



Exploring the Role of Animated Fable in Facilitating Eighth Grade Students' Narrative Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore how animated fables facilitate students' narrative comprehension and to investigate students' perceptions of learning narrative texts through animated fables. This study employed a qualitative research design using thematic analysis. The participants consisted of one English teacher and six eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli who were selected through purposive sampling based on their English summative assessment scores to represent high, medium-, and low-achieving students. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations documented in field notes, and students' worksheets. The data were analyzed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data source triangulation was conducted by comparing the data obtained from interviews, field notes, and students' worksheets. The findings revealed two major themes. The first theme showed that animated fables facilitated students' narrative comprehension through five categories: Visual Support, Increased Engagement, Ease of Understanding, Dual Coding, and Audio Support, with Visual Support emerging as the most dominant category. Visual elements, character movements, and narration enabled students to understand the storyline, narrative structure, and moral values more effectively. The second theme indicated that students had positive perceptions of learning through animated fables. Their perceptions were reflected in five categories: Interesting, Emotional Response, Enjoyable, Perceived Learning Benefits, and Learning Preference, with Interesting emerging as the most frequently identified category. Overall, students perceived animated fables as an engaging, enjoyable, and beneficial learning medium that helped them comprehend narrative texts. In conclusion, animated fables effectively facilitated students' narrative comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

English language learning at the junior high school level places great emphasis on developing four language skills in students, namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing. At this level, these four skills are not only taught as separate competencies, but are integrally directed toward the development of

students' comprehension, particularly students' narrative comprehension, which is a core objective of English learning in junior high schools. These four skills play a fundamental role in building students' comprehension abilities because they form the basis for mastery of knowledge, literacy skills, and even the interpretation of reading materials.

At the junior high school level, students' comprehension skills are not limited to literacy. More than that, students must be able to comprehend the plot, characters in the text, cause and effect relationships, and the moral message conveyed through the text. These elements are central components of narrative comprehension, which requires students to actively construct meaning rather than merely decode words. Thus, learning about texts becomes complex in terms of students' comprehension, which helps students understand the text itself (Khoirunnisa, 2019).

Currently, the development of an independent curriculum requires students to be able to master various types of texts, one of which is narrative text. Narrative text itself consists of several types of texts such as myths, legends, fairy tales, folk tales, fables, and several others. Among these narrative genres, fables are commonly introduced at the junior high school level because of their simple structure, familiar characters, and strong moral messages, which align with the goals of narrative competencies in the English curriculum for UPTD SMP as outlined in the Capaian Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris (Kemendikbudristek, 2025). Of course, in terms of understanding narrative text, students must be given appropriate intervention. Without the right intervention, this could potentially weaken the quality of students' English education through narrative texts. One simple narrative text in the junior high school curriculum that aims to improve students' narrative skills is fables.

In narrative learning, one of the materials that can develop students' abilities and understanding is fables. Fables are short stories usually featuring animal characters or figures, the content of which aims to present knowledge and lessons that are an important part of the literature curriculum in almost all parts of the world by conveying moral messages (Pebriyani et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2023). Fables play a crucial role in studying English because its function is not only as a medium to improve students' language skills but also to teach moral values and enhance critical thinking among students, especially in narrative text learning.

However, despite their seemingly simple form, fables present specific comprehension challenges for junior high school students. From a linguistic perspective, many students also experience difficulties in understanding descriptive vocabulary, plot or storyline, characters and their actions, as well as

figurative phrases that often appear in fables. In addition, students are required to infer moral values implicitly, follow narrative sequences accurately, and interpret symbolic meanings embedded in animal characters. This condition is further exacerbated by the characteristics of classroom learning, which still predominantly uses conventional methods where teachers instruct students to read long texts individually or even listen to the teacher's explanations without adequate visual media support. This learning pattern will hinder students in constructing meaning, especially for students who have visual and audiovisual learning styles.

The limitations above show that every teacher or instructor is compelled to innovate in learning, which is expected to facilitate the process of understanding the material by students in a more interesting, enjoyable, multisensory, and meaningful way every day. Currently, there are many methods or approaches that can be used and adapted by teachers. One recommendation from recent research is the use of multimedia in audiovisual form, especially animated. Animated fables are known to not only display attractive images, but also present material that allows for the presentation of characters, storylines, and visual kinesthetic events that are easier for students to understand and interpret.

In line with this, the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) emphasize that information obtained from a combination of verbal and visual channels will form and present stronger mental representations, thereby improving comprehension (Mayer, 2020). Previous research has found that animation is effective in English language learning. Research by (Utama, 2024) shows that animation increases students' comprehension by helping to visualize the plot and characters. This is supported by research from Azhimia (2023) which reveals that animation has a significant impact in increasing the average comprehension score of students with effectiveness in themes and characters. Research by Handari et al., (2023) confirms that animation plays a special role in improving the comprehension of 70% of students and in visualizing narrative conflicts. However, most of these studies emphasize general reading comprehension outcomes and rely heavily on quantitative measurements, with limited exploration of how students actually construct meaning from narrative elements. Thus, the researchers conclude that narrative texts not only function as a learning medium to fill learning gaps but can also improve students' comprehension of narrative learning materials. These findings reinforce the argument that narrative learning requires media that is not only informative but also capable of visualizing stories and facilitating the student learning process in terms of natural comprehension.

Therefore, this study addresses the gap by qualitatively exploring how animated fables facilitate students' understanding of orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value in a rural Nias context. Given the persistent difficulties faced by eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan in identifying plot development, character actions, and implicit moral values in fables texts and the limited integration of audiovisual media in current classroom practice there is a need for an instructional approach that can visualize narrative events and scaffold students' meaning-making.

Although prior studies generally report positive effects of animated on students' reading or narrative comprehension, most of them emphasize test-score gains and provide limited qualitative explanation of how learners construct comprehension of key narrative elements, particularly, complication, resolution, and moral value, in underrepresented rural contexts such as the Nias Islands. Therefore, grounded in the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2020), the present study qualitatively explores how animated fables facilitate eighth-grade students' comprehension of fables narratives and investigates students' perceptions of learning through animated fables in this rural classroom setting.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The design was selected because the study aimed to explore and describe students' narrative comprehension and their experiences when learning fable narratives through animated fables. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of animation statistically, the study focused on describing students' understanding, classroom responses, perceptions, and learning experiences.

The research was conducted at UPTD SMP Negeri 4 Gunungsitoli Selatan. The participants of the classroom learning activities consisted of 23 eighth-grade students. The students participated in the learning activities involving two animated fables. From the classroom participants, six students were selected as interview informants. The six students represented different levels of English ability, consisting of two high-ability students, two medium-ability students, and two low-ability students. In addition, one English teacher who taught the eighth-grade class participated as a supporting informant. The variation among student informants was intended to obtain different perspectives regarding their comprehension and experiences during the learning process.

The data in this study were primarily qualitative and were obtained from semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and documentation in the form of students' worksheets. The interviews were conducted with six

selected students and one English teacher. Student interviews focused on their understanding of the narrative structure and moral values, as well as their learning experiences with animated fables. The teacher interview focused on students' responses, engagement, understanding of the narrative structure, moral values, and the effectiveness of animated fables in the learning context.

The observations were conducted using field notes. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer and observed students during the learning activities. The observation focused on students' engagement while watching the animations, their visual attention, responses to scenes, participation in discussions, and their ability to identify narrative elements. The observation also included students' difficulties, such as structural confusion, the need for scaffolding, and off-task behaviour during comprehension activities.

Two animated fables were used as the instructional materials: The Tortoise and the Hare and The Fox and the Crow. The students watched the animations and subsequently completed worksheets related to the narrative elements. The worksheets examined students' understanding of orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value. The students' responses were used as supporting documentation for the interview and observation data.

The research process consisted of several stages. First, the researcher prepared the animated fables, interview instruments, observation field notes, and worksheets. Second, the animated fables were presented to the students during the learning activities. Third, the researcher observed students' behaviours and responses while they watched and discussed the stories. Fourth, students completed the worksheets related to the stories. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected students and the English teacher to obtain deeper information about students' comprehension and learning experiences.

The data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The researcher first organized and reduced the data obtained from interviews, observations, and worksheets. Relevant statements and observations were identified and coded according to their relationship with the research questions. The codes were then grouped into categories and themes. The analysis resulted in themes related to the facilitation of narrative comprehension and students' perceptions of animated fable learning.

The analysis of the facilitation process identified six categories: visual support, audio support, dual coding, engagement, emotional response, and ease of understanding. These categories were compared across interview data, field

notes, and students' worksheet results. Data from different sources were triangulated to strengthen the interpretation of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The results of the study were obtained from interviews with six students and one English teacher, classroom observations, and students' worksheets. The data showed that animated fables supported students' comprehension of narrative texts in several ways. The findings were organized according to the four narrative elements orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value and the processes through which animated fables facilitated students' comprehension.

The analysis identified six facilitation processes: visual support, audio support, dual coding, engagement, emotional response, and ease of understanding. Among these categories, visual support appeared most frequently, followed by engagement and ease of understanding. These findings indicate that students relied strongly on the visual representation of characters, settings, actions, and events when understanding the animated fables.

The students generally demonstrated good understanding of the orientation of the two animated fables. They were able to identify the main characters and the setting of the stories. The animated presentation provided direct visual information that helped students recognize the characters and understand the initial situation. The visual representation of the characters and their surroundings helped students recognize the orientation without depending entirely on written descriptions.

The complication was the narrative element that presented greater difficulty for some students. Students were generally able to identify the main problem, but several students required clarification when explaining why the conflict occurred or how the events were connected. In *The Tortoise and the Hare*, students understood that the conflict involved the hare challenging the tortoise to a race. In *The Fox and the Crow*, students recognized the fox's attempt to obtain the cheese from the crow. However, explaining the development of the conflict required greater attention to the sequence of events.

Students generally demonstrated good comprehension of the resolution. They were able to explain how the problems in the stories were resolved and recall important events at the end of the narratives. The worksheet results also showed that most students answered the resolution questions correctly. However, several students made minor errors when recalling specific details of the ending.

Moral value was the narrative element that students understood most consistently. Almost all students were able to identify the lessons presented in the two fables. The worksheet results showed that students successfully answered the moral-value questions. This indicates that animated fables not only helped students follow narrative events but also supported their understanding of the messages conveyed through the stories.

Facilitation of Narrative Comprehension through Animated Fables

The data revealed six processes through which animated fables facilitated students' narrative comprehension that show in chart below.

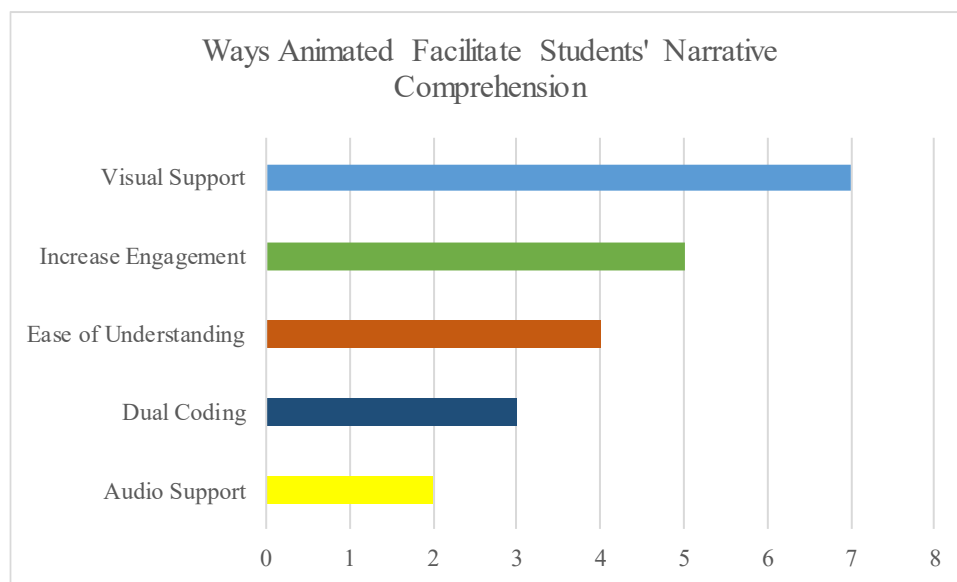


Figure 1.

Ways animated facilitate students comprehension

First, visual support helped students understand characters, settings, movements, and events. Students could observe what happened directly through the animation, making the storyline easier to follow. Second, audio support helped students follow narration, dialogue, and sound. Audio information complemented the visual information and helped students understand the sequence and meaning of events. Third, dual coding occurred when students simultaneously received visual and auditory information. The combination of images, movement, narration, and subtitles helped students connect different forms of information while understanding the story. Fourth, engagement was reflected in students' attention, participation, and responses while watching the animations. Students showed interest in the scenes and participated in discussions after viewing. Fifth, emotional response appeared through students' laughter, surprise, enjoyment, and other emotional reactions to the animated scenes. Sixth, ease of understanding was reflected in students' perceptions that

animated fables made the stories easier to understand than relying only on written explanations. These six processes demonstrate that the role of animated fables was not limited to presenting the story visually. Instead, the animations created a multimodal learning experience involving cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects of learning.

Students' Perceptions of Learning Fable Narratives through Animated Fables

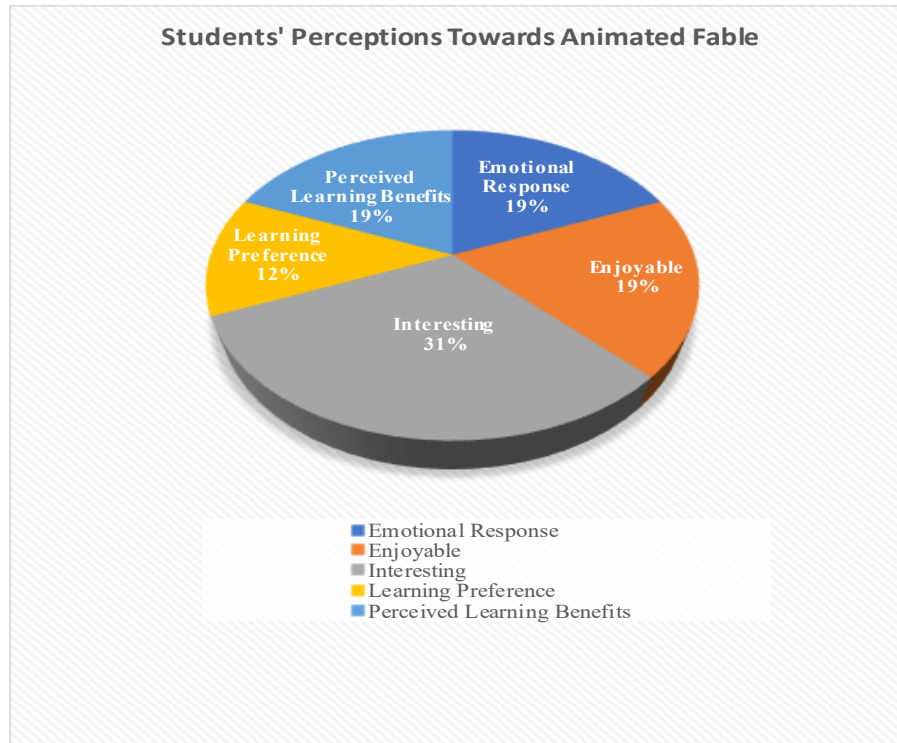


Figure 2.

Percentage of Students Perceptions Toward Animated Fable

As presented in Chart 2, Interesting emerged as the most dominant category, representing 31% of the coded responses. Most students described animated fables as attractive because the combination of moving images, colours, and narration made the stories more engaging than conventional text-based learning. Several students stated that animation encouraged them to pay closer attention to the lesson and remain focused throughout the learning activities.

The second category was Emotional Response, accounting for 19% of the coded data. Students expressed positive emotional reactions such as happiness, excitement, and curiosity while watching the animated fables. These emotions created a more comfortable learning atmosphere and encouraged students to participate actively during classroom activities.

Similarly, Enjoyable also represented 19% of the coded responses. Students explained that learning through animated fables was fun and reduced the feeling of boredom commonly experienced during reading activities. The entertaining

nature of animation motivated them to complete the learning tasks with greater enthusiasm.

Another category, Perceived Learning Benefits (19%), reflected students' beliefs that animated fables helped them understand the story more effectively. Students reported that they could identify the sequence of events, characters, and moral values more easily because the information was presented through both visual and auditory modes.

Finally, Learning Preference accounted for 13% of the coded responses, making it the least frequent category. Although most students preferred animated fables, one participant indicated a preference for reading the written text because it allowed greater imagination while following the story. This finding suggests that students possess different learning preferences even when generally responding positively to animated learning materials.

Overall, the coding results indicate that students held predominantly positive perceptions toward learning fable narratives through animated fables. The predominance of the Interesting category suggests that students valued animation primarily because it increased their interest and attention during learning. Meanwhile, the presence of Learning Preference demonstrates that although animation was generally well received, individual differences in preferred learning modes remained evident among the participants.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students held positive perceptions toward learning fable narratives through animated fables. Their responses consistently indicated that animation created an enjoyable learning environment, increased motivation, reduced the difficulties associated with reading English texts, and promoted active classroom participation. These perceptions were consistently reflected across the interview data, classroom observations, and students' learning behaviors documented during the implementation of the lessons. Consequently, animated fables were perceived not only as instructional media but also as learning experiences that encouraged students to engage more confidently and meaningfully with narrative texts.

Discussion

The findings indicate that animated fables facilitated students' narrative comprehension by providing multiple forms of support during the learning process. The most prominent form was visual support. Students were able to observe characters, settings, movements, and events directly through the animation. This helped them construct an understanding of the story, particularly when identifying the orientation and following the sequence of events.

This finding is relevant to the use of multimedia in language learning because students learning English may experience difficulties when narrative information is presented only through written language. The visual representation provides contextual information that can help students interpret the meaning of events. In this study, students did not have to depend exclusively on their ability to decode every English word because the actions and expressions of the animated characters provided additional information.

Audio support also contributed to students' comprehension. Narration, dialogue, and sound effects provided verbal information that complemented the visual representation. The findings therefore indicate that animated fables supported students through the combination of visual and auditory information rather than through animation alone.

The finding concerning dual coding further shows the relationship between visual and audio support. When students saw the characters performing an action while simultaneously hearing the narration or dialogue, they could connect the two forms of information. This process helped them follow the storyline and understand the meaning of events.

The findings also showed that animated fables contributed to students' engagement. Students demonstrated attention while watching the animations and responded to scenes through laughter, comments, and participation in subsequent discussions. The interesting and enjoyable nature of the animations encouraged students to remain involved in the learning process.

However, the findings also demonstrate that animated fables did not automatically eliminate comprehension difficulties. The complication was more difficult for some students than orientation, resolution, and moral value. This difference is important because understanding a complication requires students to identify the central problem and understand the relationship between events. Therefore, teachers still need to provide questions, explanations, and scaffolding after or during viewing.

The strong understanding of moral values is another important finding. Students were able to identify the lessons of the two fables and, in some cases, connect those lessons with situations in their daily lives. This suggests that the combination of concrete story events and animated character behaviour helped students recognize the messages embedded in the narratives.

The findings also indicate that students generally perceived animated fables positively. Students considered the learning activity interesting and enjoyable and perceived that animation helped them understand the stories. Nevertheless, individual preferences were also present. Some students preferred reading because they felt that reading allowed them to imagine the story independently.

Overall, the findings suggest that animated fables can be used as a supporting medium for narrative instruction when accompanied by appropriate learning activities. Teachers can use animated fables to introduce stories, develop students' understanding of narrative structure, stimulate discussion, and help students identify moral values. However, teachers should pay particular attention to the complication stage and provide guiding questions or explanations to help students understand the development of the conflict.

CONCLUSION

The study found that animated fables facilitated eighth-grade students' narrative comprehension through visual support, audio support, dual coding, engagement, emotional response, and ease of understanding. These processes helped students understand the narrative elements of orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value in *The Tortoise and the Hare* and *The Fox and the Crow*. Students generally demonstrated good understanding of the stories, particularly in identifying the characters and settings, following the resolution, and interpreting the moral values. However, the complication remained the narrative element that required greater attention and teacher support.

The contribution of this study lies in providing a qualitative description of how animated fables facilitate narrative comprehension, rather than focusing only on whether students obtain higher learning outcomes. The findings show that animated fables can function as a multimodal learning medium that supports students cognitively, behaviourally, and emotionally during narrative learning.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. It was conducted in one eighth-grade class at one school and focused on only two animated fables. The classroom participants consisted of 23 students, while six students were selected as interview informants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all eighth-grade students or other educational contexts. Future research could involve more participants, different schools, longer implementation periods, and a wider variety of animated narrative materials. Future studies could also combine qualitative findings with quantitative measures to examine students' narrative comprehension more broadly.

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