Comics were incorporated into the English curriculum as class project where students participating in this activity every Friday. During the initial session, students exhibited curiosity in learning more about comics. Following these informative sessions, the teacher proceeded to elucidate the components of a comic strip. Among the activities was the presentation of images, prompting students to converse and share potential expressions to complete the panels of the strip (see Figure 3).

The 62.5% of the students mentioned that they often read comics. While another group of students (37.5%) remarked they never read comics. This phenomenon occurs due to the fact that many readers find comics to be a captivating method for delving into particular cultures, such as the manga style, and for gaining proficiency in a second language. As outlined by the research, individuals who read manga are considered “engaged readers”, as they must devise techniques to navigate the structured layout and amalgamation of visuals with diverse textual elements. In other words, manga can be used «to develop students' awareness and understanding of multiple literacies» and to teach reading strategies, «such as word recognition and problem solving» (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003, p. 680).

There was another question about how students learn English through comic strips. Most of the students (57.1%) mentioned that they believed that comics help to learn a foreign language. Several students stated that English may be taught through comics (35.7%). Only 7.1% believe that comics cannot help to learn English. In this regard, Budiman, Sada, & Wardah (2018) along with Cabrera, Castillo, González, Quiñónez, & Ochoa (2018), argue that vocabulary stands as a pivotal component that students must proficiently grasp



Figure 2. Overall results of post-test



Note. Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum, and Maximum scores for the pretest.

in the process of language learning. This is primarily because vocabulary serves as the conduit enabling individuals to effectively employ and comprehend a language, facilitating the development of crucial skills encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Consequently, it is imperative for teachers to establish a conducive learning environment that motivates students to acquire new words.

At the same time a question mentioned that comics help to learn more vocabulary in a second language and the results show that students can learn more vocabulary using comics (71%). Meanwhile, the 16.2 % percent of the people voted maybe and the rest with no sure. Drawing from the data, several compelling arguments in favor of the notion that comics serve as a valuable tool within the classroom for learning a language. Specifically, comic strips prove advantageous for vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, in addition to enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills, comic strips also contribute positively to the development of writing skills. This connection arises from the fact that vocabulary, grammar and reading proficiency are inherently interconnected with writing skills. As articulated by Chaikovska (2018), efficacy stems from the learning process's engagement with visual aids, including images, photographs, maps, cartoons, and video clips.

## DISCUSSION

This investigation highlights several advantages associated with the utilization of comics in English learning. These benefits are evident in the use of comic strips to enhance various language components and skills, including vocabulary, grammar, reading proficiency, and writing skills. Nonetheless, it is important to know the challenges that both educators and learners may encounter during the teaching-learning process.

Comic strips play a crucial role in vocabulary improvement, as they reinforce traditional grammar and vocabulary tasks (Chaikovska, 2018). Furthermore, Megawati (2012) states that comic strips are effective in helping students grasp vocabulary by using images and dialogue to convey character expressions. Annex C shows that students complete a comic strip which uses vocabulary related to Crime. It uses words such as charges, thief, officer, and commit a crime and so on. This implies that comics contribute to 1) vo-

cabulary instruction, 2) vocabulary enhancement, and 3) making the learning process engaging and meaningful.

On the other hand, there are challenges when incorporating comics into the teaching process. Using comic strips to teach grammar could be seen as an unconventional strategy in language learning, leading to resistance, as noted by Fischer (2012), who argues that comic strips are primarily associated with entertainment. Another challenge is the diverse ways in which comic strips can be applied in language classrooms. Therefore, teachers must employ creative approaches to align the use of comic strips with their learning objectives (Budiman *et al*, 2018).

Finally, the integration of comics into language learning makes the process more enjoyable and engaging for students. Comic strips not only stimulate students' creativity but also serve as a medium for developing and practicing their target language. Moreover, this investigation supports the hypothesis that comics have a positive impact on English language acquisition among baccalaureate students. Comics could be used effectively to teach various aspects of language, including vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, and writing skills, such as teaching modals and pronouns and transforming direct speech into indirect speech within speech bubbles.

## CONCLUSIONS

Numerous studies have provided compelling evidence regarding the efficacy of incorporating comic strips into language teaching, shedding light on both their advantages and challenges. The consensus among these studies is that the utilization of comic strips in language education yields significant benefits. The use of comic strips helps to express their thoughts and ideas through visual imagery while simultaneously facilitating language components, including vocabulary and grammar, and contributes to the refinement of their reading and writing skills.

Based on the information provided, it can be inferred that the use of both printed and digital comic strips serves as an effective English teaching medium for improving vocabulary among Junior High School students. This conclusion is supported by the survey results, which indicate that learners responded positively to the use of comics in their language learning experience.

Furthermore, comic strips are deemed suitable and efficient as teaching media due to their capacity to facilitate the seamless delivery of instructional materials by teachers. They are also found to be effective in aiding students' comprehension of the expressions conveyed by characters within the comics. For instance, comic strips are an effective tool for teaching vocabulary and grammar, as they can be employed to introduce concepts like modals and pronouns and even demonstrate the transformation of direct speech into indirect speech within speech bubbles. Additionally, comic strips provide valuable support for words and grammar featured in dialogues, rendering the text more comprehensible and aiding students in their pursuit of written language skills. Further research might be in comic strip strategies for children and its effect in affective filter in learning a foreign language environment.

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