

# The Impact of Graphic Stories on Student Comprehension: A Case Study on Prep Students at University

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**Abstract:** Graphic stories are stories that are enriched with the contribution of visuals to the narrative of the story. Thus, it is easier for the reader to concentrate on the story. It also turns into a fun activity for the reader. Graphic stories also have educational aspects. Graphic stories can have important effects, especially in gaining the habit of reading to students. In this study, the graphic story version and the text-only version of the same story were distributed to two separate classes. Then, the same test was applied to both classes and the results were evaluated. According to the results obtained, it was seen that the students who read the graphic story understood the story better.

**Keywords:** Graphic Stories, Elements of Graphic Stories, Advantages of Graphic Stories

## 1. Introduction

In foreign language teaching, story reading, as a form of extensive reading, is a very effective method. However, for some students, this activity can be boring. In addition, there may be some factors in the stories that make it difficult to understand the plot and some other points. Graphic stories, on the other hand, provide visual aids, making it very easy for students to understand and follow the story. Likewise, the story turns into a fun activity for the student. Graphic stories also have aspects that attract the reader into the story. Therefore, it can be said that graphic stories are a colorful activity as an extensive reading. How graphic stories help students will be discussed in this study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Graphic Stories

Graphic stories are the telling of a story with accompanying pictures instead of just the written narrative. Thus, the reader sees many scenes in front of him instead of imagining them. In this way, it can be said that it is more memorable for the reader. A graphic story or graphic novel has been described as a sequential art (Weiner, 2010). The graphic story is suitable for use for many literary genres. Many features that are not in the traditional text-only story are presented in graphic stories (Cary, 2006).

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Graphic stories are an example of sequential art, which primarily describes events that are in a meaningful relationship with each other and come in a sequential manner, primarily through pictures. In these stories, the follow-up of the theme is done especially with the pictures that follow one after the other and the texts that complement them. Thus, the information and event series are transmitted to the reader and create an aesthetic effect on the reader (McCloud, 1993).

The presence of written and visual elements together in graphic stories and the presentation of different actions with different visuals make graphic stories attractive. For example, speech and thought bubbles are presented with visuals in a way that the reader can understand. Even different voices are shown with some original visuals from these stories (Cohn, 2013).

### **a. Elements of Graphic Stories**

There are some elements in graphic stories that will make it easier to understand. With the use of these elements, many emotions, thoughts, sounds and movements are effectively presented to the reader visually. In this respect, graphic stories express meaning with the help of many visual elements. In order for all this to happen effectively, there are some elements in graphic stories that will help to be understood.

#### **i. Icon**

Icons used in graphic stories are images that represent a real person or object. Icons, which are drawings, are drawn as the same or similar to the real object. Icons sometimes show a person with all their features and create the impression on those who look at the picture that it is that person. For example, a caricatured icon of a president looks exactly like him, and people who look at it do not have the impression that it could be someone else. Therefore, someone who looks at the real photo or icon of the same person knows that this person is the same person. In some cases, stereotyped icons are used (Errington, 2017). For example, a smiling or crying emoji does not represent any person, but generally reveals this feature of people. In addition, logographic cues are used in some subjects (Reale et al., 2021). According to this, it is understood from that drawing that a person who is described only with lines is male or female.

#### **ii. Panels**

In graphic stories, sometimes speech bubbles cannot convey the message that is intended to be given to the reader. In order to achieve this, a story that explains the situation must be told outside of the speech. In one corner of the scene drawn in graphic stories, situational stories are written in rectangular spaces. These spaces are called panels. These panels where the stories are told are called story panels.

There are "character panels" within the story panels that aim to introduce the characters in the story to the reader. There are other forms of story panels. For example, "plot panels" are panels where the main idea of the story is told. In addition, the panels in which the environment in which a certain part of the story takes place is told are called "setting panels". The panels in which the main conflict point of the story is told are called "climax panels". In addition, the panels in which the theme of the story is presented are called "theme panels". On the other hand, there are images or words that are used to evoke a feeling, arouse excitement about an event or attract attention. For example, in the story, it is very common to describe

someone shooting with a gun with the word "bang" in the image. These panels are called content panels (Monnin, 2010).

### **iii. Gutters**

It is not possible to tell the whole story in graphic stories. Therefore, in the transitions between the panels where the story is told, some visual elements that will fill the gaps are placed on the next panel. Since graphic stories are sequential stories, telling this sequence is possible by filling in the gaps with some visuals. At this point, the reader is expected to establish a mental connection between the events and reach a conclusion. It is possible with gutters to fill these gaps in graphic stories that the reader can see and understand. The reader sees the small parts in the story and understands what they put together and comes to a conclusion. The image used when transitioning from one panel to the other shows the reader the difference of time and space, and also gives a clue as to how the story told develops. The reader fills the gap in his own mind (Wallner, 2019).

Thanks to Gutters, the reader can add his own imagined details to the story, which goes beyond the panel and text on paper. In many cases, the artist who draws the graphic story follows a method that allows the reader to fill the gap between the stories. Here, an important task of the reader is to arrange the sequence of events and fill in the gaps. In this way, the reader rewrites the story with the inferences he has made in the story and plays an active role in the retelling of the story (Low, 2012).

### **b. Advantages of Graphic Stories**

It is much easier to follow the topic in graphic stories than text-only stories. Not only is the reader's capacity to understand the target language effective, but the meaning given to the images and the message given from the images are also effective on the comprehension. Therefore, the comprehension capacity of the reader increases considerably. Moreover, the reader both enjoys what he reads and relaxes (Chan et al., 2019). In addition, affective filters, which greatly delay learning in language learning, lose their effect thanks to graphic stories. Thus, anxiety factor, which is an important obstacle in front of the reader's language learning, is largely eliminated (Evangelina & Louisa, 2018).

The fact that graphic stories make it easier to understand also increases the reader's self-confidence. Thus, the reader begins to be more interested in both the story and the language he learns. This makes language learning easier. Especially for visual learners, graphic stories are an effective learning tool. As visual learners learn more easily by seeing text and image together, they will learn much faster through graphic stories (Hughes et al., 2011).

Another important aspect of graphic stories is that they increase the motivation of the reader. The intrinsic motivation, which is especially necessary for students, is provided more effectively through graphic stories. Intrinsic motivation is a person's motivation to do a job voluntarily and internally, without any external influence. Here, the person with intrinsic motivation does not need any external positive or negative reinforcement. Graphical stories have features that increase intrinsic motivation because they are visual and attractive. In this respect, they are very effective resources for foreign language learners (Bateman et al., 2017).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Model**

In this study, the text-only version of the same story is given to one class, and the graphic story version is given to another class. After these classes read the story, the same comprehension test was applied to both of them. In this study, the story called "The Count of Monte Cristo" was used. The text-only version is a pre-intermediate level story by Penguin Readers (Dumas, 1996). The illustrated and published form of the same story by the Gilberton Company is given to the other class to read. Then, the same test was applied to these two classes and the test results were evaluated. The questions for the test were taken from the comprehension questions at the end of the text-only book. In this study, students who read the graphic story were used as the experimental group, and those who read the text-only story were used as the control group. The results obtained from the test were evaluated. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used together in this study.

##### **a. Sampling**

In this study, students attending the preparatory class at Tishk International University were used. These students knew English at B1 level when they were given books to read. In this study, there are 12 students in the class reading graphic story and 15 students in the class reading text-only story. Gender difference is not taken into account in this study.

##### **b. Data Collection**

In this study, the data collection process started with having students read two different versions of the same book. Then, the results obtained by applying the same test to the students were evaluated.

### **4. Findings**

After the students got the stories, they read it in one week, and at the end of the week, they were given a test to see the results. The maximum mark in this test is 20. The results of the experiment group are as follows:

Table 1-Experiment group test results

Student 1	20
Student 2	20
Student 3	19
Student 4	19
Student 5	17
Student 6	16
Student 7	16
Student 8	15
Student 9	15
Student 10	15
Student 11	13
Student 12	10
Average	16.25

According to these results, the experiment group got the average of 16.25. When we check the results of the control group, we will have the opportunity to compare the results.

Table 2- Control group test results

Student 1	20
Student 2	18
Student 3	17
Student 4	17
Student 5	15
Student 6	15
Student 7	14
Student 8	13
Student 9	13
Student 10	12
Student 11	11
Student 12	11
Student 13	10
Student 14	9
Student 15	9
Average	13.6

According to these results, the experiment group which read the story from the graphic version, got a higher average than the control group which read the story from text-only version.

The comparison of the averages of the two groups is shown below statistically.

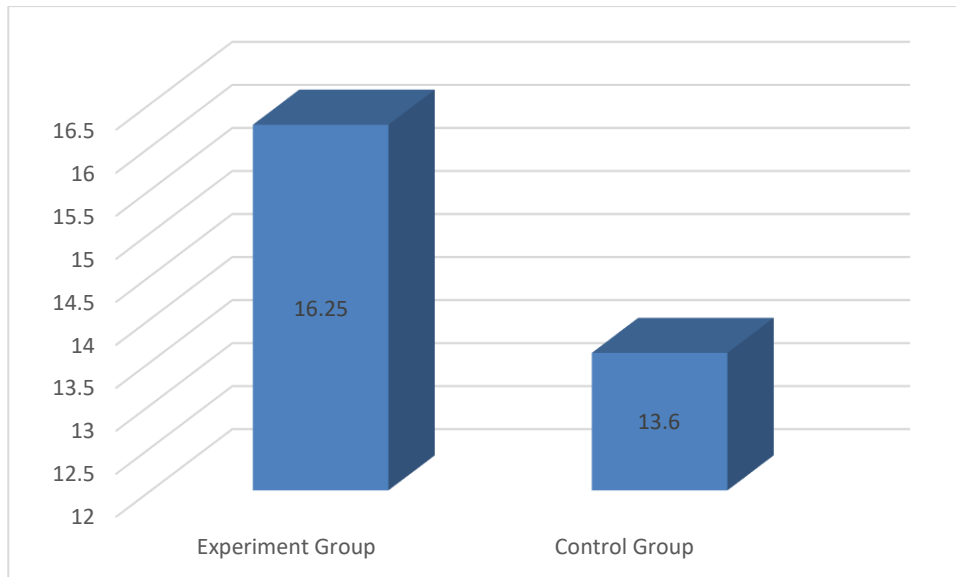


Figure 1: The Comparison of averages

According to these results, experiment group achieved the average of 16.25 while control group got the average of 13.6. It is apparent that the experiment group got better results. The results were also put into SPSS program and the results are as follows:

Table 3: Paired samples statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Experiment	16.25	12	2.649	.684
	Control	13.60	15	3.376	.872

The standard deviation of the experiment group is 2.6 while that of control group is 3.3. According to these results, the standard deviation of the experiment group is lower than the other one. It means the range between the marks in experiment group is lower than the other. There is not much difference between the highest and the lowest marks in experiment group while it is higher in control group, which shows the results of experiment group is better in distribution to the whole class.

Table 3: Paired Sample Statistics 2

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.
Pair	Experiment - Control	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		4.245	14	.001
		2.650	2.418	.624	Lower	Upper			
1	- Control	2.650	2.418	.624	1.311	3.989	4.245	14	.001

According to these results, p value is lower than 0.05 and it means that there is significant difference between the two groups. As a result, graphic story made a significant difference in comprehending the story.

## 5. Discussion

The results obtained in this study, which compared the graphic story with the text-only story, show that the graphic story is much more vividly memorable. There is another point to be noted here. Of the two classes used in the study, the control group which was the lower performing class in this study are better than the class used as the experimental group in terms of performance throughout the year. For example, the average of the last 3 exams of these two classes clearly reveals the difference. While the average of the grades of the control group from the last 3 exams was 74.3, the average of the grades of the experimental group from the last 3 exams was 65.7. As such, we can predict that if the groups had been changed, much different results could have been obtained.

The important aspect of graphic stories for students is that the visual aspect of the icons used is memorable. Therefore, the student who gets used to an icon easily follows the actions of the same character throughout the story without any difficulty. However, in a text-only story, this tracking is more difficult. One of the important concepts that contributes to the fluency of the story is the gutters used in graphic stories (Wallner, 2019). In this way, students are actively involved in the story and follow the story using their own intuitions on many occasions. Thus, the student mentally provides an active participation in the story. On the other hand, in a text-only story, the student follows events and people with greater difficulty.

The educational aspect of graphic stories and comics has long been discussed (Akcanca, 2020). The use of these for entertainment purposes was not considered appropriate in terms of education (Botzakis, 2009). However, this type of expression, which is defined as sequential art, provides many advantages. In fact, those who oppose this idea have arguments that can be considered right. For example, when we compare the graphic story with the text-only story, we see that the text-only story has a much richer vocabulary. Thus, students are exposed to more words and sentence structures. In this respect, we can say that it is more instructive in the long run. However, acquiring the habit of reading for some students is something

that requires a lot of effort. In acquiring this habit, students' reading from the graphic story has the potential to give very effective results. Therefore, it is appropriate to use graphic stories to help students gain reading habits.

In this study, the advantages of graphic stories were shown only by doing tests to the students. Many other ways can be used to indicate different dimensions that can gain much more than we can expect.

## 6. Conclusion

Graphic stories are useful tools for students to comprehend better and gain a habit of reading. Even with relatively weak students, it works well to read from these stories. In this way, they can also gain more confidence because they understand the story much easier with the help of visual aids. However, it does not seem to be a good idea to have the students read all the stories from graphic stories because they never include as many language elements as text-only stories.

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**APPENDIX- The test given to the students**

**1-) What feelings are there between these people? Are they friends or enemies? Give reasons for your answers.**

Edmond and Mercedes

Danglars and Edmond

Mr Morrel and Edmond

Caderousse and Edmond

Danglars and Caderousse

**Answer these questions.**

2-) Where was Dantes when the soldiers came?

3-) Who was Captain Leclerc?

4-) Why did Dantes visit Marshal Bertrand?

5-) Why is the judge afraid when he sees the name and address on the letter?

6-) Where does Villefort send Dantes?

7-) Why is Dantes afraid when he sees the prison?

8-) What does Dantes ask for in the prison?

9-) Why do the soldiers put Dantes in an underground room?

10-) Who visits the prisoners' rooms?

11-) Why can't the chief officer help Dantes?

**Complete these sentences.**

12-) Edmond breaks his water pot because

13-) He puts back the big stone and moves his bed to

14-) When part of the floor in his room falls away, Dantes

15-) Before Faria came to the Chateau d'If, he

16-) Dantes gives the red liquid to Faria because

17-) Cesare Borgia needs money to

18-) Spada dies because

19-) Cesare Borgia looks for the Spada treasure but

20-) Faria burns a piece of paper and