e-ISSN: 2807-8594

STAIRS
English Language Education Journal

Digital Comic Strips as Multi-Modal Text for Learning Interpersonal and Transactional Text in Junior High School: A Content Analysis

Anisa Pratiwi [1*], Tara Mustikaning Palupi[2]
English Language Education Study Program, State University of Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Submitted: 07-Nov-2021
Revised : 30-Mar-2022
Accepted : 25-May-2022

Corresponding e-mail:
*)*anisap2008@gmail.com*

Keywords: *Content Analysis, Digital Comic Strips, Interpersonal Text, Transactional Text.*

Abstract

*This research aimed to analyze the content of the digital comic strips for learning interpersonal and transactional text at Junior High School levels. The research was conducted based on the research questions: (1) How is the suitability of the digital comic strips used for grade 8 Junior High School in terms of the content of the interpersonal and transactional text? (2) How do the digital comic strips meet the criteria of digital learning material? The research used qualitative content analysis the instrument of which was adapted from the Indonesia Minister of Education and Culture Indonesia Syllabus and three Digital Learning Material Framework. The data was sourced from the digital comic strips uploaded on social media and comic strips web. It was revealed that 95% of all of the digital comic strips already have the language features that the Indonesia Education and Culture Minister stated on the syllabus, also accomplish the digital material learning criteria from accessibility and content by The National Center for Accessible Educational Resources (AEM), PRIMO (Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online) Selection Criteria, and Petri Nokelainen. The findings revealed promising future to u*se digital comic strips as an *instructional reading materials.*

INTRODUCTION

In the classroom and daily life, students do not just passively receive and read information. According to Kitson (2011), reading comprehension involves the active construction of meaning through the interaction of the reader and the text, involving the reader's prior knowledge to understand and make meaning from what he/she reads. In response to the advancement of technology and rapid changes both in the learning environment and social environment, texts used in the classroom reading sessions should be adjusted with 21st-century skill demands and challenges. Teachers need to adopt

an innovative approach to make the students ready with the appropriate skills and strategies, especially in a more digitized era. Referring to Chalkiadaki's analysis (2018), digital literacy in the 21st-century context indicates individual confidence in the use of media and ICT and proficiency in the use of digital tools, plus interactive digital skills, critical use of digital tools (analysis, critique, evaluation, creation), and the ability to attend to ethical responsibilities required in participatory culture in technology.

Teaching materials become the most important and observable element in classroom instruction (Nunan, 2004). They serve as a resource that supports learners' practice and communicative interaction by presenting grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and ideas for classroom activities and service support for less experienced teachers. However, learning materials in schools mostly focus on the traditionally published text, for example, the textbooks given by the school or the government. These printed texts offer limited modes; in fact, students these days are exposed to much more varied modes such as pictures, sounds, signs, gestures, and motion pictures likely at the same time. To help and support the students' needs, teachers must provide materials that can engage the students well and make them enjoy the learning process. The use of m*ultimodal texts* then becomes one of the possible solutions that enables language learners to read comprehensively by using different learning channels (Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2008).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) stated that multimodal is a source of verbal and visual semiotics together that can be used to engage in a text of multimodal approach, for example, a text in a form of comic strips or a text with audio motion pictures. The multimodal approach aims to develop students into readers and creators of multimodal text by drawing attention to various sources in making meaning in the text (Al-Fajri, 2018), as well as how a specific choice works to achieve the desired communicative goals. In addition, multimodal approaches help to meet diversity, ensuring inclusiveness that encourages intellectual quality and enables students to experience a vast learning experience (Pirini, 2017). With a multimodal approach, students can choose for themselves the object of learning, or representation, which best suits their capital preferences based on their dominant learning style; thus, enabling educators' teachers to meet the needs of different types of learners in a language learning environment. However, Balafa-Rodosthenous, Georgiou, and Pitri (2019) highlighted in their research finding that the students had some difficulties during the production of multimodal meaning-making activities. Systematic approaches on how to address the different dimensions of meaning in multimodal text production were encouraged. It means that the activities involving the use of multimodal materials should be done gradually, from regular exposure and discussion to the production stage.

As an example of multimodal text, comic strips appear not only in printed styles such as in newspapers, magazines, or comic books but also digitally on social media or websites. They can cover various topics conveying certain messages, stories, or moral values (Aggelton, 2018), and the language can also come in various levels of competence. Digital comic strips can cater to today's learning needs because they not only help students in making a better comprehension of a subject being discussed but also provide the students with texts in a non-printed multimodal format easily accessed practically anytime anywhere (Aggelton, 2018).

Depdiknas (2006) has included interpersonal and transactional texts in the Curriculum for grade 8, meaning that students at that level are considered ready to use English to socialize as well as to exchange goods, services, or information. Interpersonal texts are related to communicating meaning in the context of daily life to interact with the immediate environment while transactional texts are those used to get things done. Teaching those texts using digital comic strips can be an alternative because it offers the potential to attract youngsters' attention for education as well as entertainment. Even though digital comic strips are in written form, students can learn the expressions used in the context being discussed as part of the language exposure, then practice pronouncing the words, and finally, create the same dialogs.

Cahyaningati (2018) did research on the use of non-printed multimodal texts (NPMT) involving two groups of students undertaking engineering majors at a polytechnic in Surabaya. It revealed that the experiment group taking NPMT gained better reading proficiency than that of the Linear Texts (LT) group. It means the use of non-printed multimodal texts in extensive reading can boost the students' reading comprehension. Another study by Meneses, Escobar, & Véliz (2018) explored how verbal and visual resources (scaffolding level) and individual differences (reading skills) contribute to science reading comprehension. One-hundred and sixty fifth-grade students were assessed on reading skills, vocabulary, and prior science knowledge. Analysis showed that the high-multimodal scaffolding text significantly boosted science reading comprehension for low-skilled comprehenders. Istiqomah (2016, in Jamil & Aziz, 2021) shared that her students' grades were gradually improved to 94% when using multimodal texts as instructional material, much higher compared to the outcome of those students learning mainly with textbooks. Every student agreed that multimodal teaching materials which are presented in written text, audio-visual (video), and infographics are useful and help students comprehend the sequence of a certain process in explanatory texts much better. Multimodal materials are also more entertaining; thus, helping them retain their learning span. The same results are also stated by Enteria, O. C.., & Pet, H. (2019). The respondents of their study positively perceived that the developed comic strips had enhanced their inferring and communicating science process skills, proving that comic strips were effective instructional materials in teaching concepts. Similar positive research results were also obtained by Manik (2019) and Kamil, Komariah, & Natsir (2017).

However, the previous study related to the use of digital comic strips for interpersonal and transactional text in the 8th grade of junior high school was still scarce. Therefore, the researchers were interested in investigating the content suitability of the digital comic strips to teach interpersonal and transactional texts for grade 8 of Junior High School and its suitability with the criteria of digital learning materials. Digital comic strips support the current learning style which has now changed into the online system. The comics need not be a long text but what is more important is the content and the language features need to be coherent with the learning objectives. They require sufficient reading skills to enable the students to get the meaning clear and to get exposed to digital activities.

e-ISSN: 2807-8594

STAIRS
English Language Education Journal

RESEARCH METHOD

Content analysis descriptive qualitative method was used as the design of this research. 35 digital comic strips from 11 creators on social media became the data source, the topics of which were related to interpersonal and transactional purposes. The researchers adapted the instrument from Indonesia Education Minister Syllabus (K13) for the content, while an instrument adapted from the POUR Principle by AEM (2020), PRIMO (Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online) Selection Criteria by PRIMO Committee (2017), and the technical and pedagogical usability criteria for digital learning material by Nokelainen (2005) was used for the digital literacy analysis.

The National Center for Accessible Educational Resources (AEM) proposed four big principles, namely POUR which stands for P for *Pursuable*, O for Operable, U for *Understandable*, and R for *Robust*. *Persuadable* refers to whether the materials flexibly give information to accommodate the numerous ways of learning. *Operable* means that content may be navigated in a variety of ways with operable materials, and learners can manipulate the interface in a variety of ways. *Understandable* examines whether the materials are operating in an intuitive, logical, and predictable manner, allowing students to spend more energy and attention on the content. Last but not least, the term *Robust* sees whether materials are durable and can be used with both present and future technology (e.g., web browsers and reading systems). Compatibility with assistive technologies is also part of this category. The researcher uses all the principles to classify the data into the accessibility criteria. The Technical Usability Criteria for Digital Learning Material (Nokelainen, 2005) originally proposed nine criteria, but due to the research's needs, only three criteria are included in the analysis, they are *Learnability and Memorability*, *Help,* and *Graphical Layout.*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The Content of Digital Comic Strips

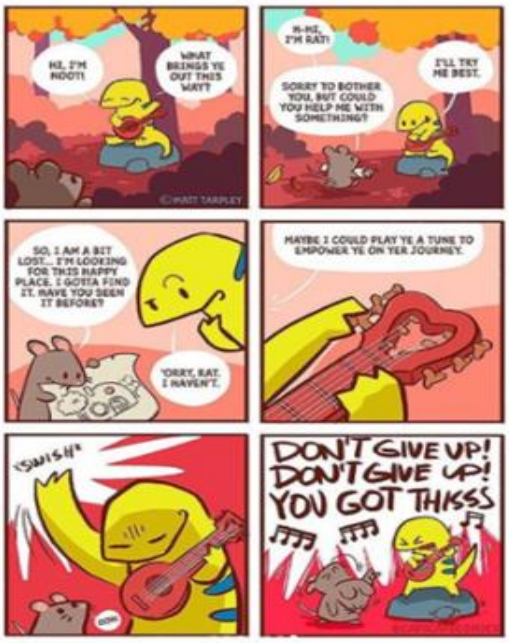
The interpersonal and transactional related themes of all 35 digital comic strips were about asking-giving information, introduction, greeting, daily activities, congratulating, asking and giving an opinion, expressing willingness and ability, prohibition, suggestion, and obligation. To some extent, all of the digital comic strips have fulfilled the required topics and the language features suggested in the Indonesia Education and Culture Minister's Syllabus, especially the learning materials for grade eight. They are short enough, easy to understand, and presented clearly.

All of them include determiners and articles suggested on the syllabus. Articles "*the*" and "*a"* are found in all digital comic strips while plural and singular determiners are found in 17 out of 35 digital comic strips. The researchers found 11 comic strips which contain the language features of *asking and giving information* such as: "*could you help me?* ", "*can I talk? "wanna go?", "would you like to help?", "could you…?", "please...", "can you...?", "grab me coffee..."*. See picture 1 below as an example. Ten digital comic strips contain the language features of *self-introducing and introducing the others.* The expressions are *"Hello, my name is…", "My name is...", "His name is...", "Her name is...", "Hi, I'm...", "*and *"How are you?*". See picture 2 below as an example. Five

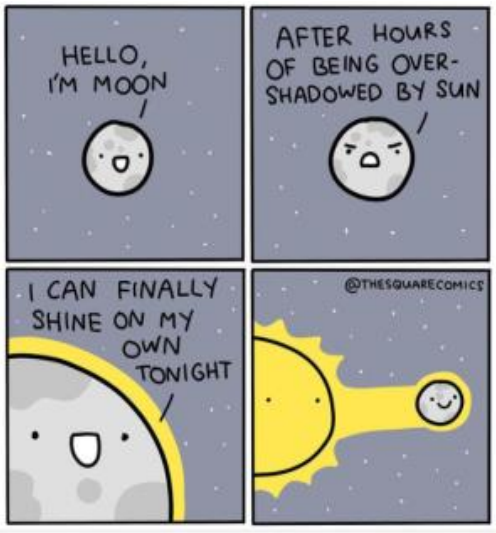
e-ISSN: 2807-8594

STAIRS
English Language Education Journal

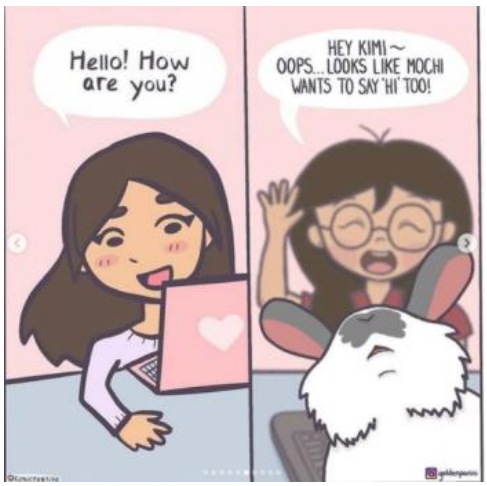
digital comic strips contain language features in *Greeting*, for example, "*What are you doing?", "How are you?", "Hello...", "Hi...", "How was your day?"* and *"Welcome..."*. Picture 3 is the example. Four digital comic strips discuss daily activities. No specific expressions are found but they use adverbs of time such as *always*, *often*, *usually*, *never*, and *every*. Picture 4 is the example.



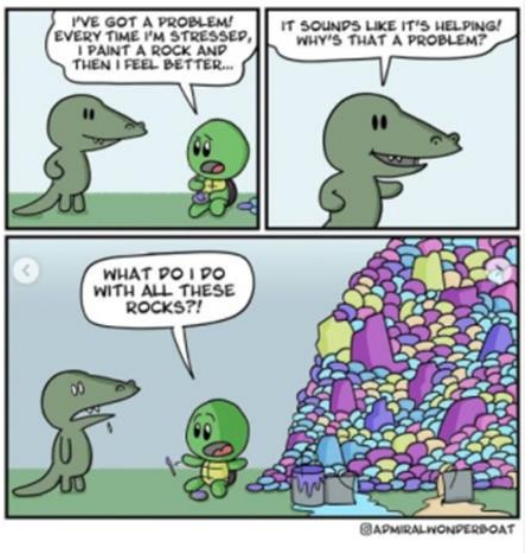
Pictures 1. Digital comic strips on catscafecomics. These digital comic strips talk about the lost rat who asks for help from the Lizard named Noot. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CBifAK_D-a6/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.



Pictures 2. Digital comic strips on thesquarecomics. The digital comic strips talk about how the solar eclipse happens. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CNF_XhrrxlW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link



Pictures 3. Digital comic strips on kimicreative . The digital comic strips talk about two best friends who greet each other through a webcam. Source:

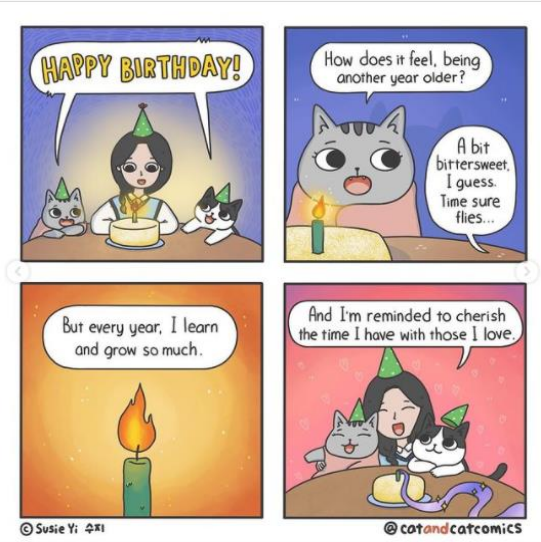


Pictures 4. Digital comic strips on kimicreative. These digital comic strips talk about a personal problem. Source:

e-ISSN: 2807-8594

STAIRS
English Language Education Journal

https://www.instagram.com/p/CKM0Bc5lCCu/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link



Pictures 5. Digital comic strips on comicsandcat. The digital comic strips talk about a cat congratulating its owner on her birthday. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/CIyE4XgjVA_/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

https://www.instagram.com/p/CKM0Bc5lCCu/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Four digital comic strips contain language features for *Congratulating*. The expressions are "*Congratulation.", "Congrats.", "Happy Birthday..", "I really proud of you..".* See picture 5 as an example.

One digital comic strips contain *asking and giving an* opinion using the expression *"I don't think…"*. One digital comic strips talk about *willingness and ability* with no specific expressions. One digital comic strips talk about *Prohibition, Suggestion, and Obligation* with no specific expressions.

Digital Comic Strips as Digital Learning Materials

Based on POUR by AEM (2020), the criteria for *Persuable* have been fulfilled. The 35 digital comic strips provide display customizing options, use easy-to-read fonts and sizes, and use eye-friendly color contrasts. Some comic strips have an accessible alternative for embedded media, which is usually a link for the digital comic strips if they cannot be opened. The criteria for *Operable* are fulfilled by well-working and flexible options for navigation. For example, the comment section or an image with a voice-over from the creator could direct the feedback from the readers to the creator, so the readers can feel free to give their thoughts according to the digital comic strips uploaded. However, poorly, two digital comic strips have no comment section.

For the third principle *U or Understandable,* all 35 digital comic strips have similarities in their content and style, and easy-to-understand language use which is appropriate for the intended audience. For example, the digital comic strips that talk about self-introduction or daily activities use high-frequency words for junior high school level. However, not all the Digital Comic Strips include the key terms in interpersonal and transactional communication suggested by K13. There is a sample of digital comic strips that go straight to the point, leaving the readers in confusion about the context. Furthermore, the digital comic strips provide explanations of unique features to help new users, explaining to the readers the procedure of how to use and find the digital comic strips they need. The last principle is *R or Robust* which is satisfied when most digital comic strips can be accessed on different operating systems and devices, phones as well as desktops. Yet, the platforms are selected because the creators upload the digital comic strips on certain social media and the free web, the

access is open as long as the account is registered. Since the digital comic strips do not have special plug-ins to work, they can be accessed every time and everywhere. Unfortunately, all the digital comic strips do not have copyright protection that could block assistive technologies.

According to PRIMO Selection Criteria, all the digital comic strips used appropriate and effective technology which makes them accessible to the user. While all the digital comic strips have clear, effective, and easy-to-use language, only 25 digital comic strips contained accurate information. Moreover, 15 digital comic strips use fictional stories and 29 of them have unique and creative use of graphics. All of them fulfilled the criteria for relevancy, availability, and accessibility.

From the criteria of *Learnability and Memorability*, all 35 digital comic strips provide topics and language use that are not hard to learn so they are possible to be given to 8th-grade students with various language levels. Since each comic consists of 2-4 panels, the number of words is enough to memorize and understand, not too complicated or too many. They are worth it to learn in class as well as independently. According to the criteria of *Help*, digital comic strips provide instruction and content that are represented in an understandable form. They have well-designed help that supports users with a more productive way of working. Moreover, since the story is mostly short, the digital comic strips can be used in the class discussion as ice breaking, or when the time allocation is limited. Last but not least, the *Graphical Layout* of the comic is already well designed with decent colors, not too bright, distracting, or blurred. The layout is structured in a best possible way to promote the user's ability to use the system. For example, the icons are well-sized and well-positioned enabling the readers to reach them effectively and efficiently.

B. Discussion

The digital comic strips analyzed in this study have already included the topics and the suggested language features for interpersonal and transactional texts in grade 8th as stated in the Indonesia Education and Culture Minister's Syllabus table. Various topics are available, enabling the teachers as well as the students to find digital comic strips that fit their learning needs. This wide coverage of themes is in line with what has been mentioned by Aggelton (2018) The language features represented in 29 digital comic strips are clear, easy to understand, and in context, providing the expressions and the responses which can make up the story to a full version. For example, a digital comic strip that talks about daily activities starts the story with the subject's name, their activities, and ability, and ends up with their goodbye. Some comic strips also include slang words but they are still easy for the students to understand. If students have difficulties understanding what they read, pictures in the comic strips offer assistance as they travel through the texts. This confirms the findings from the previous study by Enteria, O. C.., & Pet, H. (2019) saying that comic strips were effective instructional materials in teaching concepts and helped the students develop proper communication skills in the language they are learning.

In general, 32 out of 35 digital comic strips fulfill all of the criteria of digital materials. From accessibility, the web and social media where the comic strips are posted offer easy access because, technically, they are user-friendly. The materials are free to access without any subscription fee needed as long as they have a registered account on that particular platform. There are no strict

copyright rules so the comics can easily be found and downloaded. They are compatible with most systems and devices so they can be accessed through any common devices anytime anywhere. This conclusion is in line with the previous research findings by Rundang Mayangsari (2019) which discussed the effectiveness of digital comic strips and Ikasari, Drajari, & Sumardi (2019) about the new types of learning materials. Moreover, all of the 35 digital comic strips give information flexibly or instructions to accommodate the numerous ways in which students want to explore the comics. 33 of them provide a comment section to give readers the chance to direct some feedback to the developers or comic creators.

The display of the digital learning materials or e-learning materials is also under consideration because it relates to students' health. Most digital comic strips are representative of teenage students because the colors are decent to see and the story panels and illustrations are short and easy to follow.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teachers need to adopt new teaching methods to establish strategies and skills for the students to compete with the new 21th-century challenges. Textbooks should not become the main resource of the learning process. Teaching materials do not merely deal with long printed texts delivered in traditional classroom activities. This study has proven that digital comic strips can be a potential option for teaching interpersonal and transactional text in grade 8th of junior high school. With careful selection, teachers can find digital comic strips that fit the topics, language features, and even the text structures they need. In turn, digital comic strips help the teachers to transfer the knowledge to the students and improve the students' reading comprehension uniquely and attractively.

Digital comic strips can also function as an enrichment because they may use slang words, introducing the students to nonformal and casual language use. When the slang words are not commonly found in the student's prior language exposure or are not available in the dictionary, the pictures may help them grasp the context of the use of the slang words. Moreover, interesting themes such as anecdote-based stories or fictional stories may broaden the student's knowledge.

30 digital comic strips fulfill the criteria of the content suggested by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Although they somehow do not fulfill the accurate information and graphic unique criteria, they mostly satisfy the criteria from The National Center for Accessible Educational Resources (AEM), PRIMO (Peer-Reviewed Instructional Materials Online) Selection Criteria, and the Technical Usability Criteria for Digital Learning Material.

In short, the findings reveal a promising future for better education, from the practical aspects in the classroom as well as from the scientific aspects. In response to the technological advancement and the urge to blend the learning, teachers can use digital comic strips as the introduction to the learning topics, and then analyze the expressions, and make them the sample model for further practice. More research can also be conducted regarding the use of digital comic strips in various genres, levels, and skills.

REFERENCES

Aggelton, J. (2018). Defining Digital Comics: A British Library Perspective. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics (34)*. https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2018.1503189.

Al-Fajri A.T. (2018). Pentingnya Penggunaan Pendekatan Multimodal dalam Pembelajaran. *Waskita: Jurnal Pendidikan Nilai dan pembangunan Karakter, Vol. 2. No. 1.* Retrieved from : https://waskita.ub.ac.id/index.php/waskita/article/view/6 (p. 1-3).

Balafa-Rodosthenous, M., Georgiou, A., & Pitri, E. (2019). Production of Multimodal Texts in Secondary Education: A Case Study. *Puncturn, 5(1): 216-234.* Retrieved: *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337889866_Production_of_multimodal_texts_in_Secondary_Education_A_case_study.*

Cahyaningati, Desi Tri. (2018). The Use of Multimodal Text in Enhancing Engineering Students' Reading Skill. *International Journal of Language Education, 2(2): 35.* DOI:10.26858/ijole.v2i2.6360.

Chalkiadaki, Areti. (2018). A Systematic Literature Review of 21st Century Skills and Competencies in Primary Education. *International Journal of Instruction, v11 n3 p1-16.*

Enteria, O. C.., & Pet, H. (2019). The Effectiveness of Developed Comic Strips as Instructional Materials in Teaching Specific Science Concepts. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research 7(10):876-882.* DOI:10.31686/ijier.Vol7.Iss10.1835.

Ikasari, B., Drajari, A. N., & Sumardi. (2019). The Use of Multimodal Texts in an English Classroom of Hard-of-Hearing Learners. *Pedagogy Journal of English Language Teaching. Institut Agama Negeri Metro. (p. 15-17).*

Jamil, N.A., & Aziz, A.A. (2021). The Use of Multimodal Text in Enhancing Students' Reading Habit. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH), Volume 6, Issue 9.*

Kamil, A., Komariah, E., & Natsir, Y. (2017). The Use of Comic to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension Skill at Junior High School. *English Education Journal, Vol.2, pp. 1-7.*

Kitson, L. (2011). Reconseptualising Understanding of Texts, Readers, and Contexts: One English Teacher's Response to Using Multimodal Texts and Interactive Whiteboards. *English in Australia 46(3). 76-86.*

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication.* London: Arnold Publishers.

Manik, R. M. S. (2019). The Effectiveness of Comic Strip as Media to Improve the Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text of MTs Ar-Rahman Langkat. *KnE Social Science: The Second Annual International Conference on Language and Literature, Vol 2019.* http://dx.doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i19.4918.

Meneses, A., Escobar, José-Pablo,. & Véliz, S. (2018). The Effects of Multimodal Texts on Science Reading Comprehension in Chilean Fifth-graders: Text Scaffolding and Comprehension Skills. *International Journal of Science Education, 40:18, 2226-2244,* DOI: 10.1080/09500693.2018.1527472.

National Center on Accessible Educational Materials. (AEM). (2021). *National Center on Accessible Educational Materials.* 20/05. https://aem.cast.org/acquire/vetting-accessibility#.XG2ECi2ZOis.

Nokelainen, P. (2005). *Conceptual Definition of the Technical and Pedagogical Usability Criteria for Digital Learning Materials.* The University of Tampere and Hame Polytechnic, Finland.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336.

Pirini, J. (2017). *Approaches to Multimodal Discourse Analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

PRIMO. (2017). *Peer-Reviewed Instructional Material Online.* 20/5. https://acrl.ala.org/IS/instruction-tools-resources-2/pedagogy/primo-peer-reviewed-instruction-materials-online/primo-selection-criteria/

Verhoeven, L. & Perfetti, C. (2008). Advances in Text Comprehension: Model, Process and Development. *Applied Cognitive Psychology 22: 293–301.*