

## **Understanding German Grammar Through Reading Line Webtoon Digital Comics in Telegram Community**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to describe German grammar learning through reading Webtoon and learners' responses in using Line Webtoon as a learning medium. The research subjects used were members of the telegram group "Belajar Niveau A2". The research was conducted asynchronously through *chat* and phone calls using the telegram application. The research used a qualitative descriptive approach. The data were collected using questionnaire and interview techniques, while the analysis technique used the 6P analysis model (approach, excavation, deepening, matching, interpretation, and presentation). The results showed that learning using Line Webtoon digital comic media was conducive and active during the process as seen from the learners' activeness when asking and answering questions from the teacher. The learners become interested as well as motivated to learn German through the media because learning feels like reading casually rather than studying, so Webtoon can be used as a new breakthrough as a support in training grammatical skills as well as German reading skills

**Keywords:** *Webtoon, Learning Media, Reading Skills*

### **Introduction**

Line Webtoon is a digital comic application from South Korea developed by NAVER Corporation and Line Corporation in 2004 (Lestari & Irwansyah, 2020). Webtoon is a digital comic application that is popular among digital comic lovers because of the ease of access for free and interesting stories with various genres that come out every week. 6 million out of 35 million active users make Indonesia the country with the highest Webtoon users (Putra, 2020). Its popularity in Indonesia makes Webtoon interesting to research as an alternative to learning media through current technology. Learning requires several important roles to be able to support the process, including teachers, students, materials, media, and infrastructure and evaluation (Falah, 2015). Based on this statement, learning media is one of the determinants of the realisation of learning objectives. Media is everything that is used to convey messages. Meanwhile, learning media is everything in the form of objects, people, and the environment that is used to convey learning material in order to facilitate the process and achieve learning objectives (Hamid et al., 2020). For example, books, PPT, and videos that have been a reference for learning in schools in Indonesia. Other alternatives that can be used as media in delivering learning materials, namely podcasts, comics, learning applications, etc.

In addition, to achieve the goal of learning, good communication skills are also needed. Good communication begins with the mastery of four interconnected language skills, including listening and speaking skills that have been learned since childhood, then reading

and writing skills that we learn in childhood (Istiqoh, 2020). When reading and understanding a reading or story, not only vocabulary mastery is needed, but also good cognitive abilities such as the ability to remember and reason. Readers can describe the main idea after collecting and exploring the information read (Aini, 2021). So reading skills are needed to familiarise students to train learners' cognitive abilities. Research by Armala(2022) on students' low and high level thinking skills (LOTS and HOTS) in answering reading questions said that things that affect language learning include motivation, student attitudes in class, and reading strategies. For this reason, reading strategies are needed so that the essence of the reading material can be found efficiently. Based on the VERA-8 module (*Vergleichsarbeiten 2014 8. Jahrgangsstufe*)(2014) there are three styles in reading, including *Globales Leseverstehen* (global reading), *Selektives Leseverstehen* (selective reading), and *Detailliertes Leseverstehen* (detailed reading). Readers must find the appropriate reading style because all three have their own characters in capturing the essence of a story. The reading style emphasised in the research is selective reading.

In addition, German language learning is also supported by two other aspects, namely mastery of vocabulary and grammar. According to Febiandini (Febiandini, 2013) and Ramdhan (Ramdhan, 2017) good and correct grammatical skills are needed in language, including reading. The better one's grammatical understanding, the better one's reading comprehension. The presence of the internet makes human habits change and rely more on technology. If in the past reading still used paper and books or was print-based, then now it is all digital which can be accessed anywhere and anytime using their respective devices. According to research conducted by Zuhria, et al(2022) one of the causes of the decline in students' interest in reading is due to the easy access to information on the internet, which makes students no longer use books as the main reference in learning. In addition, entertainment in the form of videos and *online games* that can be accessed easily makes people even more lazy to use conventional media.

Content about foreign languages can also be easily accessed on the internet. Many language learning *platforms* or social media *platforms* such as Youtube and Instagram discuss foreign languages, especially German. Usually the content contained in language learning applications, Youtube, or Instagram is content for listening skills or content about culture only because it is in the form of videos, while for understanding grammar through reading is still limited. Based on this, this study is to determine the mastery of grammar through reading Line Webtoon digital comics as an alternative learning material that follows the latest technological developments. As a messaging application Telegram has several benefits for carrying out the learning process . Among them can send files in the form of text, images, videos, and large documents efficiently, and accessing Telegram only requires the internet because telegram is free to use (Fitriansyah & Aryadillah, 2020) . Based on research conducted by Oktavia(2022) on blended learning using Telegram, the application is able to be a good mediator between teachers and students in interacting.

This research involves members of the Lernhaus German Learning community on the *Telegram* application as research subjects. The Lernhaus community on Telegram has 1,588 members from various backgrounds. The German language levels of the members of the Lernhaus community also vary, ranging from A1 to B1 levels. The subjects studied in this research are only limited to community members with a German level of A2. The comic titled "*das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht*" by Park Subong is used in this study because it is a German digital comic with an A2 level. This can be seen based on the grammar and vocabulary used in the comic. For example, the use of *nebensätze mit dass, da, weil, and denn*. Comics are

pictures that are arranged in such a way and have several characters and storylines. Research conducted by Hermawan(2013) states that images can represent an experience. This means that images can also be interpreted like verbal language that has meaning both connotatively and denotatively. Images can also help clarify the message that the author will convey to the reader. Therefore, comics can be used as an alternative learning media, both inside and outside the classroom.

In addition many researchers have successfully utilised the Line Webtoon application as a learning medium. In research conducted by Nafisah & Pratama(2020) it is said that the use of comic strips can increase learner motivation in learning. Another study by Hikmah(2021) used Webtoon effectively to improve reading comprehension in English Foreign Language learning. Based on the background that has been described above, the focus of this study is the use of Line digital comics for understanding German grammar through reading Webtoon and the response of learners when using Line Webtoon digital comics as a medium for learning German.

## Method

This research uses descriptive qualitative method and the researcher presents the research data in the form of a detailed explanation of the understanding of German grammar through reading Line Webtoon digital comics as well as the learners' responses expressed in sentences. Yuliani(2018) said that usually this type of approach is used for social phenomenology. That means this approach is used to find out and explain how events are experienced by someone. This is in line with the purpose of the research conducted, namely, to find out the grammatical understanding of Jemran language learners through reading Line Webtoon digital comics as well as the learners' responses when using Line Webtoon as a learning medium.

The data sources in this study are members of the *Lernhaus* German Learning community in telegram with a German level of A2. The community has 1588 members with different levels of German which allows the researcher to collect more research data. The 32 respondents were gathered into the Learning Niveau A2 group to facilitate the learning process. The research data was collected through a questionnaire about the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media as a German language learning media in the form of google form. Questionnaire is one of the data collection techniques in the form of giving a number of written questions to respondents to answer (Dianingrum, 2021) . Structured interview techniques were also used to find out the responses of Lernhaus Telegram group members to the use of Line Webtoon digital comics as a medium for learning German. In addition to questionnaires and interview guidelines, the research instruments used are digital comics Line Webtoon as well as learning videos about material from German level A2.

In the research instruments in the form of questionnaires and interview questions, the researcher wants to emphasise on questions regarding the responses of Lernhaus community members to the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media if applied to German reading comprehension. The comic instrument used in this study is a German comic with the title *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht*. This comic has 10 episodes with German level A2. The last instrument is a video of learning material for German level A2 to support the reading skills of the members of the Telegram Lernhaus community. The material that will be delivered through the video is grammatical material *nebensätze mit dass, da, weil, and denn*.

After the data collection stage by the researcher was completed, continued with the analysis of existing data with the aim of obtaining conclusions from the research results. The data obtained from respondents during the study were in the form of answers to multiple choice questions and short essays from questionnaires and interview results about the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media as a learning medium for German reading skills. The data obtained will be analysed using the 6P simultaneous analysis model proposed by Winarno & Rofiah(2020) which includes approach, excavation, deepening, matching, interpretation, and presentation. The definitions of these stages are as follows: 1) The first stage carried out by researchers is the approach, researchers relate the data that has been obtained with the research design. 2) At the excavation stage, researchers must understand, explain, and find solutions to problems from the data that has been obtained. 3) In the next stage, researchers explore the data to be studied so that the existing data is in accordance with the theory used. 4) At the matching stage, the data obtained during the research is matched with assumptions about the research topic that the researcher puts forward and existing previous research. 5) Furthermore, at the interpretation stage, the researcher draws conclusions from the research conducted so that the data obtained during the research can answer the existing problem formulation. 6) The final stage is that the researcher will present the results of the research.

## Results and Discussions

### **The Learning Process of Understanding German Grammatical Comprehension Through Reading Line Webtoon Digital Comics**

In the context of research using Webtoon media for German language learning, the reading style used is *selective leseverstehen* or selective reading, because in reading webtoons it is important for learners to capture core information that leads to the story. With this method, reading does not need to detail the entire text, but only needs to find relevant and important information from the text (Ananda, 2016; Ulrike, 2018) . This kind of reading technique is suitable for comprehending reading in a short time because learners only need to look for the information needed without the need to read in detail. This is also helped by the visualisation of images from Webtoon comics that support learners to read with this technique. The visualisation of the storyline makes it easier for German learners to better understand the core of the story through the depiction of activities, settings, and storylines.

Prior to the research, a questionnaire in a google form link was sent to the Learning German community and 32 respondents filled out the questionnaire. For the smooth running of the research and to make it easier for researchers and respondents to interact, the researcher invited learners into a Telegram group, namely, Learning Niveau A2. This research was conducted asynchronously through the group *chat room* on the Telegram application. The related research used Line Webtoon digital comic media with the title *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht* as learning media. The learning references used during learning are Webtoon digital comic media links, lesson plans, and teaching videos with *nebensätze mit dass, da, weil, denn* material prepared before the research was carried out.

In the core activities, the researcher explained the meaning of Webtoon media, the features contained in the application and the web version, and the usefulness of Webtoon

media for learning German reading skills. Furthermore, the researcher shared the Webtoon link entitled *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht* to be read first in episodes 0-3 for 20 minutes. From the learners' answers, it was found that by using Webtoon media, besides being visually interested, the learners also get new grammar and vocabulary, because if the learners do not know the meaning of the words they read, they will be curious and immediately open the dictionary. Some learners also show interest because of the interesting story selection. According to Aulia & Fatichatul(2016) whether or not the learners are active during the learning process is a sign that there is a desire or interest of the learners in learning. It is this activeness that makes the learning process run smoothly, orderly and conducive.

After reading the Webtoon entitled *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht*, the learners understand the storyline of the comic they read, but they do not immediately understand the grammar in the story. For this reason, further explanation is needed so that learners understand the correct use of grammar. In addition, the evaluation in selective reading can be assessed by whether or not the learners use a word correctly. Learners are expected to look for certain words or patterns in the text and then use comprehension to determine the answer. An example is the sentence "*Ich kann es nicht glauben, dass du uns das nicht gesagt hastest.*" In the sentence, the pattern needs to be recognised from the word "dass" which shows the meaning of "*Konjunktion*" characterised by the placement of the verb at the end of the sentence. Before the explanation from the teacher, the learners understand what is being said because there are pictures in the comic that explain the activity, the setting, and also the atmosphere, but they don't understand the use of *Konjunktion* or the conjunction *dass* and its grammar correctly. Explanations like the example above will help learners as Webtoon readers to better understand the grammar used in the story. Then the teacher gives a 6-minute 40-second video material using conventional teaching model to the learners. In this model, the teacher has a dominant role in delivering the material to the learners through a structured teaching method (Manurung, 2018) . Based on this explanation, the conventional model was chosen for several reasons including, in language teaching, especially for grammatical comprehension through reading Webtoon, it is important to learn grammar and text context systematically. The conventional approach can provide a coherent and clear teaching picture to introduce and understand these elements gradually. learning materials and objectives are structured and phased before learning takes place, allowing learners to grasp concepts and acquire language skills progressively. In learning a foreign language, a good understanding of grammar and context is essential so that learners can develop a broader understanding of the language and use it appropriately in appropriate contexts. In the video, a *Power Point* is shown which discusses the grammar of the different uses of *konjunktionen: Nebensätze mit dass, da, weil, and denn* according to the example sentences found in the Webtoon *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht*. After all the learners watched the video, the teacher asked "Is the video explanation clear or do you have any questions?" The learners answered that the video explanation was clear enough and there was nothing to ask.

Data extraction was conducted by collecting data on learners' response to the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media. The data was collected by giving a performance sheet on the material that had been delivered after using the media. After the learners understood the explanation of the teaching video, they were asked to do the worksheet in the form of *google* form with 20 minutes working time. The questions contained in the worksheet were 14 questions consisting of 6 multiple choice questions and 4 closed and 4 open essays. The

multiple choice questions given were questions with the theme "Konjunktion." One of the items is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Performance Question Item 1

No	Item	Answer Options
1.	<i>Ich esse eine Pizza, ... ich habe Hunger.</i>	<i>a. da</i> <i>b. denn</i> <i>c. dass</i>

The form of the question in table 1 is in the form of a hollow sentence with answer choices. The sentence if arranged correctly becomes *Ich esse eine Pizza, denn ich habe Hunger*. In the second type of question, which is a closed essay question, there are two sentences arranged and the learners are asked to connect the two sentences using the right *Konjunktion* (conjunction). One of the items is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Item 1 Performance Question

No	Item	Correct Answer
1.	<i>Es ist zu sehen, dass... (sein der Roller in gutem Zustand).</i>	<i>Es ist zu sehen, dass der Roller in gutem Zustand ist.</i>

Meanwhile, in the third type of question, which is a closed essay type question, the learners are asked to make free sentences using *Konjunktionen*: *weil/da*, *denn*, and *dass*. From the learners' performance, it can be concluded that the learners can use the conjunctions *da*, *weil*, *denn*, and *dass* according to the material explained in the video. It can be seen from the total of 23 points given, the class average can answer 79.5% of the questions correctly with an average score of 18.32 points. From the learners' answers, some basic errors related to conjugation or the system of changing verb forms related to number, gender, mode, and time can also be observed (KBBI Online, 2016) . The main focus of data collection is on "Konjunktionen" or conjunctions. In the realisation, the learners make many mistakes in sentence conjugation as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Errors in Answer 1

No	Question	Correct Answer	Error
1.	<i>Mann kann erkennen, dass... (befinden ein Riss an der Sitzbank).</i>	<i>Mann can recognise that there is a riss an der Sitzbank.</i>	<i>Mann can recognise that there is a Riss an der Sitzbank befinden.</i>

The verb "befinden" in the wrong sentence should be used in the third indicative singular or indikativ Präsens 3. Person Singular i.e. "befindet" which corresponds to the singular object "ein Riss" (a crack). In German, the third indicative singular (indikativ Präsens 3. Person Singular) is the verb conjugation form used when the subject of the sentence is the third person singular (he, she, it) in the present tense. Following the rules of verb conjugation in German which in this context, "befindet" is the form of the verb "befinden" (to be) used for the singular subject "ein Riss" (a crack).

Grammatical understanding through reading German Line Webtoon digital comics can be trained using Line Webtoon digital comic media, and even has positive implications for learning German. Learning is conducive and active as seen from the learners' activeness in asking and answering questions posed by the teacher. The learners also seem to master the grammar that has been taught, namely the use of Konjunktionen: *weil/da*, *denn*, and *das*, seen from the class average answer of 79.5%.

### **Learners' Response to the Use of Line Webtoon Digital Comic Media as German Language Learning Media**

Another technique used by the researcher to find out the response to the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media is using questionnaires as well as interviews to some randomly selected learners. After the lesson was finished, the learners were asked to give feedback on the learning activities on the research questionnaire sheet in the form of google form that had been given by the researcher. Finally, some learners were randomly selected to be interviewed about the use of the comic media for German language learning.

Data deepening was done by analysing the data in more detail. The learners showed good ability in understanding the text, identifying narrative elements, and interpreting the content through the use of this digital comic media. This is proven by one of the questions in the questionnaire, namely "Tell me briefly the storyline of the Webtoon *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht* that you read!". Although the learners' understanding is slightly different due to their limited vocabulary and only a few learners answered with details in a coherent paragraph, overall the learners can tell the outline of the story and interpret it using their own language very well.

Some learners expressed the content of the story briefly. Based on the answers, it can be seen that the detail of understanding of each individual can be different when reading a picture story, but it can be concluded that the learners can capture the essence of the story from the Webtoon comic *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht* well, which tells about a man who likes his classmate, but the man does not dare to express his feelings. The pictures in the comic present scenes and situations visually that can help learners in understanding, identifying objects, characters, relationships between characters, and the context of the story. The pictures that are arranged in order following the storyline also make it easier for learners to see the sequence of the pictures, and connect each other to understand the development of the story and its narrative flow.

Besides being asked questions through questionnaires, the researcher also conducted interviews regarding the use of Webtoon media for German language learning. The learners were randomly selected later and interviewed via Telegram phone. The results of the interview showed a positive response to the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media. In the interview, the learners stated that Line Webtoon digital comic media can be an interesting new breakthrough to be used as a support in learning German, where learning does not have

to be fixated on textbooks and can utilise digital media that is easily accessible anytime and anywhere (Indah & Wibowo, 2021). Through Webtoon *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht*, learners find a lot of new vocabulary that can increase vocabulary, practice grammar understanding, as well as practice reading skills. The presentation of the story that does not only contain text, but also contains conversations accompanied by pictures makes reading more interesting and easier to understand. Although there are vocabularies that are not understood, learners can still understand the storyline very well because there are pictures that support the activities, atmosphere, and setting of the story. This is supported by Sabnawati's research(2018) that picture stories can stimulate learners' imagination, motivation and creativity. Image media, serves as a learning tool used to communicate messages, arouse the interests, emotions, attention, and motivation of students, so that the teaching and learning process can occur intentionally, goals are achieved, and controlled. (Pandarangga. 2013). In addition, picture stories convey their messages through illustrations and written text, both of which are equally important elements in a story. In the context of German language learning, the use of image media can stimulate the thoughts, feelings, attention, and willingness of learners to engage in the learning process. Through the use of images, the messages that want to be conveyed can be communicated more clearly and interestingly, thus facilitating a deliberate, purposeful, and controlled learning process. By looking at pictures that illustrate situations, objects or concepts that are difficult to understand with text alone, learners can enrich their interpretation of the text. This is in line with the research conducted by Hikmah(2021) namely the use of Line Webtoon digital comics is effective to improve reading comprehension in English Foreign Language learning. Images can help describe situations, objects, or concepts that are difficult to understand with just words, thus facilitating learners' understanding. By presenting relevant images, comic media can provide strong visual support, enrich the learning experience, provide a clearer context, and strengthen learners' understanding of the material being learnt. This can be proven from the learners who can retell the storyline of Webtoon *das Mädchen aus dem Unterricht* well when the teacher asks them.

The learners feel that learning German using Webtoon is more fun because it feels like casual reading rather than learning. One of the efforts to deal with the low attractiveness as well as the low quality of learning is to use varied learning media. (Suryani, 2016) Based on this research, learning and reading with interesting media is very important to be maintained to bring out the learners' interest in learning. Aini & Demara(2023) said that the combination of pictures, writing, and colours can attract learners' attention visually. In addition, Sabnawati(2018) also asserts that picture storybooks can facilitate understanding and reduce learners' stress when learning a foreign language. Thus, the use of picture media becomes an effective means to optimise the teaching and learning process and achieve maximum learning objectives. By linking these findings, it can be concluded that using interesting learning media, such as Webtoon or picture storybooks, which combine visual elements such as pictures, text and colours, can help improve learner engagement and learning quality in the context of learning a foreign language such as German.

Meanwhile, learners' motivation and interest can be obtained by using interesting media because learning feels more fun (Aini & Demara, 2023) Moreover, with the development of technology that continues to develop, many media or applications can be used as a tool to stimulate learners' interest and motivation to learn, especially in grammar comprehension and reading such as the use of digital comic media. Interest and motivation to learn German using digital comic media Line Webtoon is also influenced by the Webtoon read, if the story

read is interesting in terms of visual and story, it will increase the motivation of the learners, and vice versa, if the appearance or story chosen is not interesting then the learners become unmotivated to learn using digital comic media Line Webtoon. This opinion is supported by Abrizal(2021) who states that when someone can find reading materials that match the learners' interests, such as genres or types of stories that learners like, learners will be more motivated to engage in the learning process through reading. The interest and pleasure that learners feel when reading a story that is relevant to their interests can trigger a strong intrinsic drive to continue learning and exploring the language topics that learners learn because learners voluntarily and enthusiastically look for reading materials that are interesting and relevant to learners.

The learners' response to the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media is that the learners feel that the media can be used as a supporting media for German language learning in terms of appearance and ease of access. Therefore, the learners become interested and motivated to learn German through the media because learning feels like casual reading rather than learning.

## Conclusion

The results showed that the use of digital comic media Line Webtoon in learning German language obtained positive results regarding the use of Webtoon comic media and responses from learners. The learners were actively involved in answering questions given by the teacher and actively asked about the Webtoon comic media during the learning process. The response from the learners regarding the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media is new knowledge about Webtoon comic which is not just a regular comic *platform*, but can be used as a tool to learn a foreign language that is practical and interesting. According to the learners, the use of German language with the media is a new learning experience that is innovative. Learners get stimulated and motivated during the learning process, especially if the stories they read are interesting in terms of story themes, illustrations, language use, etc. Therefore, the use of Line Webtoon digital comic media as a means of learning German can be used as an effective and innovative alternative supporting media in learning foreign language reading skills, especially German.

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