

Graphic Novel's Contribution to the Development of Linguistic Skills and Cultivation of Reading Strategies

Sofia Venetopoulou

Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece

Sotiria Kalasaridou

Postdoctoral Researcher

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

This study explores how graphic novels can be employed to enhance reading comprehension strategies among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Greece, focusing on multimodal text integration, visual literacy, and learner motivation. Seven 1st grade high school students took part in nine teaching scenarios that incorporated Fred Fordham's (2018) graphic novel adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The study lasted for three months. The scenarios focused on promoting pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning, summarizing) to improve reading comprehension. Each scenario consisted of three basic stages (before/during/after reading) and was designed in a way so that the students could exploit the variety of semiotic modes (visual, linguistic and typographical) offered by the graphic novel, locate the required information and become effective and independent readers. To evaluate the intervention's effectiveness, a mixed formative evaluation methodology was adopted, drawing on teacher journals, questionnaires and the analysis of students' written productions. Findings revealed that integrating a graphic novel format fosters EFL and encourages students to use context and non-textual elements for meaning-making. Participants also reported increased motivation and engagement, as well as positive attitudes towards reading in English. These outcomes underscore the graphic novel's potential as an innovative pedagogical tool to develop linguistic skills and cultivate effective reading strategies in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Graphic novel, reading strategies, EFL reading comprehension, visual literacy

1. Introduction

In recent years, the dominance of visual media has brought about significant changes in communication, necessitating new pedagogical approaches. Within this context, a new narrative form has emerged, with graphic novels gaining a prominent role. Their widespread appeal and integration of multimodal literacy offer promising applications in EFL education, yet they remain underutilized (Cary, 2004; Carter, 2009). At the same time, reading in a foreign language presents unique challenges, requiring readers to engage various strategies to derive meaning (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Research has consistently shown that a common characteristic of strong and independent readers is the use of appropriate strategies when approaching a text (Manoli, 2013).

However, few studies have explored how graphic novels can specifically help learners in EFL strategy development.

In the context of this study, reading comprehension strategies were applied in combination with the multimodal texts of a graphic novel and, more specifically, Fred Fordham's (2018) adaptation of the classic literary work, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. The objectives of the research were the following: to examine whether graphic novels can enhance reading comprehension in an EFL context; to investigate how students apply strategies for multimodal textual understanding; and to explore students' attitudes and motivation toward reading EFL texts presented in graphic novel form.

Theoretical Background

Reading comprehension in a foreign language

Reading comprehension in a foreign language is a more complex process compared to that in a native language because readers need to overcome the challenges and limitations that arise from the second language. Grabe and Stoller (2002) point out that limited vocabulary knowledge and structural differences between L1 and L2 constitute a barrier to the effective application of skills and strategies leading to text interpretation. Students struggle with unfamiliar words, affecting word recognition, decoding efficiency, and overall fluency (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Also, sentence structures, grammar, and discourse organization in L2 may not align with that of students' native language (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

A further element that hinders the comprehension of the text is the phenomenon of transfer in L2 reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). According to this, readers apply native-language reading habits to the foreign text, which can either facilitate or hinder its comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Sometimes the application of knowledge provides considerable help; however, it can also mislead or even slow down the reader's processing.

Furthermore, individual differences among readers such as socio-cultural background, prior knowledge, and motivation may affect comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). These characteristics contribute significantly to the effective approach to texts and to the meaning-making process. When the reader lacks knowledge or personal experiences relevant to the text content owing to a different cultural context, comprehension in the target language may be impaired.

Reading comprehension strategies

Research shows that the use of reading comprehension strategies in a foreign language distinguishes effective from ineffective readers. Results indicate that some of the techniques used by effective readers are trying to remember the content of the text, skipping unknown words, using background knowledge or personal experiences, skimming for the general idea, and identifying special features/structure of the text (Anderson, 1991). According to Anderson (1991), the strategic reader is not limited to knowing which strategy to use but is also able to orchestrate successfully the right group of strategies for the comprehension of a text. Another important skill is being aware of the effectiveness of a given strategy and transferring what is really helpful to other activities (Anderson, 1991). Being strategic gives the reader autonomy and independence in their learning.

There are several models for the classification of reading comprehension strategies. Anderson (1991) divides these into the following five categories: supervising, support, paraphrasing, strategies for establishing coherence and test-taking. O' Malley and Chamot (1990) categorize them

as follows: cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. A third categorization (Psaltou, 2010) has a procedural character and is related to the stage of their implementation during the teaching process: pre-reading, during/while reading and post-reading strategies.

Multiliteracies and the Graphic Novel

The increasing shift towards multimodal texts and visual communication has expanded meaning-making beyond the linguistic code to include other semiotic modes, such as typographical, pictorial, and chromatic modes (Chatzisavvidis, 2007). Therefore, literacy education must evolve by embracing the pedagogy of multiliteracies (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999), which acknowledges the diverse semiotic elements in contemporary texts. In particular, the dominance of visual media necessitates the design of educational programs that promote students' visual literacy. A visually literate person employs not just their observation skills but also skills for managing the information offered by the image for further exploration, critique, and reflection. This shift has influenced language education, emphasizing the need for skills in both comprehending and producing multimodal texts (Adlhash & Altalhab, 2020; Castellano-Sanz & Reyes-Torres, 2024).

The graphic novel, an emerging literary form, often placed in the context of comics (Cary, 2004), sometimes classified as sequential art (Carter, 2009), constitutes a valuable educational tool by combining verbal and visual elements. Processing text and images together fosters more advanced reading skills than traditional print media. Readers learn to decode facial expressions, body language, and non-textual elements such as symbols, color, and typography to construct meaning (Swartz, 2006). Graphic novels can serve as a “bridge” to more complex literary forms, with adaptations of classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Great Expectations*, and *Persepolis* offering students enriched literary experiences (Weiner, 2001). Many of these works, particularly those within the *bildungsroman* genre explore themes of identity, social responsibility, and cultural differences, prompting young readers to reflect on their own values and place in the world (Swartz & Crenshaw, 2013; Dolan, 2014).

Beyond fiction, graphic novels are effective in presenting nonfiction content. The use of visual metaphors and analogies can make complex or sensitive historical events more accessible, creating a level of detachment that facilitates engagement with challenging topics (Chun, 2009; Kalasaridou, 2024; López-Robertson et al., 2025).

Graphic Novel and Reading Comprehension in a Foreign Language

Research has shown that the use of visual elements enhances reading comprehension in EFL contexts (Adlhash & Altalhab, 2020; Burger, 2020). Many introductory foreign language textbooks introduce students to new vocabulary through images. This approach encourages students to associate images automatically with words and eventually “think in the language”. These early-stage materials often rely on illustrated stories and rich visual content to support vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. However, as students progress, illustrated texts become less common, often replaced by traditional, heavy-text material.

Graphic novels offer a valuable alternative to reinforcing reading comprehension in a foreign language. Sources suggest that the combination of visual and textual information can facilitate comprehension, particularly for visual learners (Adlhash & Altalhab, 2020). The multimodal nature of these narratives—incorporating images, colors, typography—enhances meaning-making, images inferencing, and prediction skills, even among less proficient readers (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018; Castellano-Sanz & Reyes-Torres, 2024).

The sequential presentation of the graphic novels in panels aids comprehension by organizing story elements easier in a structured manner, making it easier for readers to recall and reconstruct narratives (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Even when events are presented non-linearly, the panel arrangement helps readers contextualize and sequence information accurately (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018). This structured presentation makes graphic novels particularly suited for close reading (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018).

Furthermore, graphic novels expose learners to spoken language in ways that traditional texts do not. They incorporate hesitations, gaps, and repetitions reflective of real-world communication (Derrick, 2008). Cary (2004) points out that such texts introduce learners to ambiguities and irregularities of spoken language, including ellipsis, blends, and nonwords.

Research Questions

The aim of our research was to use the graphic novel to cultivate reading comprehension strategies on multimodal texts in EFL. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Can graphic novels foster reading comprehension within the EFL context?
2. How does the use of graphic novels influence students' ability to apply reading strategies to multimodal texts?
3. To what extent can graphic novels create a more positive attitude towards reading, particularly in an EFL context?

2. Method

Participants

This study was conducted over three months with seven 1st grade high school students (15-16 years old) attending a secondary school in Xylagani in Rodopi, Greece. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling as they were part of the researcher's accessible educational setting. This selection method ensured consistent observation and engagement throughout the study. The students were all native Greek speakers who had been learning English as a foreign language for seven years, with a proficiency level classified as B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Xylagani is a rural village in the regional unit of Rodopi, where the local economy is primarily based on agriculture. As a result, the students' socioeconomic background may reflect limited access to diverse educational and cultural resources. Prior to the study, none of the students had been exposed to or had experience with the graphic novel format.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study, integrating elements of mixed-methods research. A qualitative case study was selected to examine students' engagement with the graphic novels and the application of reading comprehension strategies. The case study approach was appropriate for the small group of seven 1st grade high school students, allowing for an in-depth understanding of their learning experiences and progress. The qualitative case study was supplemented with quantitative elements to enhance the study's validity and reliability. Likert-scale questionnaires and comprehension level categorization integrated a quantitative component, complementing the qualitative findings.

Research Design

The study was designed using the Pre-During-Post Reading Model, a structured approach to reading comprehension, integrating empirically validated strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of multimodal texts. To implement this model, nine educational scenarios were developed to guide students through before, during and after reading stages with structured reading tasks and comprehension activities. The scenarios were based on Part 1 of the graphic

novel owing to time constraints and alignment with the school’s examination timetable. However, students expressed an interest in continuing their engagement with the text independently. The model ensured that the following reading comprehension strategies were systematically introduced, practiced, and reinforced throughout the study (See Table 1):

Table 1: Research Model

Stage	Strategies Used	Activities
Pre-reading	Activating Prior Knowledge Predictions Context and non-textual elements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anticipation Guide (Vasquez et al., 2010): Engaging in thematic discussions and personal reflection 2. Panel Observation Tasks: Examining color symbolism, panel composition, typography 3. Search & Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018): Reflecting on the role of objects, symbols, characters, and emotions
During-reading	Scanning & Skimming Context and non-textual elements Structure of the text Note-taking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehension quizzes: Multiple questions, fill-in-the-gaps, and true/false activities 2. Cut & Paste Worksheet: Reconstructing fragmented text 3. Reading Circles: Participating in peer discussions 4. Double-Entry diary (Vasquez et al., 2010): Documenting personal reflections, and real-world connections about textual excerpts 5. Reading Log (Vasquez et al., 2010): Close reading and deeper engagement with the text
Post-reading	Summarization Graphic organization Re-reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative writing tasks: Writing diary entries, character maps, personal comments/interpretations 2. Graphic Organizers (Oxford, 1990): Mapping character-arcs and thematic motifs

Research Instruments and Materials

The Graphic Novel

This study employed Fred Fordham’s (2018) graphic novel adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee as its primary material. The selection of this text was informed by pedagogical and research-based considerations, aligned with multimodal literacy development, engagement with classic literature, and EFL reading strategies.

- **Multimodal Literacy Development**

The graphic novel format synthesizes visual and textual storytelling, aligning with multimodal literacy pedagogy. The combination of visual and verbal code offers learners more scaffolding than traditional texts, facilitating meaning-making.

- **Engagement with Classic Literature**

To Kill a Mockingbird is a significant work of classic American literature, lending itself on a didactic level to approaching issues of identity, morality, and justice (Karantona & Tsilimeni, 2021). The graphic adaptation preserves its core themes and character dynamics, making them more accessible to EFL learners through visual reinforcement.

- **Alignment with the Bildungsroman Genre**

The novel belongs to the *bildungsroman* genre, which follows the moral and intellectual growth of the protagonist, Scout Finch. Students visually track Scout's evolving perception of justice, racism, and personal identity. The story enables the readers to engage more deeply with the text and compare their own experiences with the protagonist's moral dilemmas.

- **Critical Socio-Cultural Issues**

The work addresses issues of race, ethnicity, social and cultural difference, making it a powerful text for critical discussions.

Adopted and Adapted Worksheets

The study adopted and adapted a combination of materials as follows:

1. The Search and Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018)(Table 2a)
 - Adopted for visual inferencing and prediction skills.
 - Adapted by requiring students to locate significant objects, emotions, or character actions and analyze the narrative and symbolic meaning
2. The Double Entry Diary (Vasquez et al., 2010)
 - Adopted for deeper textual analysis and note-taking
 - Adapted by adding a structured section for students to record direct textual excerpts on one side and their personal reflections, interpretations, or real-world connection on the other
3. The Anticipation Guide (Vasquez et al., 2010)
 - Adopted for encouraging re-reading discussion and engaging with text themes
 - Adapted by incorporating moral and social issues (e.g., justice, equality, gender roles). A before-and-after reading comparison was added to track how students' perspectives evolved
4. The Reading Log (Vasquez et al., 2010)(Table 2b)
 - Adopted for tracking character development and text analysis
 - Adapted by including structured prompts to help students document character descriptions, personality traits and their personal reflections based on textual evidence

Table 2(a) presents an excerpt from the Search and Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018), which was used in guiding students to identify key elements in the story. These elements were selected because they hold symbolic meaning or play a crucial role in the narrative. The table includes three columns: the first lists specific items or objects found in the text, the second indicates where these items appear in the novel, and the third requires students to reflect on the significance of these elements in terms of setting, characters, and plot.

Table 2(a): Search and Discover Worksheet

Item found	Where I found it	What it tells me about the setting, characters, plot
Small figures		
A letter		
Mr. Radley		
A problem		
Miss Maudie		
Azaleas		

Source: Jaffe & Hurwich (2018)

By tracking and analyzing these elements, students made inferences and developed a deeper understanding of the novel's themes, character motivations, and symbolic elements.

Table 2(b) presents an excerpt from the Reading Log (Vasquez et al., 2010) structured to help readers track character development and engage with the text. The log consists of four columns: the first identifies important characters, the second prompts students to record descriptions of their appearance, the third asks for a quote that illustrates personality traits, and the fourth encourages students to reflect on character's role and significance in the story.

Table 2(b): Reading Log

Character	A quote describing the character's appearance	A quote spoken by or about the character that shows his/her personality	My thoughts/ideas about the character
Jem			
Scout			
Dill			

Source: Vasquez et al. (2010)

Students found and documented textual evidence about the characters (Jem, Scout, Dill), analyzed dialogue to infer personality traits, and reflected on the character's role in the narrative.

Teacher's Journal

The teacher's journal was used to document student engagement, participation, and reading progress. It also included reflections on the effectiveness of different reading strategies. After each educational scenario, the researcher recorded reflections based on the following two axes:

A. **Teaching**

- Which reading comprehension strategies were implemented?
- Which were most/least effective?

B. **Students**

- Student engagement

- Progress
- Challenges
- Preferences regarding the reading tasks

Observations were recorded in response to pre-determined questions and analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. A categorization table was used to identify patterns and trends across the teaching sessions.

Student Questionnaires

The study used an adapted questionnaire to collect data about students' engagement with graphic novels, their comprehension experience, and their perspective of multimodal literacy. The questionnaire was modified to focus specifically on EFL learners' experiences with multimodal texts. To ensure validity and reliability, a pilot study (n=X) was conducted to provide feedback on question clarity and structure. The questionnaire included both open-ended questions and Likert-scale items. The questions focused on the following three key areas:

- Engagement and motivation: Students' overall experience with graphic novels and their interest in using graphic novels for English learning;
- Comprehension and learning process: Effective lesson components that supported understanding and whether the multimodal format facilitated comprehension; and
- Future reading preferences: Students' willingness to continue reading graphic novels in and beyond the classroom.

Students' Written Productions

Diary entries, character reflections, and interpretive essays were examined to assess students' ability to engage with the text and apply comprehension strategies.

Scoring criteria were the following:

- Linguistic and semantic accuracy: Did students correctly use vocabulary and linguistic structures? Did they accurately convey and interpret key concepts from the text?
- Content adaptation: How effectively did students select, modify, and integrate textual information to fit the requirements of the given task?

Students were categorized into three groups based on their written responses:

- High comprehenders: Accurately adapted textual information to the task requirements, and used precise linguistic and semantic structures to convey meaning effectively;
- Mid-comprehenders: Retained and incorporated some relevant textual information, but demonstrated minor inaccuracies in linguistic and semantic expression; and
- Low comprehenders: Relied primarily on textual recall with limited adaptation to the activity's context. Displayed significant linguistic and semantic inaccuracies in their responses.

Data Analysis

A mixed-method approach was used to analyze qualitative and quantitative data.

- Responses from the Likert-scale questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of students who expressed either positive and negative attitudes towards graphic novels. Open-ended questions were analyzed thematically, identifying recurring themes related to engagement, comprehension, and student perceptions.
- Teacher journal entries were coded into two pre-defined axes:
 1. The researcher tracked the frequency of the strategies and rated their effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 10, based on observed student engagement and comprehension.
 2. Student engagement was measured by recording how many students actively participated in lessons and followed the teaching process. Progress was assessed by tracking improvements

in reading comprehension and identifying common areas of difficulty. Student preferences for specific activities were also noted for future instructional approaches.

- Students' written productions were assessed using linguistic and semantic criteria, and content adaptation criteria. Responses were categorized into high, mid-, and low comprehenders according to their ability to integrate and adapt textual meaning effectively. To strengthen reliability, triangulation was applied by comparing questionnaire responses with qualitative data from teacher observations and student written responses.

3. Results

The study's findings were based on teacher journal observations, student questionnaires, and an analysis of students' written productions. The data revealed the following regarding the use of graphic novels in EFL instruction: improved reading comprehension and inferencing skills, and enhanced student engagement and motivation in reading. The data also supported the application of effective reading strategies such as scanning, predictions, and working with text structure.

Improved Reading Comprehension and Inferencing Skills

The findings show that graphic novels improved specific aspects of reading comprehension by providing scaffolding through multimodal integration.

1. Improved understanding of vocabulary

Students demonstrated better word recognition owing to visual elements that helped them infer meaning. For example, they correctly identified unfamiliar words such as *fussing* (as *fighting*) and *disgrace* (as *shame*) based on image panels. Student questionnaire responses revealed that visual-text connections helped them minimize misunderstandings and reinforced implicit vocabulary learning.

2. Strengthened inferencing skills

The teacher's journal entries documented that graphic novel's combination of images, text, and sequential storytelling facilitated students' ability to make logical assumptions about the characters' emotions and plot developments.

Table 3 indicates that reading comprehension improved over time. The number of students showing progress increased steadily, particularly after engaging with structured worksheets. The Search and Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018) was preferred in multiple scenarios (T.S 3 and T.S 6) as it helped students analyze non-textual elements and make predictions. Also, while three students initially struggled, this number decreased in later scenarios, suggesting that instruction on multimodal strategies helped them adapt to the format.

Table 3: Journal Findings

B. STUDENTS	T.S 1	T.S 2	T.S 3	T.S 4	T.S 5	T.S 6	T.S 7	T.S 8	T.S 9
Followed the teaching process	7	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	7
Showed progress	4	4	5	6	6	5	5	6	6
Had difficulties	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
What did the students like most?	Introduction to the graphi	The reading	"Search & Discover	"Cut & Paste" Worksheet +	Role-playing	"Search & Discover	Reading Circle	Role-playing	Worksheet "Cut

	c novel	proc ess	Work sheet"	Written Product ions		Work sheet"			& Paste"
	T. S: Teaching Scenario								

Example 1: Inferring emotion from visual and textual cues

In the third educational scenario, students were asked to identify the emotion of anger and comment on that. One student inferred the emotion by writing *“Scout is angry because she’s trying to explain to her father what happened, but he has a different opinion”*. This response demonstrates the student’s ability to decode character emotions through character expressions, facial expressions, and panel composition rather than relying solely on dialogue.

Example 2: Inferring narrative structure through color changes

Students also analyzed color changes indicating different timelines of the story. Students noticed that some panels, referring to flashbacks were shaded in darker gray tones, while present-day scenes had a lighter palette. One student noted *“Colors change. The pictures are gray and darker, and that shows we are in the past”*. This response indicates that students tracked temporal shifts without textual cues, relying only on the color code.

3. Text-visual integration for comprehension

Student questionnaire responses showed that all the participants benefited from the integration of texts and images as it facilitated their ability to extract and construct meaning from the story. Figure 1 illustrates students’ perceptions of the most helpful lesson elements in understanding the story. The data highlights the role of visual and structured comprehension activities.

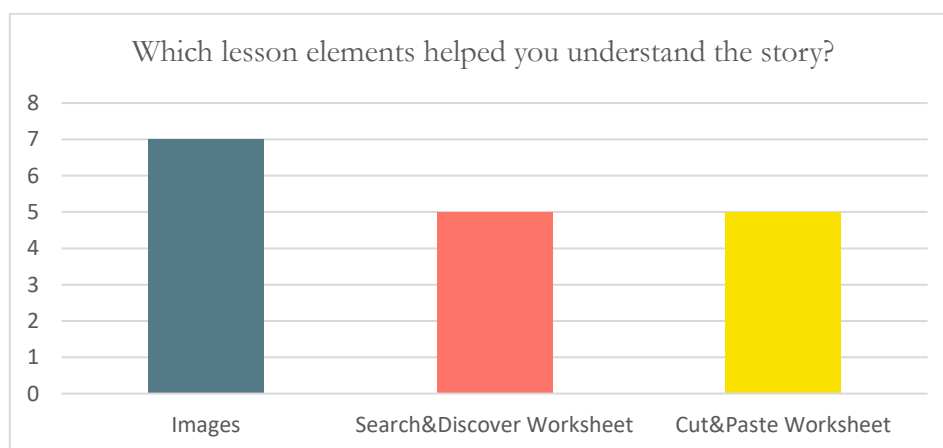


Figure 1: Questionnaires

As shown in Figure 1, images were reported as the most effective element in aiding comprehension, with all seven students indicating their usefulness. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that multimodal texts support linguistic comprehension by reducing the cognitive load (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018). Additionally, structured comprehension tools, such as the Search and Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018) and the Cut and Paste Worksheet, were also recognized as beneficial to the meaning-making process.

Analysis of students’ written productions further support these findings, demonstrating students’ ability to integrate textual and visual elements for meaning-making. The multimodal nature of the

narrative supported comprehension and engagement with the text, guiding students to modify textual information effectively and use precise linguistic and semantic structure in their writings.

Figure 2 illustrates students' participation rates across six writing activities while Figure 3 categorizes student responses as high, mid-, and low comprehenders, based on linguistic accuracy, textual adaptation, and content integration. Students' written productions were diary entries (Scenarios 3, 6, and 9), a note to a character (Scenario 4), an interpretive response (Scenario 7), and a news report (Scenario 8).

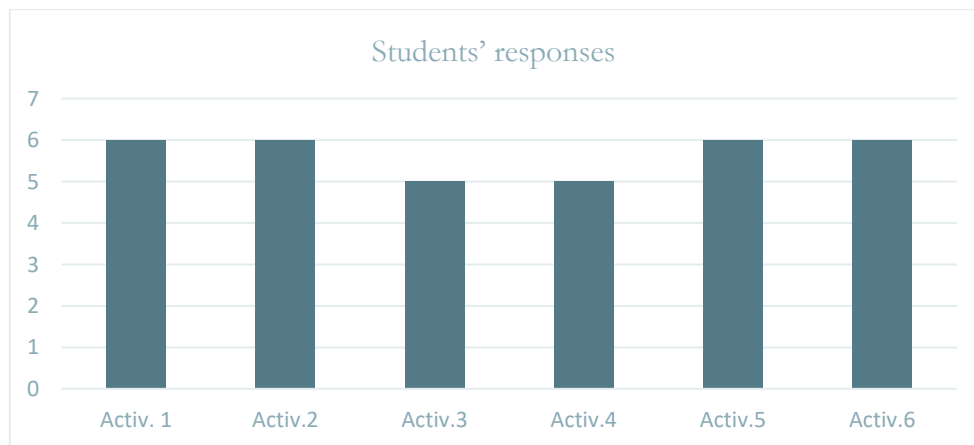


Figure 2: Students' responses

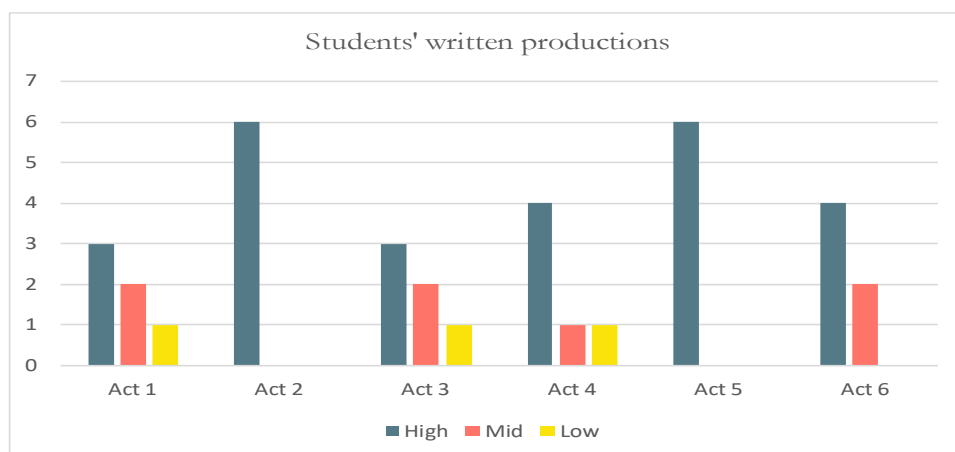


Figure 3: Students' written productions

As shown in Figure 2, six out of the seven students responded to the first two and the last two activities. Five out of the seven students responded to the 3rd and 4th activity. This slight drop in participation suggests that some tasks posed challenges requiring additional scaffolding. As illustrated in Figure 3, in Activity 1 three students were classified as high comprehenders. In the group-written Activity 2 and Activity 5, both groups achieved high comprehension scores, suggesting that collaborative work facilitated comprehension and linguistic adaptation. By the final Activities 4 and 6, high comprehenders increased to four, indicating improvement.

Student Engagement and Motivation

The study confirmed that students were highly motivated to read in the graphic novel format. Students expressed enthusiasm for reading beyond the classroom and engaged in self-directed learning by independently searching for unknown words. Table 4 presents students' responses regarding their perceptions of graphic novels as a medium for reading comprehension in EFL.

The results highlight students' positive attitudes towards using graphic novels in the language learning process.

Table 4: Questionnaires

QUESTION	VERY	NOT VERY	NOT AT ALL
Did you like the project?	86%	14%	0%
Do you find the presentation of an English literature text in the form of graphic novel easier to comprehend?	100%	0%	0%
Would you like to learn the English language using graphic novels?	100%	0%	0%
Would you read a graphic novel in the future?	100%	0%	0%
Would you choose a graphic novel in English?	86%	14%	0%
Would you like to participate in a similar project again?	100%	0%	0%

As shown in Table 4, the questionnaires indicated the following:

- 86% of students reported great enjoyment in reading a graphic novel;
- All students preferred multimodal story-telling to traditional ones;
- All students reported preference to being taught English using graphic novels; and
- All students were motivated to read a graphic novel in the future, with 86% probably choosing one in the English language.

Effective Reading Strategies

The study also evaluated the effectiveness and frequency of reading comprehension strategies used in the scenarios. Table 5 presents the frequency of occurrence (FO) and degree of effectiveness (DE) for each strategy employed across the nine scenarios:

Table 5: Frequency and Effectiveness of Reading Strategies

THEMATIC AXES	A. Teaching								
CATEGORIES	1. Strategies								
SUBCATEGORIES	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	ix
	Graphic Organizers	Predictions	Structure of the text	Scanning	Skimming	Context & Non-textual elements	Double Entry Diary	Summary	Re-reading
F.O	3	6	3	9	3	9	1	3	9
D. E	7	9	9	9	8	10	7	9	9
	F.O : Frequency of occurrence								
	D. E : Degree of effectiveness								

Table 5 indicates that the most frequent strategies were the use of context and non-textual elements, scanning, and re-reading. These strategies involved multimodal analysis and engagement with the text. The most successful strategies were the following: scanning for specific information, predictions, working with text-structure and using context and non-textual elements.

4. Discussion

The study investigated the role of graphic novels in fostering EFL reading comprehension through structured strategies. The findings highlight that graphic novels are an effective pedagogical tool owing to their ability to integrate multimodal literacy, facilitate deeper comprehension, and sustain learner motivation. Graphic novels therefore bridge the gap between visual and textual comprehension. Their pedagogical benefits over traditional texts include the following:

- Multimodal scaffolding: Graphic novels serve as scaffolding tools for complex language structures, enabling students to process meaning through both textual and non-textual elements (Burger, 2020).
- Higher engagement and motivation: Visual storytelling enhances student interest by counterbalancing linguistic deficiencies and giving even the less proficient readers a sense of achievement (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018; Adlhash & Altalhab, 2020). It also allows students to view literature from a more approachable perspective, which is particularly significant in developing lifelong reading habits.
- Facilitating inferencing: The integration of explicit and implicit information in graphic novels enhances students’ ability to draw conclusions, make predictions, and interpret meaning beyond the text (Burger, 2020).

This approach could be applied in other EFL contexts by integrating graphic novels into EFL curricula. Graphic novels can be used as supplementary texts, offering scaffolding for learners who may struggle with traditional literature. They could also support students moving from visual narratives to traditional texts. Explicit strategy instruction is essential as students need guidance in extracting meaning from images and texts. Teachers should guide students in decoding panel layouts, color symbolism, and facial expressions. Activities such as the Search and Discover Worksheet can help students with predictive reading and scanning skills. However, successful implementation requires teacher training in visual literacy, ensuring that educators can effectively guide students in decoding non-textual elements. Also, some learners may need additional scaffolding in visual-textual integration to build confidence in multimodal reading.

Proposed Pedagogical Model for EFL Instruction

Based on the study findings, this three-phase model systematically integrates graphic novels in EFL instruction through a structured approach.

Phase 1: Pre-Reading Phase

Objective: Activate prior knowledge and familiarize students with multimodal elements.

- Anticipation Guide (Vasquez et al., 2010): Facilitates prediction and thematic discussions.

- Panel Observation Tasks: Encourages students to make visual inferences.
- Search and Discover Worksheet (Jaffe & Hurwich, 2018): Engages students in detailed panel analysis, prompting them to identify characters, symbols, objects, and emotions within the visual text before reading.

Phase 2: During-Reading Phase

Objective: Engage students in active comprehension using both textual and visual elements.

- Scanning for specific details: Strengthens targeted reading skills for identifying essential details.
- Contextual Analysis: Enhances meaning inferencing through interpretation of color symbolism, facial expressions, and panel layout.
- Cut and Paste Worksheet: Requires students to reassemble fragmented dialogue and text elements within the correct panels, reinforcing their understanding of narrative structure, sequencing, and textual cohesion.

Phase 3: Post-Reading Phase

Objective: Reinforcing comprehension and encourage critical engagement.

- Creative Writing Tasks: Promotes synthesis through alternative endings, diary entries, character reflections.
- Graphic Organizers (Oxford, 1990): Facilitates in organizing and visualizing key concepts.

This model provides a systematic yet flexible framework for incorporating multimodal reading strategies into EFL instruction, enhancing both comprehension and engagement.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of graphic novels in enhancing reading comprehension in an EFL context. The findings indicate that graphic novels serve as a supportive and engaging medium for developing reading comprehension strategies. Multimodal storytelling strengthens learners' engagement with texts, inferencing skills, and overall reading proficiency. By integrating visual and textual elements, students navigated complex narratives more effectively, demonstrated enhanced vocabulary retention, and applied more reading comprehension strategies such as prediction, scanning, and working with text structure.

The study also identified a significant shift in students' attitudes towards reading. Many students who had previously struggled with reading in English exhibited greater autonomy and confidence. This shift highlights the potential of graphic novels as pedagogical tools and motivational instruments. As literacy education continues to evolve to meet the needs of digital and multimodal learners, it is essential that teachers embrace graphic novels as legitimate and effective pedagogical tools. The study's results advocate for a more flexible and adaptive approach to EFL instruction, one that incorporates visually rich texts to support language acquisition and enhance engagement.

The study's limitations include a small sample size, which limits generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size would provide stronger, statistically significant data. Also, the short duration of the intervention may not capture the long-term development of advanced reading skills. Future research could explore longitudinal studies of how the benefits of graphic novels persist over time. Most students in the study had no prior experience of engaging with graphic novels. This limitation may have influenced their initial ability to navigate multimodal texts effectively. Future studies could include a pre-study training phase to familiarize students with graphic novels, improving their ability to integrate textual and visual elements. Future research should also examine how students at different proficiency levels engage with graphic novels. Integrating graphic novels into EFL curricula offers a promising approach to language learning.

6. References

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