

## Developing Thematic Economic Comic with Characters for Early Childhood

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**Abstract.** This study aims at developing a thematic economic comic with character to improve students' learning motivation and results. This research and development underwent 5 stages including pre - need analysis, identification of materials, development, and design of the comic, and trials. After developing the product, the feasibility was tested by experts to match between the content and characters internalized into the narration. The appropriateness between materials and context and characters internalized into the comic attracts children to read because it illustrates various economic activities in the real world performed on a daily basis. Assessment by design expert is to see the feasibilities of structure, display of figures, and characters of the thematic economic comic. Data were gathered using an instrument both in assessment by experts and field trials. The results show that the thematic economic comic with character is very feasible to be developed and trialed to users. Results of field trials in INPRES IKIP shows that elementary school students experienced an increase in their learning results based on pretest (69.13) and posttest (88,72). It means that in general, students understand materials presented in the comic although it is only provided as supplementary material for thematic learning at school. As a result, the economic values with characters can be understood by children early so that in the future, they can be responsible economic actors.

**Keywords:** Comic with characters, thematic economy, learning results, local wisdom, effective learning media

## INTRODUCTION

Effective and enjoyable learning is a must to ensure the quality of education at school. High quality education is the way to bear a high quality of human resources. One of the indicators is the comprehensiveness and the continuity to carry out education in all aspects

of life (Rahmatullah & Inanna, 2017). Education is the medium to develop human resources with good quality who are ready to face any changes (Alazam et al., 2012). Education is a very important need to develop humans with knowledge, morals, and dignity

(Nasrullah et al., 2018). Therefore, education is oriented to create a generation with characters as a solution for moral decadency experienced by the nowadays young generation (Agung, 2018). The implementation of education should internalize moral values applicable in any aspect of the daily lives (Buchori & Setyawati, 2015). Character is important to be integrated into the learning process to build high quality of generation (Tsai, 2012).

One of the factors determining the success of learning is the teacher (Rahmatullah & Inanna, 2019). Teachers as educator resources should be ready and have the ability to respond to the development of knowledge and technology by mastering various learning models, methods, and media to be applied in classroom learning (Ramli et al., 2018). In other words, the quality of learning is determined by the quality of the teacher. High quality of teachers will produce a good quality of education, and if teachers show good progress in their performance, the education world will become better too, especially in creating educated generations (Farmawati et al., 2018). It means that teachers have the responsibility to implement a learning system to successfully provide education in the school. The success of learning at school depends on the teachers' expertise and competence to motivate students. Teachers or tutors should dominantly function as learning facilitators (Jauhari, 2018). Teachers as facilitators and motivators should have the competence to develop teaching media that can stimulate students' spirit to learn and help them to understand the materials (Yulianti et al., 2019).

The design of the learning materials used in the classroom is an influential factor in the success of the learning. It is because, students are supported to feel comfortable to join the learning and assisted to comprehend the materials easily (Rokhayani et al., 2014). Teaching media is an integral component in learning thus its implementation affects the students' learning results (Ramli et al., 2018). Teachers' ability to design and implement the learning design is the key to the success of enjoyable learning.

Effective and enjoyable learning is collaborative with and focused on students (B Boholano, 2017). Therefore, the media should be in accordance with the learning goals and able to make students enjoy and easy to understand the material content (Rokhayani et

al., 2014). The learning media should consider the illustration applied to deliver the message to the learners. One of the illustrations frequently used for learning material is comic. The use of a comic in teaching has the purpose to educate children with characters adopted based on their age (Yulianti et al., 2016). Comic educates children through content and character that are visualized to make them easier to understand (Honarvar & Rahimi, 2011).

The comic is a resource that can help students in learning (Saputro, 2015). The comic should be matched with the need for teaching and contains messages that can stimulate the interest to learn. As a teaching media, it is a tool to deliver the instructional message that can function well as visual communication media as the context refers to the communication process between students and learning resources (Ntobuo et al., 2018). The comic is a medium to deliver information interestingly because it contains a story delivered using pictures so that it can trigger the motivation to learn (Negrete, 2013).

Interesting and creative learning media like comics can integrate character values based on the economic activities performed by children in their daily activities. Characters can be defined as the way of thinking and behaving which characterize how individuals live and collaborate in the family, society, and nations (Kusnida et al., 2015). The competence that is developed has the role to grow the character of the young generation to have the mindset, attitude, and behavior in accordance with the nation's identity (Rahmatullah et al., 2019). The uniqueness of the comic is that it has continuous drawing art. The continuity makes the comic alive when being read so that the message can be easily delivered. The comic can be utilized to deliver knowledge, enrich the vocabulary bank and reading skills, and increase students' interest to read (Sudjana et al., 2011).

The design of the thematic economic comic with character is an alternative to teach economics. Occasionally, elementary school students have difficulties in understanding the economic activities performed in their daily lives. The content of economics is presented thematically but still in a very general way and less emphasis on character values that should be habituated to children in their daily lives. Theoretically, they can understand the economic activities but practically, they still

need to learn more. By using the comic, besides understanding the content, students can also actualize it practically in their daily lives. The comic is a visual media with interesting figures so that it can trigger students to learn and can be an alternative method to vary learning activities (Afrilyasanti & Basthomi, 2011).

The comic was designed using cartoons illustrating characters of economic activity actors that are connected. The story of the comic is various so that it stimulates students' curiosity to learn the content of the comic. Moreover, it tells about daily customs presented thematically including consumption, production, money, and other general economic activities that are generally performed by early childhood. Thus, comic can be an effective and efficient teaching media because it is presented interestingly and creatively so that it stimulates students' interest to learn (Maxtuti & Ambarwati, 2013). The comic is interested to be used for learning because the narration, the structure of the literature, figures, and colors, and the techniques of photography are compiled into one media (Maxtuti & Ambarwati, 2013). A comic can be used for two-way learning as a teaching aid and learning media that can be independently used by students (Saputro, 2015).

Thematic learning is defined as learning that is planned based on particular themes (Trianto, 2016). Thematic learning has an actual theme, closely related to students' world, and correlated with the daily lives (Muklis, 2012). The theme becomes the unifier of some different materials. Thematic learning should choose materials from different subjects that are possibly correlated. Thus, the selected materials can deliver the theme meaningfully presented in the comic.

In this study, the comic is used as the media to deliver information or meaning of the materials related to economic activities that are usually performed by children in their daily lives. The characterization and short dialog completed with interesting figures and Bugis and Makassar characters make the comic becoming more interesting. The comic is planned and designed based on the needs of the learning especially for elementary school students and they are expected able to understand the economic activities generally performed in their daily lives. Thus, the comic can be additional teaching media and can stimulate students' interest to read

(Kristiyaningrum, 2017).

## **METHOD**

This is a Research and Development referring to the system introduced by Dick & Carey (2001) considering that: (a) the model has some systematic stages which are suitable for developing teaching design, (b) the component that is developed is procedural and correlated each other and generally used and referred by many learning design development, and (c) it is relatively more simple but the stages and components which are developed are more detailed from the beginning of the step to the final product. As has been explained previously, the study followed five stages as follows: (a) Stage I. Initial Need Analysis; (b) Stage II. The identification of materials about economic activities that will be developed into the comic; (c) Stage III. The development or design of the comic; (d) Stage IV. Formulation of the thematic economic comic with characters; (e) Stage V. Trial and revision and data collection instruments (pretest and posttest).

In the development process, we need input from experts of design and material to validate the product design that has been developed. After revising based on the suggestion and advice from experts, we conducted trials to 20 5th-grade students at Elementary School Inpres.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the initial analysis or need analysis, and after identifying the materials to be developed related to consumption, needs, wants, barter, transaction, buyers, loss, production, environment, profit, saving, and bank, for the next stage, we developed a thematic economic comic with characters for early childhood. Some steps followed in developing the comic include creating the synopsis, creating the story script or scenario, creating the storyboard/sketching, line art, coloring, finishing, typesetting, validating, and revising the comic.

A synopsis is necessary to briefly illustrate a theme or the thematic economic materials that will be presented in the comic. Story script or scenario outlines the sequence of scenes, background of place and circumstances, and dialog, arranged in dramatic structure content to be a guideline in the writing process

of each comic part or panel. Storyboard or program script of the thematic economic comic is the list of scenes to be narrated including figures and description that aims to assist students in achieving the learning goals. Line-art focuses on coloring to make the comic more interested and to have color consistency. The last parts of the developmental stage are finishing and typesetting. They included labeling, watermarking, branding, and the selection of font types and sizes.

Materials presented in the comic are supplementary for thematic learning in elementary school. The purpose is to build economic understanding, behavior, and attitude to children early based on the local economic characters of Bugis-Makassar societies.

The interpretation of data from the test performed by the experts of materials showed

the average score of 89.2 which means that the thematic economic comic with characters that was developed is very feasible for the trial step. Suggestions from material experts to improve the comic design include “ the cover of the comic should show the characters to illustrate the roles that characterize the characters in the comic”. It can be seen in figure 1. Thus, readers can more easily understand the dialogue performed by each character in the comic.

The average score of assessment performed by design experts was 90.5 indicating that the design of the comic was feasible for the trial step. The experts suggest improving the color of the cover and the consistency of terms used in the comic. It can be seen in figure 1



Figure 1. he design of the comic

The interpretation of the assessment of the comic performed limitedly by students at

Elementary School Inpres IKIP can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Results of Analysis of Limited Assessment on Thematic Economic Comic by Students

No	Categories	Average Scores	Criteria
1	The linkages between the materials and daily lives	91.5	Very feasible
2	The completeness of the materials	85	Feasible
3	The attractiveness of the materials	93,4	Very feasible
Average Scores		89,96	Very feasible

Source: Results of data processing (assessments by students), 2020

Assessment performed by students on the comic design shows a score of 89.96. It

means that the comic is very feasible and can be easily understood by students so that it can be continued to field trials.

In terms of content, language, and graphs, in general, the comic which was developed was feasible based on the average score the aspects got. Thus, the design of the comic can be continued to the field trial at Elementary School Inpres IKIP.

The field trial of the design of the thematic economic comic with characters was performed on 20 fifth grade elementary school students of Inpres IKIP. In the trial, we measured the learning results using pretest and posttest to evaluate the effectiveness of the thematic economic comic. The instruments used to collect data for field trials were pretest and posttest. Results of pretest and posttest are presented in the table below:

**Table 2.** The Average Scores of Pretest and Posttest

Activities	Average Scores	Qualifications
Pretest	69,13	Good
Posttest	88,72	Very Good

Source: pretest and posttest data, 2020

Based on table 2, it can be concluded that the average score obtained by students in the pretest is 69,13 while the posttest shows the average score of 88,72. The results indicate that there is an increase in students learning results after treated with the thematic economic comic with characters based on students' understanding of the thematic economic subject. Thus, the increase of test results explains that in general, students involved as trial subjects in this study had understood the content of the comic which was developed.

The comic that was developed is an interesting learning media to be used for teaching especially in early childhood. In this study, the comic was a supplementary or learning aid that can be used by teachers to ease students understand the thematic learning about economics like consumption, needs and want, primary needs, buyers, transaction, loss, production, environment, barter, profit, and bank. The implementation of the media through trial activities, increased the students learning interest and results (see table 2), as also mentioned by (Arini et al., 2017) that the use of comics as a learning aid can boost students' learning interest.

In general, learning utilizing the thematic economic comic with characters is more interesting especially for elementary students. Besides more practical, the story content in the comic represents the condition experienced by students in their daily lives. It absolutely stimulates students' happiness and motivation to use the comic for learning aid or media. A study carried out by (Aslamiyah et

al., 2017) found that comics can be used in the learning process to help students to understand the learning materials. They also stated that students are more motivated to learn by using comics. Furthermore, in the study, it was mentioned that comics can increase students' learning motivation.

Materials narrated in the comic that was developed has attracted students to use the comic in the learning process. The language style is matched with the characteristics of children in the elementary school so that they can understand and accept advice intrinsically and extrinsically presented in the comic. The plot was designed more flexibly so that students can be interested to read the comic thus it supported the information easier to be delivered. (Negrete, 2013) mentioned that a comic is a preferable narration to deliver information. Therefore, it is important to integrate character values in the plot narrated in the comic so that students can apply them in their daily lives. Those characters include gratefulness, mutual respect, nationalism, independence, and local values or characters of Bugis-Makassar. The character of gratefulness can be seen in the following fragment Picture 2.

Values of characters are important to be integrated into the comic to make them more interested to be applied by students in their daily lives. It can build generations with mindset, attitude, and behavior in accordance with the principles or values of lives. A study conducted by (Kusnida et al., 2015) defines character as the way of thinking and acting that characterized individuals to live and collaborate in the family, society, and nations.

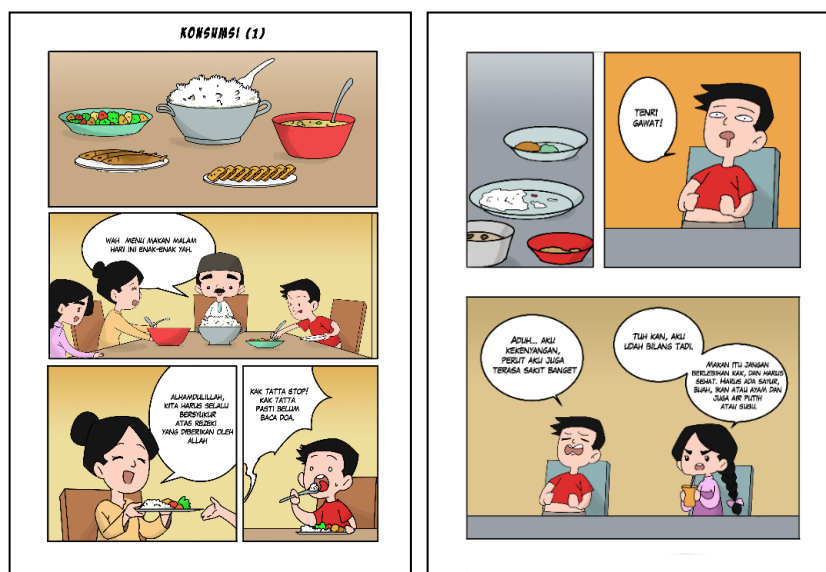


Figure 2. examples of the character load of gratitude

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The development of a thematic economic comic with characters for early childhood has the purpose to provide supplementary media for learning at the elementary education level and for any kids in general. The content of the economics subject developed in the comic is based on the daily activities generally performed by children in their daily lives like consumption, needs and wants, primary needs, buyers, transaction, loss, barter, profit, and bank. Besides that, the integration of characters into the comic content is important to build a responsible generation. Some values or characters that should be internalized into the comic are gratefulness, mutual respect, nationalism, independence, and local values or characters of Bugis-Makassar. Using thematic economic comics with characters for early childhood is important to increase the learning motivation and result. For further development, the material provided in the comic should be widened so that it can be also used by teenagers and adults collectives.

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