

GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR MULTIMODAL LITERACY AND READING COMPREHENSION DEVELOPMENT IN AN EFL EXTENSIVE READING COURSE

¹*Rahmi Munfangati, ²Maman Suryaman

¹English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jln. Kapas No. 9, Semaki, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and Culture, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: rahmi@pbi.uad.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 2026 Revised: May 2026 Accepted: June 2026 Published: July 2026	<i>EFL students in Extensive Reading course often encounter reading comprehension difficulties due to limited vocabulary, insufficient inferential skills, and restricted exposure to authentic English texts. Although graphic novels have been recognized as engaging reading materials, limited research has examined their role in fostering multimodal literacy and reading comprehension in EFL Extensive Reading contexts. This study aimed to explore how graphic novels support multimodal literacy and reading comprehension among EFL students enrolled in an Extensive Reading course. A qualitative descriptive design was employed involving three undergraduate students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in reading graphic novels during the course. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that graphic novels facilitated reading comprehension by providing visual support for understanding context, emotions, vocabulary, and narrative structure. The multimodal features of graphic novels also increased students' engagement, supported contextual reading strategies, and promoted the integration of visual and textual information. However, challenges were identified, including students' overreliance on visual elements and differing perceptions regarding the contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking. The study concludes that graphic novels are effective multimodal resources for supporting multimodal literacy and reading comprehension in EFL Extensive Reading contexts. The findings suggest that teachers are encouraged to integrate graphic novels into Extensive Reading course while providing explicit guidance on interpreting visual and textual elements to maximize learning outcomes.</i>
Keywords Multimodal literacy; Graphic novels; EFL learning; Reading strategies; Extensive reading;	
How to cite: Munfangati, R., & Suryaman, M. (2026). Graphic Novels for Multimodal Literacy and Reading Comprehension Development in an EFL Extensive Reading Course. <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 14(3), 920-932. Doi: https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v14i3.20468	

Copyright© 2026, Munfangati et al.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) License.



INTRODUCTION

In the context of 21st-century education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning is increasingly shaped by digital and multimodal communication practices. Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) faces several difficulties in the digital age, which is marked by the abundance of visual and interactive media, particularly in the development of reading skills. A major obstacle encountered by EFL students is the inability to comprehend English texts, which

is frequently caused by a lack of vocabulary, low inferential abilities, and a lack of cultural background relevant to the text's content. Improved reading comprehension abilities are directly correlated with a deeper vocabulary grasp, highlighting the fact that incidental word exposure is frequently insufficient. (Mouchrif et al., 2023). In addition, exposure to the cultural norms and values of the target language significantly enhances EFL students' reading and listening comprehension skills (Kamaeva et al., 2022). This finding suggests that inferential skills, which are often developed through cultural exposure and background knowledge, play an important role in comprehension. Similarly, Toti and Hamid (2022) found that learners' cultural background knowledge positively influenced reading comprehension, indicating that culturally unfamiliar texts may present additional challenges for EFL learners. In the context of reading instruction, these challenges become even more significant because students are expected to read a variety of texts independently and extensively to improve their reading comprehension and fluency.

Beyond these linguistic and cultural challenges, EFL learners increasingly encounter multimodal texts that combine written language with visual elements. Although images can support comprehension, students do not automatically know how to integrate visual and verbal information to construct meaning. Many learners tend to focus primarily on either the written text or the visual representations, limiting their ability to interpret relationships between different modes of communication. As a result, difficulties in combining visual and textual information may affect both reading comprehension and the development of multimodal literacy, particularly in learning environments where students are expected to read independently and make meaning with limited instructional support.

At some universities, the extensive reading course aims to enhance comprehension through a variety of texts and to foster reading habits in students. However, conventional approaches that focus on linear and expository texts are often not in line with the cognitive habits of today's students who are accustomed to visual and interactive media. Teaching resources that may offer a more comprehensive and contextualized literacy experience are needed in this context to provide engaging content. This condition highlights a critical issue: despite the increasing availability of multimodal resources, reading instruction in EFL contexts remains predominantly text-based and does not adequately address students' multimodal learning needs. As a result, students continue to struggle with comprehension, engagement, and independent reading development. Recent studies have emphasized the growing importance of multimodal literacy in contemporary education. Rather than relying solely on written language, multimodal literacy involves the ability to interpret and construct meaning through the integration of multiple modes of communication, including text, images, symbols, and digital resources (Xu, 2024). Research has demonstrated that multimodal learning environments can enhance learner engagement and support learning outcomes by providing diverse pathways for meaning-making (Sutrisno et al., 2024). These findings suggest that literacy instruction should move beyond traditional text-based approaches and incorporate multimodal resources that reflect contemporary communication practices.

Among various multimodal resources, graphic novels have received increasing attention for their potential to support literacy development and reading comprehension. By combining visual and textual elements within coherent narrative structures, graphic novels provide learners with multiple entry points to meaning-making. Previous studies have reported that graphic novels support inferential thinking, contextual understanding, and cross-modal reading skills through the interaction of images and written language (Ferdiawan et al., 2021). Graphic novels have also been recognized for their ability to engage learners who may struggle with conventional texts because their visual elements provide contextual support and facilitate access to textual meaning (Barter-Storm & Wik, 2020). In EFL settings, such visual support may help

learners overcome linguistic limitations while encouraging more active engagement with reading materials.

Several studies have highlighted the educational benefits of graphic novels. Aziz and Aziz (2023) reported improvements in reading engagement and comprehension, while Hajibayova and McCorkhill (2021) found that graphic novels supported students' interpretive abilities. Similarly, Wong et al. (2022) emphasized the value of graphic novels as literacy-support tools that promote both comprehension and engagement. Nevertheless, previous research has not consistently examined graphic novels from a multimodal literacy perspective. Several studies have focused on the entertainment, moral, and cultural dimensions of graphic novels (Kim, 2022; Rohila, 2023; Zukowski, 2023), while their role in supporting the integration of visual and textual information in language learning has received comparatively less attention. As a result, the processes through which learners combine verbal and visual information during reading remain underexplored.

Despite the growing body of research on graphic novels and multimodal literacy, several gaps remain in the literature. First, limited attention has been given to how EFL learners integrate visual and textual information when constructing meaning from multimodal texts. While previous studies have reported positive outcomes in reading comprehension and engagement, fewer studies have explored the cognitive and interpretive processes involved in multimodal reading. Second, much of the existing research has been conducted in ESL contexts, where learners have greater exposure to English outside the classroom. Consequently, the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of EFL learners whose interaction with English is largely restricted to academic settings. Furthermore, the dominance of ESL-based research limits the applicability of existing findings to EFL contexts, where learners typically have more restricted exposure to English. In such contexts, visual-based resources such as graphic novels may provide important support for learners experiencing linguistic difficulties (Chen, 2023). However, previous studies have not sufficiently examined how EFL learners integrate visual and verbal information during multimodal reading, particularly within Extensive Reading courses.

Another limitation concerns the instructional context. Previous studies have primarily examined graphic novels as tools for literacy development, motivation, or language learning outcomes. However, relatively little research has investigated graphic novels within Extensive Reading courses, where students are expected to read independently, engage with texts extensively, and construct meaning with minimal instructional support. This context provides an important opportunity to explore how learners interact with multimodal texts and how visual and textual elements contribute to their reading experiences. Therefore, this study differs from previous research by focusing on EFL students' experiences of integrating visual and textual information while reading graphic novels in an Extensive Reading course. Unlike studies that primarily examined learning outcomes or instructional effectiveness, the present study explores how learners perceive the role of graphic novels in supporting multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. By examining students' meaning-making processes, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of graphic novels as multimodal reading resources in EFL contexts.

This study aims to investigate the role of graphic novels in supporting multimodal literacy and reading comprehension among EFL students in an Extensive Reading course at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. Specifically, the study explores how students interpret and integrate visual and textual information during the reading process. The scope of this study is limited to undergraduate EFL learners enrolled in an Extensive Reading class, with particular attention to their multimodal reading strategies, comprehension development, and engagement with graphic novels. To address these gaps, this study addresses the following research questions: How do EFL students perceive the role of graphic novels in supporting multimodal literacy in an

Extensive Reading course? And How do EFL students perceive the contribution of graphic novels to reading comprehension in an Extensive Reading course?

Multimodal Literacy and Graphic Novels in EFL Reading

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of multimodal literacy in contemporary education as learners increasingly engage with texts that combine visual, textual, auditory, and digital modes of communication. Multimodal literacy refers to the ability to interpret, produce, and communicate meaning across multiple modes rather than relying solely on written language (Sutrisno et al., 2024). Research has shown that multimodal texts can support deeper meaning-making by encouraging learners to integrate information from different semiotic resources. For example, Riesco and Grizzle (2022) found that graphic narratives enabled learners to navigate complex relationships between images and written language, leading to richer interpretations of texts. These findings suggest that multimodal literacy is not merely a technical skill but a process of constructing meaning through the interaction of multiple communicative modes.

The growing use of multimodal texts in educational settings has also been associated with increased learner engagement and accessibility. Jamil and Aziz (2021) reported that learning materials incorporating visual and digital elements promoted stronger reading habits and greater participation among learners. Similarly, Hidayat and Susanto (2020) found that students who engaged in the creation of graphic stories developed stronger abilities in visual communication, narrative construction, and textual interpretation. These studies indicate that multimodal literacy can support both comprehension and active engagement in learning.

Despite these benefits, several studies have highlighted challenges in implementing multimodal literacy practices. Irasuti et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of visual literacy in helping learners interpret multimodal texts effectively, while Aziz and Aziz (2023) noted that the educational potential of graphic novels may be limited when students and teachers lack sufficient visual literacy skills. These findings suggest that the successful use of multimodal texts requires not only access to visual materials but also instructional support that helps learners interpret and connect visual and textual information.

Graphic novels also offer valuable insights in education. When used as part of teacher training programs, these texts can help preservice teachers develop a stronger understanding of visual culture and multimodal pedagogy. This, in turn, prepares them to incorporate graphic novels more effectively into their future teaching practices (Kwon, 2020). Moreover, visual literacy itself plays a foundational role in the effective use of comics and graphic novels. Students who possess stronger visual decoding abilities demonstrate improved recall, comprehension, and motivation. Therefore, visual literacy interventions are necessary, particularly for learners who struggle with conventional reading tasks (Golding & Verrier, 2020).

Reading comprehension is generally understood as the process of constructing meaning through the interaction of linguistic knowledge, inferential reasoning, and contextual understanding. In multimodal reading contexts, however, comprehension extends beyond written language and requires learners to integrate information from both visual and textual sources. This perspective is particularly relevant to graphic novels, where meaning is conveyed through the interaction of images, text, and narrative structure. Consequently, successful comprehension of graphic novels depends not only on linguistic processing but also on learners' ability to interpret and connect visual and verbal information. The literature suggests that multimodal literacy plays an important role in supporting meaning-making, engagement, and comprehension across multiple modes of communication. However, limited attention has been given to how EFL learners integrate visual and textual information when reading graphic novels, particularly within Extensive Reading contexts. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into students' experiences of using graphic novels as multimodal reading resources to support multimodal literacy and reading comprehension.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding students' perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making processes when interacting with multimodal texts. The study aimed to examine how students interpreted and integrated visual and textual information while reading graphic novels and how these experiences contributed to multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. Qualitative descriptive research enables researchers to investigate phenomena in their natural settings and provide detailed accounts of participants' perspectives (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach enabled an in-depth examination of students' experiences with graphic novels and their role in supporting multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. Through students' reflections and experiences, the study examined how visual and textual elements contributed to comprehension, engagement, and the development of reading strategies within an Extensive Reading context.

Research Participants

The participants were three undergraduate students in their second semester who were enrolled in an Extensive Reading course at the English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could provide relevant information regarding the use of graphic novels in Extensive Reading activities. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) enrollment in the Extensive Reading course, (2) experience reading graphic novels as part of course activities, (3) active participation in reading assignments and class discussions, and (4) willingness to share their experiences and reflections during the interview process. Based on the Ahmad Dahlan English Proficiency Test (ADEPT) administered at the beginning of their studies, all participants demonstrated sufficient English proficiency to engage with the reading materials and participate in the interviews.

Although the number of participants was limited, qualitative descriptive research emphasizes the depth and richness of information rather than statistical generalization. The selected participants were expected to provide detailed insights into how graphic novels supported their multimodal literacy and reading comprehension development. Participation in the study was voluntary. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, research procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. To ensure confidentiality, participants were identified using pseudonyms (Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3) throughout the analysis and reporting of findings.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary research instrument to explore students' experiences of reading graphic novels in an EFL Extensive Reading course. This instrument was selected because it allowed participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in detail while providing flexibility for the researcher to ask follow-up questions when necessary. The interview guide was developed based on the concepts of multimodal literacy and reading comprehension identified in previous studies. The questions focused on four main areas: (1) students' experiences of reading graphic novels, (2) the role of visual and textual elements in meaning-making, (3) the contribution of graphic novels to reading comprehension and reading strategies, and (4) the benefits and challenges of using graphic novels in Extensive Reading activities. These areas were aligned with the objectives of the study, which sought to explore how graphic novels support multimodal literacy and reading comprehension among EFL learners.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with students who had experience reading graphic novels as part of their Extensive Reading course. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The interviews explored participants' experiences of reading graphic novels, their interpretation of visual and textual elements, and their perceptions of the contribution of graphic novels to multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. The interviews were conducted individually in a quiet and comfortable setting to encourage participants to share their experiences openly. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy prior to analysis. To enhance the credibility of the findings, participants were given opportunities to review and confirm the researchers' interpretations of their responses through a member-checking process.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis began with repeated readings of the interview transcripts to identify meaningful statements related to students' experiences of reading graphic novels, multimodal literacy, and reading comprehension. During the data reduction stage, relevant data were selected and assigned initial codes. The coding process focused on participants' perceptions of graphic novels, the integration of visual and textual information, reading comprehension, reading strategies, engagement, and challenges encountered during reading. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories based on conceptual relationships.

Following the coding process, thematic categories were developed to represent common patterns across participants' responses. The categorized data were then organized and displayed to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among the themes. This process enabled the researcher to examine how graphic novels contributed to multimodal literacy and reading comprehension within the Extensive Reading context. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified by revisiting the interview transcripts and coded data to ensure consistency between the findings and participants' responses. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review the researchers' interpretations of their responses.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section presents the findings from interviews with three EFL students enrolled in an Extensive Reading course. The findings address the research objective of exploring how graphic novels support multimodal literacy and reading comprehension and are presented through participants' interview responses. The interview data revealed that graphic novels supported comprehension through the integration of visual and textual information, increased engagement in reading activities, and facilitated the use of contextual reading strategies. The data also indicated challenges related to reliance on visual elements and differing views on the contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking. The findings presented below reflect students' experiences and perceptions within the context of this study.

Graphic Novels Supported Reading Comprehension Through Visual and Textual Integration

One of the main findings was that participants perceived graphic novels as helpful for reading comprehension through the integration of visual and textual information. The interview data indicated that visual elements assisted participants in understanding the context, emotions,

vocabulary, and narrative development of the stories. For these participants, illustrations provided additional cues that supported meaning-making when they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary or complex textual information. Participant 1 stated, “With the images supporting the story, the use of graphic novels helps me understand the context and emotions in English stories.” Similarly, Participant 2 explained, “Graphic novels can bring us into the atmosphere of the story through the images, making it easier to understand.” These responses indicate that visual elements helped participants interpret narrative events and emotional situations presented in the text.

The interview data also suggested that visual representations supported participants’ understanding of vocabulary and textual meaning. Participant 3 stated, “I can understand the reading and vocabulary through the visual representation.” Likewise, Participant 2 commented, “The sequence of images and the situation in the story make it easier for me to understand English texts.” These responses indicate that participants used visual information to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary and to follow the meaning of the text. These findings indicate that participants perceived graphic novels as multimodal texts that helped them construct meaning by combining visual and textual information during the reading process. This integration of modes was reported as contributing to their understanding of the stories they read in the Extensive Reading course.

Graphic Novels Increased Reading Engagement and Supported Reading Strategies

Another important finding was that participants perceived graphic novels as engaging reading materials in the Extensive Reading course. The combination of visual and textual elements appeared to make reading activities more enjoyable and accessible. Participants reported that the visual format attracted their attention and encouraged them to engage with English texts. Participant 1 stated, “I feel excited about using graphic novels in the extensive reading class.” Similarly, Participant 3 commented, “The visual makes it more interesting and makes it not very boring.” These responses indicate that participants viewed graphic novels as more appealing than conventional reading materials and associated them with a more positive reading experience.

The interview data also suggested that graphic novels supported the use of contextual reading strategies. Participants reported using visual cues, such as illustrations, character expressions, and sequences of events, to understand the main ideas and follow the development of the story. Participant 2 stated, “I can understand the story’s main idea quickly.” This response indicates that visual and textual information were used together to support comprehension during reading. These findings suggest that participants perceived graphic novels as engaging multimodal texts that encouraged active involvement in reading and supported the use of contextual strategies to construct meaning. The integration of visual and textual elements was reported as helping participants navigate and understand the stories more easily within the Extensive Reading course.

Graphic Novels Presented Linguistic and Interpretive Challenges

Although participants generally reported positive experiences with graphic novels, the interview data also revealed several challenges. One challenge concerned the tendency to rely heavily on visual elements during reading. Participants indicated that visual support sometimes influenced how they interpreted the text and could reduce attention to the written language. Participant 1 stated, “Depending on the images can limit my own imagination.” This response suggests that visual representations may influence how readers construct their own interpretations of a story. Similarly, Participant 2 commented, “It might include misunderstandings of the illustrations or relying on the pictures without really reading the text.” This response indicates that visual elements may occasionally lead to incomplete or inaccurate interpretations when readers focus primarily on illustrations rather than the accompanying text.

These findings suggest that participants recognized both the benefits and limitations of graphic novels. While visual elements were perceived as helpful for understanding the stories, participants also acknowledged the importance of balancing attention between visual and textual information during the reading process.

Participants Reported Different Views on the Contribution of Graphic Novels to Critical Thinking

The interview data revealed differing views regarding the contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking. While some participants perceived that the integration of visual and textual information encouraged them to consider different perspectives, others did not associate graphic novels with the development of critical thinking skills. Participant 1 stated, “Through interpreting the images and text, graphic novels can help me see different perspectives.” This response suggests that the participant viewed the interaction between visual and textual elements as supporting reflection and interpretation during reading. In contrast, Participant 3 stated, “There are no relation nor ties to critical thinking.” This response indicates that the perceived contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking was not shared by all participants. Rather than demonstrating a common experience, the interview data suggest variation in how participants understood the relationship between graphic novels and critical thinking. These findings indicate that participants held different perceptions regarding the role of graphic novels in supporting critical thinking. The contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking appeared to depend on individual reading experiences and interpretations within the context of the Extensive Reading course.

Discussion

The findings suggest that graphic novels may support multimodal literacy and reading comprehension among EFL students in an Extensive Reading course. The interview data indicated that participants used visual and textual information simultaneously to construct meaning, highlighting the potential of graphic novels as multimodal learning resources. These findings can be interpreted within the framework of applied linguistics and language learning theories.

Linguistics Aspect

The interview data indicated that participants used visual elements to support vocabulary comprehension and interpret textual meaning while reading graphic novels. This finding suggests that illustrations provided contextual cues that assisted participants in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and following the meaning of the text. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, such visual cues can facilitate language comprehension by supporting vocabulary acquisition and sentence-level understanding. The visual representations in graphic novels enrich the reading process by connecting linguistic information with contextualized images, allowing readers to construct meaning through multiple modes. As multimodal texts, graphic novels offer opportunities for learners to engage with language in ways that extend beyond written words alone.

First, in terms of vocabulary (lexical aspects), the findings suggest that images may facilitate contextualized vocabulary learning. When students encounter unfamiliar words or phrases, accompanying illustrations can provide immediate clues to their meanings, thereby enhancing receptive understanding. This concept is supported by Nasrollahi & Daneshfar (2018), who stated that vocabulary meaning is more easily grasped when presented in rich visual contexts. This is further reinforced by Aqila et al. (2024), who demonstrated that visual context in narrative texts helps accelerate the acquisition of new vocabulary in EFL learning. With the help of illustrations, students can more effectively build semantic mapping, the connection between word forms and conceptual meanings.

Second, regarding sentence structure (syntax), participants reported using visual elements to interpret grammatical relationships and sentence patterns within the text. Visual narratives enable learners to connect specific sentence forms with actions, emotions, or events being depicted. This process aligns with the theory of dual coding and multimodal processing (Paivio, 1986; Mayer, 2001), which suggests that learning becomes more effective when verbal and visual information are processed simultaneously. This interpretation is also consistent with Rajkhowa (2021), who suggested that multimodal texts can support students' understanding of syntactic relationships through the interaction of visual and verbal modes. Visual sequences in graphic novels not only support narrative development but also reinforce grammatical structures. Multimodal texts represent lexical and grammatical aspects of verbal language, allowing for a more integrated and immersive syntactic experience. Comprehension due to the direct association between sentence structures and the visual situations presented in the image panels.

Supporting this, the assertion that graphic novels create an interactive reading environment where students engage with both visual and textual information. These materials help students synthesize information and make inferences more effectively, ultimately enhancing their literacy skills (Ferdawan et al., 2021). Graphic novels, as multimodal texts, enable students to interpret sentence patterns more intuitively through their interaction with visual content, allowing grammar to be learned in context rather than in isolation. Additionally, from a linguistic perspective, punctuation and graphic structuring, as noted by Dahl (2018), are essential to text comprehension. Dahl argues that punctuation marks and graphic units such as the "graphic word" or "graphic sentence" define meaning-making hierarchies in written language, which may differ from abstract grammatical categories. This interplay between graphic and grammatical units highlights how awareness of punctuation and layout contributes to understanding written discourse, particularly within visually rich texts like graphic novels. Thus, graphic novels provide dual linguistic support, at both the vocabulary and syntactic levels, making them effective learning media for developing reading competence and language understanding in EFL contexts.

Multimodal Literacy and Reading Strategies

The interview data indicated that participants used both visual and textual information to understand graphic novels and construct meaning during reading. Participants also reported that visual cues helped them identify main ideas, follow story development, and interpret unfamiliar content. These findings suggest that graphic novels functioned as multimodal texts that supported participants' reading processes within the Extensive Reading course. The use of graphic novels in EFL instruction can be interpreted as supporting contextual reading strategies and awareness of narrative structure. Unlike conventional linear texts, graphic novels require readers not only to understand the verbal content but also to process visual elements such as panel sequencing, character facial expressions, and graphic symbols that convey narrative nuances. This process requires readers to develop a holistic understanding of the story through both verbal and visual dimensions. This interpretation aligns with the concept of multimodal literacy as outlined by (Serafini, 2012), who emphasized the importance of literacy and reading skills, including understanding visual images, design elements, written language, and other semiotic resources. The participants' experiences suggest that meaning-making occurred through the interaction of multiple modes rather than through written language alone.

Students in this study demonstrated the ability to integrate information from text and illustrations during reading. The findings suggest that participants drew on both visual and verbal cues to interpret story events and understand textual meaning. This process reflects an important aspect of multimodal literacy, which is increasingly relevant in contemporary language education. Callow (2018) also highlighted that interpreting multimodal texts requires visual and semiotic awareness, skills that may be developed through engagement with graphic

novels. Furthermore, participants reported using visual cues to understand plot development and identify the main ideas of a story. This finding suggests that graphic novels may support contextual reading strategies by providing visual information that complements written text. A similar observation was reported by Yawiloeng (2022), who found that multimodal texts provided scaffolding that supported reading comprehension and learner engagement in EFL contexts. These findings indicate that graphic novels provided opportunities for participants to engage with multiple modes of meaning-making. Rather than relying solely on written language, participants reported using visual and textual information simultaneously to construct understanding during the reading process.

Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, graphic novels offer greater accessibility to students with visual learning styles and lower reading motivation. The findings of this study indicated that participants perceived graphic novels as engaging reading materials that supported comprehension through the integration of visual and textual information. This reinforces the role of multimodal learning materials as scaffolding tools in EFL. As Aziz & Aziz (2023) point out, graphic novels can improve comprehension, enhance vocabulary acquisition, support critical thinking, boost reading motivation, and even improve speaking proficiency, making them a valuable tool in English language classrooms. However, as highlighted in the findings, a potential challenge lies in the overreliance on visuals, which may hinder the development of critical literacy if not balanced with explicit instruction in text analysis. This underscores the crucial role of teachers as facilitators of multimodal literacy, not only by providing the materials but also by guiding students to read images and texts in an integrated manner. As Anis & Khan (2023) argue, multimodal strategies should be intentionally designed to accommodate diverse learner needs and promote inclusivity through structured pedagogical approaches.

The perspective of one participant who claimed that graphic novels are irrelevant for critical thinking, reminds us that multimodal literacy must be accompanied by explicit instruction. Without it, students may remain at the surface level of understanding. Therefore, teaching reading through graphic novels must be developed within a framework of visual and reflective literacy instruction, as proposed by Kaowiwattanakul (2024), who found that students responded positively to multimodal literature when it was used to enhance literary competence in a structured learning environment. From a language pedagogy perspective, the use of graphic novels holds the potential to be a differentiative learning tool that supports the needs of students with visual learning preferences and linguistic limitations. However, as noted by Loyola et al. (2024), this approach must be accompanied by explicit teaching on how to interpret multimodal texts so that students do not rely solely on illustrations. Their study highlights that graphic novels alone do not necessarily improve comprehension unless students are equipped with the cognitive tools to decode and reflect on the interplay of image and text.

When one participant failed to connect graphic reading experiences with critical thinking, it signals the importance of teacher intervention in developing reflective literacy. As suggested by Aziz & Aziz (2023), the very visual element that enhances engagement can also be a barrier when students and teachers lack sufficient visual literacy. Therefore, integrating graphic reading activities with guided interpretation and written reflection is essential to foster critical engagement and ensure that graphic novels serve not just as entertainment, but as meaningful learning resources. The findings also suggest that graphic novels may be most beneficial when accompanied by guided multimodal literacy instruction. Activities such as visual-textual analysis, guided questioning, reflective discussions, and reading response tasks may encourage students to engage more critically with both images and text. Through these activities, students can move beyond surface-level comprehension and develop a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed across multiple modes of communication. The findings indicate that the educational value of graphic novels lies not only in promoting reading engagement but also in

providing opportunities for students to develop multimodal literacy through the integration of visual and textual information within EFL reading contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of graphic novels in supporting multimodal literacy and reading comprehension among EFL students in an Extensive Reading course. The findings indicated that participants perceived graphic novels as helpful for integrating visual and textual information, understanding vocabulary and narrative content, increasing engagement in reading activities, and supporting contextual reading strategies. At the same time, participants reported challenges related to overreliance on visual elements and expressed differing views regarding the contribution of graphic novels to critical thinking. The study contributes to the growing body of research on multimodal literacy by providing insights into how EFL students perceive and use graphic novels as multimodal reading resources in an Extensive Reading context. The findings also suggest the importance of guided multimodal literacy instruction to help students critically engage with both visual and textual elements. This study is limited by its small number of participants and its focus on a single educational context. Future research may involve a larger and more diverse group of participants, different educational settings, and a wider range of graphic novels or multimodal texts to provide a broader understanding of their role in EFL learning. The findings highlight the potential of graphic novels as multimodal reading resources that can support EFL students' reading experiences when accompanied by appropriate instructional guidance.

FUNDING

This study was conducted without the support of external funding. All stages of the research process, including data collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation, were undertaken using the researchers' own resources. Despite the absence of financial support from any institution or sponsor, the study was successfully completed through the use of accessible tools and efficient, low-cost methods.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. All participants were provided with detailed information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits prior to their involvement. They were assured of the confidentiality of their identities and informed that all data collected would be used for research purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to confidentiality and ethical constraints. However, the dataset can be made available upon reasonable request for purposes of verification or further analysis, subject to case-by-case evaluation and approval by the relevant institutional ethics review board.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank all participants who contributed to this study. During the preparation of this manuscript, an AI tool was used to assist with grammar correction, language editing, and improving the clarity of the writing. All revisions were reviewed and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Anis, M., & Khan, R. (2023). Integrating multimodal approaches in English language teaching for inclusive education: A pedagogical exploration. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(3), 241-257. www.ujer.org

- Aqila, R., Sutisna Yanto, E., & Ahmad, Y. (2024). Implementing vocabulary journals through digital narrative text for EFL secondary students in learning general vocabulary. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 11, 211-223. <https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v11i2.44>
- Aziz, N. N. N., & Aziz, A. A. (2023). Advantages and challenges of teaching graphic novels in English classrooms: A systematic review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 12(2), 636-661. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v12-i2/16910>
- Barter-Storm, B., & Wik, T. (2020). Using social justice graphic novels in the ELL classroom. *Tesol Journal*, 11(4), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.551>
- Callow, J. (2018). Classroom assessment and picture books — strategies for assessing how students interpret multimodal texts. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 41(1), 5-20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03652002>
- Chen, D. (2023). Exploring the alignment of visual languaging with a pluriliteracies model for deeper learning in English language classrooms. *English Teaching & Learning*, 47(3), 359-383. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-023-00152-x>
- Dahl, A. (2018). The graphic and grammatical structure of written texts. *Studia Neophilologica*, 90(sup1), 24-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274.2018.1531248>
- Ferdiawan, I. K. T., Ratminingsih, N. M., & Adnyani, L. D. S. (2021). Graphic novel development as a reading media for increasing literacy skill of 8th grade Junior High School students. *The Art of Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, 2(2), 169-182. <https://doi.org/10.36663/tatefl.v2i2.123>
- Golding, S., & Verrier, D. (2020). Teaching people to read comics: The impact of a visual literacy intervention on comprehension of educational comics. *Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics*, 12(5), 824-836. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2020.1786419>
- Hajibayova, L., & McCorkhill, M. (2021). Graphic novels through the lens of Goodreads reviews: artistic, textual, or blend of both? *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 54(3), 508-517. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006211033898>
- Hidayat, R., & Susanto, F. A. (2020). Developing multi-literacy skills by creating graphic story in literature class: A project-based learning approach. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 4(2), 83-95. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v4i2.12049>
- Irasuti, I., Ruminda, R., & Bachtar, B. (2024). From text to texture: Elevating English teaching through visual literacy skills. *Jurnal Onoma Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 10(2), 1780-1787. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i2.3595>
- 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)*, 6(9), 487-492. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v6i9.977>
- Kamaeva, R. B., Hussien, M., Rassouli, A., Al-Sudani, A. Q. A. S., Zaini, Q., & Haidari, M. M. F. (2022). Cultural awareness, listening comprehension, listening motivation, and attitude among EFL learners: A gender-based mixed method study. *Education Research International*, 2022, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/8018675>
- Kaowiwattanukul, S. (2024). Voices from the EFL literature classroom: Students' attitudes towards the use of multimodal literature to improve their CEFR literary reading competence at C1 level. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 14, 2889-2899. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tppls.1409.24>
- Kim, S. (2022). A Model and Case of English Literature Instruction Using Autobiographical Graphic Novels for Critical Multicultural Education. *The Korean Society for Teaching English Literature*, 26(3), 35-70. <https://doi.org/10.19068/jtel.2022.26.3.02>

- Kwon, H. (2020). Graphic Novels: Exploring Visual Culture and Multimodal Literacy in Preservice Art Teacher Education. *Art Education*, 73(2), 33-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2019.1695479>
- Loyola, C., Narváez, T., Martín, C. S., & Tapia, V. T. (2024). The Effects of Graphic Novels to Improve Reading Skills on EFL Students. *Facultad de Educación, Escuela de Educación en Inglés*.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.
- Mouchrif, H., Mokhtari, N., & Benzehaf, B. (2023). The Impact of Semantic Mapping on Reading Comprehension Among Moroccan EFL Students. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 4, 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlts.v4i3.353>
- Nasrollahi, K., & Daneshfar, S. (2018). The Effect of Visual Contextual Support and Glossary of Words on Guessing Meaning of New Vocabulary Items in English by Pre-university Male EFL Students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 9(3), 561-572. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0903.16>
- Rajkhowa, B. (2021). Multimodal Stylistics in Graphic Novel: Understanding the Visual Language Syntax in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 4, 45-51. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.1.5>
- Riesco, H. S., & Grizzle, M. Y. (2022). Through the Space and Time of Educational Experiences. *Study and Scrutiny Research on Young Adult Literature*, 5(2), 175-196. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5275.2022.5.2.175-196>
- Rohila, B. (2023). Graphic Novels and Traditional Art Forms: The Indian Context. *Indialogs*, 10, 11-26. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/indialogs.218>
- Serafini, F. (2012). Reading Multimodal Texts in the 21st Century. *Research in the Schools*, 19(1), 26-32.
- Sutrisno, D., Azlinda, Z. A. N., Pambudi, N., Aydawati, E. N., & Sallu, S. (2024). Exploring the benefits of multimodal literacy in English teaching: Engaging students through visual, auditory, and digital modes. *Global Synthesis in Education Journal*, 1(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.61667/xh184f41>
- Toti, U. S., & Hamid, S. A. (2022). An Exploratory Study of Culturally Familiar or Unfamiliar Texts Contributing to Reading Comprehension in EFL Context. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13(5), 981-989. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1305.10>
- Wong, S. W. L., Li, W. O., & Cheung, A. (2022). Graphic Novel Reading Comprehension in Chinese Children With Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). *Reading and Writing*, 36(7), 1631-1649. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-022-10346-7>
- Xu, R. (2024). Enhancing English Language Education in China Through Multimodal Literacy: Opportunities and Challenges. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 44(1), 175-179. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/44/20230133>
- Yawiloeng, R. (2022). Using instructional scaffolding and multimodal texts to enhance reading comprehension: Perceptions and attitudes of EFL students. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(2), 877-894. <https://www.jlls.org>
- Zukowski, S. (2023). (Inter)Mediality, and the Graphic Novel: *Ghost River* as an Indigenous Revision of Records. *The New Americanist*, 2(1), 75-107. <https://doi.org/10.3366/tna.2023.0006>