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Elementary school learners' perceptions of graphic novels in the EFL classroom

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# Abstract

This thesis focuses on elementary school learners' perceptions of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom. More specifically, the thesis reports on findings from research that examined Norwegian 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom. Previous studies have shown that reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom can improve reading comprehension, increase motivation and engagement, and lead to the development of language and various literacies. Despite this, few studies explore learners' perceptions of these books, and none on elementary school learners' perceptions. Thus, the current study set out to cover this research gap.

To address this research gap, the current study employed a mixed methods research design. A two-week reading project was conducted in a 7th grade classroom with 29 learners, where the researcher conducted observations of 22 participating learners. Following the reading project, the participants responded to a survey, and two groups of four learners participated in a focus group interview.

The study found that a majority of the learners perceived graphic novels to be enjoyable and fun, as well as easier to read than other books. The learners found that the combination of images and less text made the books more comprehensible, especially for struggling and reluctant learners, as well as educational in terms of language and skills. The books also provided a variation from their usual lessons, which, combined with their enjoyment of graphic novels, might have instilled motivation and a want to read more. In contrast, some of the learners found reading for whole lessons to be too long for reading graphic novels. Likewise, some learners found that the order and structure of the books could be confusing and the language a bit difficult. A few learners also believed they might learn less from reading graphic novels than regular books as they include images and less text. Overall, the learners perceived graphic novels as enjoyable and advantageous despite a few challenges. As such, the current study's findings imply that graphic novels should be implemented to a greater extent in the EFL classroom as they can lead to a variety of advantages, as perceived by the learners themselves.

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# 1. Introduction

In the past few years, graphic novels and comic books have increased in popularity among people worldwide (Clark, 2019; Mendoza, 2022). This is also the case in Norway, where bookshops have experienced increased sales of graphic novels over the past three years (Falk, 2022). This increase in popularity suggests that graphic novels have become a more significant part of the literature children and teenagers read daily. Graphic novels are books that include images and visuals in a deliberate sequence, often in combination with text, telling a fiction or non-fiction narrative (Chute, 2008; Dong, 2013; McCloud, 1994). In relation to schooling, the national curriculum (LK20) emphasizes the inclusion of different types of texts for all grades, including textbooks, literature, and multimodal texts such as graphic novels (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a, pp. 2-18, 2019b, pp. 2-14). This has been particularly emphasized in the English subject curriculum, where reading texts and literature as a method for second language acquisition is one of its primary focus areas (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019b, pp. 2-14). However, teachers report a struggle with getting learners to read longer texts and books in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Habegger-Conti, 2015). Similarly, recent studies and reports have shown that children and teenagers generally read less now than before, possibly due to finding books boring and failing to concentrate while reading (Forleggerforeningen, 2021; Wagner et al., 2023). Graphic novels could offer a gateway into addressing all these points, but despite this, studies have found that this type of literature is not often found in EFL classrooms in Norway (Lyngstad, 2019; Refsland, 2021).

Mirroring the medium's increased popularity, research investigating the use of graphic novels in EFL education has likewise increased in the past few years. Most of this research focuses on the advantages of using graphic novels in the EFL classroom (e.g., Eik, 2021; Fredriksen, 2016; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Park, 2016; Wong et al., 2017). These types of studies have found that including graphic novels in the EFL classroom can lead to increased reading comprehension, various literacies, motivation and engagement, and language and vocabulary development (Basol, 2011; Eik, 2021; Fredriksen, 2016; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Chun, 2009; Park, 2016; Ranker, 2007; Sabbah et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2017). As such, most studies on graphic novels have focused on the importance of their inclusion in education. Fewer studies have investigated learners' perceptions of reading and using graphic novels in

the EFL classroom, and the few existing studies mainly focus on older learners in lower and upper secondary schools, along with the teachers' perceptions (e.g., Bravell, 2020; Brænden, 2015; Pishol & Kaur, 2015; Pladsen, 2017). Thus, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no pre-existing knowledge of what elementary school EFL learners perceive about graphic novels.

Therefore, the current study aims to contribute towards covering this research gap by focusing on elementary school learners' perceptions of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom. By exploring learners' perceptions on this matter, the study will contribute to knowledge about how the experience of graphic novels in the elementary EFL classroom can be utilized and further improved. The research question which will attempt to address this is:

> What are 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project?

To answer the research question, a mixed methods case study was conducted in a 7th grade classroom in an elementary school in Norway, including 22 learners as participants. The learners first participated in a two-week reading project to acquire experience with reading graphic novels in English. During the project, the learners were observed using an observation form. After the project, the study employed an online survey about the learners' experience and perceptions of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom. In addition, eight learners were chosen to participate in group interviews to investigate their perceptions of graphic novels in greater detail.

The thesis consists of six chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and empirical background, drawing on relevant theory and previous research. Chapter 3 includes the methodology and methods utilized in the project. Chapter 4 presents the results from the different data collection methods. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the results in light of relevant theory and research. Chapter 6 includes the conclusion of the thesis, which will summarize the complete research project, along with the implications and limitations of the study.

# 2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

The theoretical and empirical background draws on a combination of theory and research to set the background for what graphic novels are, how they can be used in the EFL classroom, and why they should be. First, a brief history of comic books and graphic novels will be provided, along with a discussion of relevant terms and definitions, as well as information on the format of the graphic novel. Next, the chapter discusses the use of graphic novels in the Norwegian EFL classroom, drawing on curricular documents. Following this, an account of various approaches to including graphic novels in the EFL classroom will be introduced and discussed. Subsequently, the study will draw on theoretical and empirical knowledge to discuss the advantages of using graphic novels in the EFL classroom. The chapter concludes with an overview of relevant previous research related to learners' and teachers' perceptions of graphic novels and comic books.

## 2.1 The Graphic Novel

### 2.1.1 The History of the Graphic Novel

The graphic novel as a format is often said to have its roots in comic books. Comic books started gaining popularity in the mid-twentieth century (Hescher, 2016). Unlike traditional books, often dominated by verbal text, comic books are short works filled with stories told through words, images, and design. They are stories told in boxes, usually in a sequence from left to right, providing a visual element to the narrative story. McCloud (1994) defines comic books as short books filled with "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p. 9). By the 1960s, comic books had accumulated a large fanbase consisting primarily of children and adolescent boys due to the publishing of superhero-, action-, and adventure-comics (Hescher, 2016, p. 9). Around the same time, people started creating comic books targeting older audiences using more humorous, radical, and graphic themes, images, and stories. These were often referred to as "underground comics" (Hescher, 2016, p. 9). Hescher (2016, p. 12) believes underground comics are the forerunners to the graphic novel in terms of subject matters (darker themes), style, and narrative structure. Following the rise of

these types of comics, several authors wrote what are now referred to as the first graphic novels.

There have been several debates as to what the first-ever graphic novel was. Will Eisner is a name that is often mentioned at the forefront of this discussion. Eisner used the term graphic novel to describe his work *A Contract with God* (1978) in commercial contexts in order to sell his book to publishers (Chute, 2008, p. 453). However, some scholars, such as Hescher (2016, p. 13), believe that *A Contract with God* (1978) is a comic book featuring four short narratives put together in one volume rather than a graphic novel. Based on his research, Hescher (2016) maintains that the first graphic novels were *Maus* (1986/92) by Art Spiegelman, *The Dark Knight* (1986) by Frank Miller, and *Watchmen* (1986-1987) by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon, and considers the works before them trailblazers which made them possible. These three books are considered to have revolutionized the comic book market due to their complex features, such as their visual and narrative design (Hescher, 2016. p. 16). While they were referred to as comic books (or "alternative comic books") when first released, the works were longer, more multilayered, and more experimental in their visual form and layout than the usual comic book (Hescher, 2016, p. 195). Likewise, they also addressed a more mature audience despite being available for all. These different elements led graphic novels to move beyond comic shops, which they exclusively had been sold in until then, and into traditional book shops. Despite this progression, graphic novels were often subsumed under the term comics until the beginning of the twenty-first century, when they started to be recognized as a separate medium (Hescher, 2016, p. 3).

### 2.1.2 Graphic Novels, Comic Books, and Graphic Narratives

Despite now being defined as its own medium, the term graphic novel has been difficult to define as separate from comic books due to their many similarities. Graphic novels and comic books are both put together by text and images working together to tell a story or narrative; they have panels and gutters, are read from left to right, and share similar audiences. As such, when people have tried to define graphic novels as separate from comic books, they often reference the length of the mediums. For example, Spiegelman, the author of one of the first-ever graphic novels *Maus* (1986/92), defined graphic novels as "a comic book you need a bookmark for" (as cited in Bland & Lütge, 2014, p. 60). Similarly, Gorman (2002) described

graphic novels as "meatier and fuller-length comic books" (p. 42). Hence, this might suggest that the length of the work is the defining factor when deciding whether a work is considered a graphic novel or a comic book (Chute, 2008, p. 453).

Others prefer to avoid the term graphic novel altogether to be more inclusive. For example, Chute (2008) prefers to use the term graphic narrative to describe books that are of a similar format to the graphic novel. She defines graphic narratives as "a book-length work in the medium of comics" since not all graphic novels are works of fiction but nonfiction as well (p. 453). For others, the term graphic novel has been used as a term to include all similar mediums and formats. For example, Dong (2013) defines graphic novels as book-length comics, which also include "graphic narratives, graphic memoirs, comic travelogue, journalistic comics, and hybrid genres" (p. 220). By this definition, graphic novels can include fiction and nonfiction works, which are longer than comic books but similar in format.

The current thesis draws on these definitions, as well as McCloud's (1994) definition of comic books, to create an including definition of graphic novels. As such, the current thesis defines graphic novels as books where juxtaposed pictorial and other images, sometimes in combination with verbal text, work together in deliberate sequence to tell a fiction or non-fiction narrative. This broader definition ensures the inclusion of various forms and genres of the medium while still having its limitations. For instance, comic books will be included under this definition of graphic novels. Likewise, manga, similar to comic books but with a traditional Japanese art form and read from right to left, will also be defined under the term graphic novels for this research (Ricketts, 2013, p. 174).

*2.1.3 Understanding the Graphic Novel*

As stated, graphic novels are books that include pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, often in combination with text, telling a fiction or non-fiction narrative (Chute, 2008; Dong, 2013; McCloud, 1994). In order to understand the graphic novel, the reader must become familiar with the inner workings of the format. The graphic novel format mainly consists of panels, gutters, images, and text which all work together to tell a story. Panels are the frames that can contain text and images of people, places, things, or ideas (McCloud, 1994, p. 98). The graphic novel's key component is the narrative told from panel to panel,

each delivering a part of the story. However, parts of the story are likewise told in the spaces between the panels, called the gutter (McCloud, 1994, p. 107). As the author provides illustrations within the panels, the gutter requires the reader to use the information given to fill in the gap of what is happening between them. McCloud (1994) calls this mental process "closure" (p. 107). By bridging together the panels in an effort to complete the narrative, the reader gets closure on the gaps between the images. As a result, the reader is working together with the author to make sense of the story. McCloud (1994) remarks that reading a graphic novel is a team effort between the author and the reader as each contributes to the creation of a complete narrative of the book.

Likewise, a large part of understanding the graphic novel is about interpreting the different features included by the author. Each panel can consist of multiple elements which add to the story, such as images, lines, style, and text (McCloud, 1994). For instance, the images illustrated by the author can become an effective element in the storytelling. Indeed, graphic novels can tell a story solely through images, as seen in the graphic novel *The Arrival* (2006) by Shaun Tan. Images alone can evoke an emotional and sensual response in the viewer, which McCloud (1994, p. 121) claims is vital in the art of comics. Through images, the author can relay a message by depicting different colors and expressive lines. Color can play a central role in the story, expressing a dominant mood or adding depth through tones and modeling (McCloud, 1994, p. 191). Likewise, lines can express distinct senses, such as movement or smell (McCloud, 1994, p. 128). Colors and expressive lines require interpretation from the reader as it adds visual context to the narrative in the graphic novel (McCloud, 1994, p. 130). However, McCloud (1994, p. 135) claims that while images can express emotions and engage the senses, they can also lack the specificity that can often only be found in words. Similarly, he claims that while words can offer that specificity, they can lack the expressive elements found in images. Thus, graphic novel authors can add to the reading experience by combining various visual elements and verbal texts.

There are multiple ways verbal text can be presented in a graphic novel, such as through text boxes, word balloons (speech bubbles), thought bubbles, and sound effects (McCloud, 1994, p. 134). Text boxes are boxes that often contain the narration of the story, and the visual presentation of the box can add a distinctive narrator's voice. Word balloons, also called speech bubbles, are text that indicates what the characters are saying. The way these are visually illustrated can symbolize how the words are expressed in sound, for example, if the

words are screamed, whispered, or emphasized. Even different lettering styles and symbols can showcase how the characters express themselves (McCloud, 1994, p. 134). Similarly, thought boxes show what the characters are thinking, and the visual representation of these can express an additional layer to the thoughts of the character. Lastly, sound effects are ways the author adds sound to the graphic novel. While the sound effects are not physical, they can engage our sense of hearing while reading. The way these are presented visually, with color, style, and symbols, can capture the essence of sound in a way that normal text cannot (McCloud, 1994, p. 134). Through the combination of text and visual elements, the author leaves the graphic novel for the reader to interpret and experience. As McCloud (1994) describes: "creator and reader are partners in the invisible creating something out of nothing, time and time again" (p. 205).

## 2.2 Graphic Novels in Education

Although graphic novels have experienced a steady increase in popularity since the 1980s, they only started becoming popular within the educational context in the past two-three decades (Syma & Weiner, 2013, p. 1). During this period, teachers of different educational institutions began incorporating graphic novels and comic books into their standard teaching. Educators of history, mathematics, philosophy, sociology, language, and more began to realize that graphic novels could be useful to utilize in the classroom for people of all ages (Syma & Weiner, 2013, p. 1). In terms of education in Norway, the content of the most recent school curriculum (LK20) seems to indicate that this realization has also reached the Norwegian education system.

### 2.2.1 The Curriculum on Texts and Graphic Novels in the EFL Classroom in Norway

In the EFL classroom in Norway, teaching is bound by the national curriculum, which governs the content of the education. In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) implemented a newly revised curriculum (LK20) for all Norwegian schools. Within the LK20, the English subject curriculum had undergone some changes from previous curricula. Notably, the curriculum had a newly emphasized focus on reading and language learning (MER, 2019c). The emphasis on reading and language learning can be seen in the way the

curriculum promotes reading and working with different texts. Texts have been defined in the English subject curriculum in the core values:

> texts can be spoken and written, printed and digital, graphic and artistic, formal and informal, fictional and factual, contemporary and historical. The texts can contain writing, pictures, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that are combined to enhance and present a message. (MER, 2019b, p. 3).

In this sense, texts in the EFL classroom can range from purely verbal texts to multimodal texts. Multimodal texts are works that can consist of two or more of "written language, spoken language, images (both fixed and moving), music, non-musical non-spoken sound, gestures, textures, and smells" (Leber-Cook & Cook, 2013, p. 27). In the EFL classroom, the most common text employed is the textbook, which can include text, images, illustrations, graphs, numbers, and even additional digital resources and materials (Drew et al., 2007). The textbooks are books explicitly created to be used in the EFL classroom and in language learning. However, the English curriculum also emphasizes using other texts in the classroom, such as authentic materials not specially created for language learners. This emphasis can be seen in the competence aims for all grades, which encourage the usage of picture books (after years 2 and 4), English language literature in general and for children (after years 2 and 4), adapted and authentic texts (after years 4 and 7), self-chosen texts (after years 4 and 7), factual texts (after year 7), and literature for children and young people (after year 7) (MER, 2019b, pp. 5-7). Thus, in addition to textbooks, the curriculum requires teachers to include other types of books and literature in their teaching, which could include graphic novels and comic books.

Likewise, the curriculum promotes multiple ways of working with these texts in the EFL classroom, the most prominent one being through reading. Reading is one of the five basic skills that learners should learn throughout their education (MER, 2017, p. 13). Reading is closely linked to texts within the English subject curriculum:

> Reading in English means understanding and reflecting on the content of various types of texts on paper and on screen, and contributing to reading pleasure and language acquisition. It means reading and finding information in multimedia texts with competing messages and using reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit

information. […] reading varied and complex texts with fluency and comprehension and being increasingly able to critically reflect on and assess different types of texts. (MER, 2019b p. 4).

As such, the curriculum advocates for working with different texts through reading, understanding, finding information, and critically assessing them. Similar ways of working with texts are promoted in the competence aims for the different grades (MER, 2019b, pp. 5-8). For instance, the aims mention that learners are supposed to work with texts through reading, listening, writing, and talking about them, e.g., "read and listen to English-language factual texts and literature for children and young people and write and talk about the content" (after year 7) (MER, 2019b, p. 7). Moreover, the aims mention that the learners are supposed to develop their vocabulary and language, as well as acquire cultural knowledge, through working with texts, e.g., "learn words and phrases and acquire cultural knowledge through English-language literature" (after year 4) (MER, 2019b, p. 6). Thus, the curriculum promotes working in different ways with various types of texts.

In addition to promoting working with texts, the curriculum includes why this is necessary in the learners' education. The learning outcomes expected from the learners' engagement with texts are explained in the following:

> Language learning takes place in encounters with texts in English. […] Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils' knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting, and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. (MER, 2019b, p. 3)

As such, the curriculum suggests that reading and working with different texts can contribute to the learners' language and intercultural competence development. The development of intercultural competence can further lead to advanced critical thinking and understanding of their own and others' identity in different contexts (MER, 2019b, p. 3). Similarly, focusing on intercultural competence encourages the inclusion of the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship, which can lead to a better understanding of the world, foster curiosity and engagement, and prevent prejudices (MER, 2019b, p. 3). Thus, the curriculum encourages

working with different types of text, graphic novels among them, through various methods in order for the learners to develop, among other things, their language and intercultural competence.

## 2.2.2 Methods of Working with Graphic Novels in the EFL Classroom

In addition to the methods mentioned in the curriculum, there are multiple other ways of working with graphic novels. Gambrell (2009, p. 259) emphasizes that there is no one-size-fits-all formula for learning and reading. Thus, the learners should be met with varied teaching strategies in the EFL classroom. This is also supported by the curriculum for English, which states that teachers should utilize different language learning strategies, teaching methods, and resources that can lead to language learning and motivation for all learners (MER, 2019b, pp. 5-6). In terms of including graphic novels, there are various ways to introduce and use the book in the classroom, as recommended by scholars, such as following an instructional model for lesson planning (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020), reading aloud (Hansen, 1986; Helgevold et al., 2005), and through reading projects (Helgevold et al., 2005).

## 2.2.2.1 An Instructional Model for Integrating Multimodal Literature into the EFL Classroom

One way of working with graphic novels is to follow an instructional model, such as Eisenmann & Summer's (2020) model for integrating multimodal literature into the EFL classroom (Table 1). As graphic novels fit under the umbrella term multimodal literature, the model can guide the introduction of graphic novels in EFL lessons. Eisenmann & Summer's (2020) model includes five principles, or ways, to integrate graphic novels into the EFL classroom. The first principle in the model is about incorporating a variety of text formats. Eisenmann & Summer (2020, p. 60) claim that the teacher should start by including different types of texts that may interest the learners. One of these types of texts can be graphic novels, as they can include a variety of topics and stories which can relate to the learners' everyday life and interests.

**Table 1**. *Eisenmann & Summer's (2020, p. 60) instructional model for integrating multimodal literature into the EFL classroom.*

| Principles | Features |
|---|---|
| 1. Integrating a variety of text formats | <ul><li>learner-centeredness</li><li>relevant topics</li><li>relevant modes</li></ul> |
| 2. Authenticity & authentication | <ul><li>textual authenticity / genuine texts</li><li>learner authentication / engaging authentically with texts</li></ul> |
| 3. Competence-based teaching | <ul><li>integrating communicative skills</li><li>outcome-oriented</li></ul> |
| 4. Integrating multiple literacies | <ul><li>analyzing verbal narration</li><li>analyzing other modes</li></ul> |
| 5. Task focus | <ul><li>integrating tasks</li><li>scaffolding</li><li>variety of outcomes</li></ul> |

For the second principle on authenticity and authentication, Eisenmann & Summer (2020) state that the texts introduced in the classroom should also be authentic. Authentic texts are texts created for reading and not with a pedagogical intention. For example, English textbooks are explicitly designed to teach English in the EFL classroom, which makes them non-authentic. Graphic novels, on the other hand, are mainly created for the purpose of enjoyment, not with pedagogical intentions in mind, thereby making them authentic (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 61). By using varied, authentic, and relevant texts in the EFL classroom, the learners are exposed to more authentic language use and motivating texts which can lead to meaningful conversations and interactions in and outside the EFL classroom (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 61).

The third principle is competence-based teaching (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 61). Competence-based teaching emphasizes giving the learners opportunities to practice their English language and communication skills in different authentic settings (Eisenmann &

Summer, 2020, p. 62). In competence-based teaching, the teacher uses varied language learning strategies in combination with communicative and intercultural competence, and text and media in their classroom (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 62). Eisenmann & Summer (2020, p. 62) suggest that the outcome of the teaching approach can lead to the development of better communicative skills through the use of multimodal texts. Thus, the teacher could have a competence-based teaching focus to better integrate graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

Similarly, the teacher can use graphic novels by integrating multiple literacies, as in the fourth principle in the model (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 62). As the world changes, so is how people communicate and go about their everyday lives. As a result, there is a more significant need for understanding the world differently than before, with a more intercultural and diverse view of life. This is often presented in graphic novels and other multimodal literature. Hence, Eisenmann & Summer (2020) recommends integrating graphic novels by focusing on multiple literacies. They state: "A multiple literacy concept comprises the skills of dealing with nonlinear texts, with visual or hybrid encodings in more than one semiotic system" (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 63). By using multimodal literature such as graphic novels, the learners are exposed to different ways of decoding the visual and verbal elements of the books. As a result, the learners can develop the ability to interpret, analyze, and understand modern ways of communication through working with graphic novels (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 63).

Lastly, the fifth principle is task focus (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 63). Task focus refers to various ways to engage with multimodal literacies and graphic novels in the classroom. Instead of emphasizing correcting grammar or language production, tasks focus on meaningful interactions and engagement with the language and authentic communication with a focus on positive outcomes (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, pp. 63-64). For instance, one way of following this approach in the EFL classroom is to create reading circles where the teacher presents a text by reading aloud while having the learners participate by listening and talking about it afterward (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, pp. 63-64). With task focus, reading a text can be a task in itself, or the text can be integrated as additional material to the task. The main idea of task focus is for the learners to engage meaningfully with the language with an emphasis on real-life communication (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020, p. 64). The overall focus should be to keep the learners engaged while interacting with multimodal literature and

graphic novels. Thus, the five principles model can serve as a guideline for planning lessons and lesson plans using graphic novels. While the teacher does not have to follow the whole process of the model, it can be a valuable tool for working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

*2.2.2.2 Reading Aloud*

Another way of working with graphic novels is reading aloud, one of the most common reading techniques within education (Hansen, 1986, p. 21). When reading aloud, the teacher and/or the learners read out loud for the whole class to listen. The method requires the skill of transforming letters into sound and for the reader to consider correct pronunciation and suitable speaking volume and speed when conveying the text to the listeners (Hansen, 1986, p. 21). When reading aloud in the classroom, the class becomes a part of a shared experience. Particularly when the teacher reads aloud, the learners encounter a good model for reading, which can inspire their own reading. Likewise, when the teacher is the one reading, the learners' decoding abilities do not affect the reading, which might lead to better reading experiences for struggling or reluctant learners (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 18). Given the interconnectedness of verbal and visual elements, the teacher needs to ensure that the learners can view the images when reading graphic novels aloud, for example, by showing the book on the smartboard or having multiple copies. This way, the learners experience the graphic novel both visually and audibly.

When the learners read aloud, it is essential to consider that not all learners are comfortable reading in front of the whole class, as some struggle with speaking anxiety, presentation anxiety, or with confidence in their reading skills (Thornbury, 2005, pp. 26-28) Thus, the teacher must consider the situation according to the circumstances, and carefully scaffold the learners' reading abilities when necessary. This way, reading aloud can be an including and developing experience for every learner (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 18).

*2.2.2.3 Reading Projects*

Another method of working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom is through reading projects (Helgevold et al., 2005). Reading projects are methods where the learners are

expected to read one or several books over an extended period. A reading project aims for the learners to engage with different texts, genres, and authors to develop a motivation to read more daily (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 6). While it is not uncommon for learners to encounter different texts in their lessons, there is often insufficient time to read whole books or chapters in the EFL lessons. Conducting a reading project can lead to more reading time, allowing the learners to get engaged in the reading. Gambrell (2009) states that providing sufficient time to read can "create the necessary foundation that is essential for supporting students in developing as competent and proficient readers" (p. 252). He further notes that sufficient reading time can lead to motivation and reading comprehension (Gambrell, 2009, p. 257). Reading for extended periods, such as through a reading project, is called extensive reading.

Susser & Robb (1990) define extensive reading as a language learning and teaching strategy where someone reads (a) "large quantities of material or long texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text" (p. 165). They also add that (d) learners individually read a book they want to read and that (e) the books are not discussed in class (Susser & Robb, 1990, p. 165). Through extensive reading, the learners are supposed to experience less teacher and student demands to attain objectives of fluency, speed, and comprehension (Susser & Robb, 1990, p. 166). The only focus of the reading is to read at their own pace and to comprehend the text sufficiently enough to enjoy reading it. Susser & Robb (1990, p. 167) remarks that even though reading books in another language can be difficult, learners who read extensively frequently find joy in finishing a whole book in another language. Moreover, a study by Elley (1991) found, through an English reading program in Singapore, that extensive reading can lead to better reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, oral language, and writing than traditionally taught learners. Krashen (2004), who uses the term free voluntary reading in place of extensive reading, states that it "is one of the most powerful tools we have in language education" (p. 1). Thus, conducting reading projects or other methods of extensive reading might be valuable when working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

When conducting reading projects or implementing extensive reading, an important principle is that the learners must have various book options (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 14). Good reading experiences require the opportunity to read and explore different types of books and genres ranging in difficulty level and length (Helgevold et al., 2005, pp. 14-15). To ensure a wide variety of books, the school needs to have books available either in the school library or

a nearby library. In addition, the teacher needs to use their knowledge of the class to ensure engaging books are available for the whole class (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 15). With available and exciting books for each learner to explore, reading might lead to the learners' motivation and desire to read for pleasure (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 15; Stuestøl, 2020).

*2.2.2.4 Potential Complications When Working with Graphic Novels in the EFL Classroom*

As demonstrated above, there are multiple methods of working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom. However, the possibility of implementing these depends on multiple factors, such as the curriculum, time, economy, and availability. For instance, the Norwegian EFL teacher is bound to follow a set curriculum. Although the English subject curriculum has emphasized reading as an essential teaching method, the teacher cannot devote all English lessons to reading graphic novels at the cost of addressing other competence aims. There are other things that take precedence in the classroom, which require other materials and methods of teaching (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 10). Between the set number of hours in the English curriculum and the number of things the teacher must cover in a year, there is little time to extensively read graphic novels, which can be relatively time-consuming (Helgevold et al., 2005, p. 11).

However, the teacher can combine the reading of graphic novels with other aims in the English curriculum, for example, by applying the principles of Eisenmann & Summer's (2020) model. For this to be possible, the teacher needs available books for the learners to read. In a study of 12-13-year-olds in Fiji, a national survey revealed that a good school library was the difference between good and poor readers (Elley & Mangubhai, 1979, as cited in Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Although little is known about the availability of graphic novels in Norwegian school libraries, recent articles have argued that the quality of many Norwegian school libraries is insufficient due to a lack of prioritization (e.g., Juul, 2018; Lien, 2018; Meyer, 2017). As such, some schools might lack a wide variety of books, including graphic novels and comic books in English. While schools could buy more books for the learners, most schools have a tight economy and other areas to prioritize (Helgevold et al., 2005, pp. 11-12). As a result, including graphic novels in the EFL classroom might pose some challenges. However, as will be shown in the following sections, the many advantages of using graphic novels provide an argument for implementing them despite these challenges.

*2.2.3 The Impact of Reading Graphic Novels in the EFL Classroom*

Graphic novels as a research area have expanded exponentially in the past few decades. Within the field of education, graphic novels have primarily been researched regarding their advantages in the classroom context. In the EFL classroom, in particular, studies have found that reading and using graphic novels can contribute to multiple advantages for the learners, such as increased reading comprehension (Basol, 2011; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Sabbah et al., 2013), also among learners of different proficiency levels (e.g., Wong et al., 2017), development of visual and critical literacy (Chun, 2009; Fredriksen, 2016; Park, 2016), increased motivation and engagement (Eik, 2021; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Ranker, 2007), and improved language development and vocabulary (Basal et al., 2016; Öz & Efecioğlu, 2015).

*2.2.3.1 Reading Comprehension*

Studies have found graphic novels beneficial in aiding different learners' reading comprehension (e.g., Basol, 2011; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Sabbah et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2017). Fountas & Pinnell (1996) define reading comprehension as a process where the learner accumulates new understanding while reading or reflecting on a text. By this definition, the learners have achieved reading comprehension when constructing new understanding and meaning during and after reading. For the learners to achieve reading comprehension while reading texts in the EFL classroom, the learners need sufficient language understanding. If the learners do not have the language proficiency to comprehend the text, images might function as a scaffolding tool in their reading (Wong et al., 2017).

Jaffe & Hurwich (2018, p. 16) state that combining images and text can help improve learners' comprehension skills. This has been confirmed by several studies (e.g., Mayer & Sims, 1994; Plass et al., 1998; Schnotz et al., 2014; Um et al., 2012), which have shown that learners comprehend more and learn better when reading texts with images rather than pure text. The name of this effect is called the multimedia effect (Levin et al., 1987; Mayer, 1997, 2009, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 413). The idea behind the effect is that people read text and images differently together than separately. When reading a text with images, especially when the images illustrate the events described, the brain picks up on the different verbal and

visual representations. It selects, organizes, and integrates information based on the essential parts of the text (Meyer, 1997, 2009, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 413). Where the verbal text can convey more abstract content, the images can illustrate complex imagery that the text cannot, and one element can aid in the understanding of the other. As a result, the visual and verbal elements can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the text (Wong et al., 2017, pp. 413-414).

Focusing specifically on graphic novels, Wong et al. (2017, pp. 415-146) studied Chinese-English bilingual undergraduates of different reading abilities to compare their reading comprehension after reading graphic novels and pure texts. The results revealed that, despite different cognitive styles and reading abilities, the learners demonstrated better reading comprehension when reading graphic novels than pure texts, mainly due to the visual support in graphic novels (Wong et al., 2017, pp. 420-425). Likewise, Sabbah et al. (2013, p. 146) researched if graphic novels could improve Malaysian year 5 (aged 10) learners' reading comprehension compared to textual novels. Through various tests of different learners, they discovered that the learners' reading comprehension overall improved more with graphic novels, especially among learners who preferred to learn through visual input (Sabbah et al., 2013, pp. 155-157). Similar results were found in a study of grade 10 Thai EFL learners by Kennedy & Chinokul (2020, p. 161). The study included measuring the effect of a Scaffolded Reading Experience (teacher support while learners achieve their goals by themselves) while reading graphic novels (Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020, p. 161). The study found that the learners' reading comprehension had improved significantly through reading graphic novels (Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020, pp. 165-169). As such, the different studies conclude that reading graphic novels can lead to better reading comprehension in the EFL classroom.

*2.2.3.2 Visual and Critical Literacy*

Beyond aiding comprehension, including images in graphic novels also provides a potential for developing various literacies. Literacy has been defined as "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts" (UNESCO, 2004, as cited in De Silva Joyce & Feez, 2016, p. 5). Literacy exists in multiple different forms, such as visual literacy, verbal literacy, critical literacy, and digital literacy. A similar term, also used concerning literacy, is

multiliteracies, which refers to the ability to make meaning across multiple literacies, such as visual, verbal, critical, digital, and more (Cazden, 1996).

Visual and critical literacy are literacies often discussed in relation to graphic novels. Frey and Fisher (2008) describe visual literacy as the "complex act of meaning making using still or moving images" (p. 1). Felten (2008, p. 60) states that with practice and training, people can develop the ability to identify, interpret, and utilize the semantics of different types of visual features. As with reading comprehension, visual literacy is about understanding the meaning behind something through making connections (Frey & Fisher, 2008. p. 1). The same can be said for critical literacy, which is likewise frequently discussed in terms of graphic novels alongside visual literacy. Critical literacy means "enabling young people to read both the word and the world in relation to power, identity, difference and access to knowledge, skills, tools and resources" (Janks, 2013, p. 227). To develop critical literacy, learners need to realize that words are not neutral and often embody meanings that require analysis in light of history, society, prejudice, and much more. How texts are presented can imply something other than what is seen at first glance (Janks, 2013, p. 227). Similar claims can be made for visual elements, which is why the term critical visual literacy also exists (Chung, 2013).

A handful of studies have found that visual and critical literacy can be developed by working with graphic novels (e.g., Chun, 2009; Fredriksen, 2016; Park, 2016). Fredriksen (2016. p. 39), for instance, conducted a study on the effects of graphic novels on visual literacy in an 8th grade EFL classroom in Norway. Through an intervention study employing a pre-test and post-test, she found that the learners had experienced a statistically significant increase in visual literacy scores and thus concluded that graphic novels might improve visual literacy. She also found that learners already familiar with and who would prefer reading similar formats as graphic novels had a more significant increase in visual literacy scores (Fredriksen, 2016, pp. 80-91). Similarly, in a study in an ESL class in America, Chun (2009) discovered that teaching critical literacy using graphic novels positively impacted the learners' literacy. In a similar study on all-girls ESL learners (grades 7-12) in America, Park (2016, pp. 94-100) found that graphic novels helped the learners develop critical visual literacy. In discussions of a graphic novel, Park (2016, p. 101) found that the learners critically engaged with the story's representations of gender and race. While the learners did comment on the language, they mainly commented on the images in the book. This was explained by Park (2016, p. 101) as proof that the girls understood that images are created by people with a particular point of

view and belief in mind. Thus, the learners engaged with the graphic novels using their critical literacy and their critical visual literacy (Park, 2016). As such, these studies show the potential of graphic novels in developing learners' various literacies.

*2.2.3.3 Motivation and Engagement*

In addition to developing better reading comprehension and different literacies, studies have shown that learners might experience increased motivation and engagement when working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom (e.g., Eik, 2021; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Ranker, 2007). Motivation is a drive and inspiration to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). The amount of motivation someone has can vary in level and type. For example, some scholars (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000) distinguish between intrinsic (inner) and extrinsic (outer) motivation. When someone is motivated through intrinsic motivation, they do something because they find it interesting and enjoyable. Within the educational context, intrinsic motivation has been declared ideal for achieving high-quality learning and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation from external factors, such as grades, praise, or treats. Since achieving intrinsic motivation is sometimes challenging in the classroom, and because some tasks are inherently not interesting or enjoyable to the learners, extrinsic motivation is as relevant as intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). As such, teachers must strive to stimulate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the classroom.

Studies have shown that working with graphic novels can help increase motivation for EFL learners, primarily intrinsic motivation (Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Eik, 2021; Ranker, 2007). While focusing on reading comprehension, Kennedy & Chinokul (2020, p. 161) also wanted to research if Thai EFL learners in grade 10 experienced any effect on their motivation while reading graphic novels. Through reading motivation questionnaires and student journals, they discovered that the learners experienced a significant increase in motivation during the study due to reading graphic novels (Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020, pp. 165-169). Relatively similar results were found in a study by Eik (2021, pp. 19-25), who investigated the motivation of pupils in a Norwegian vocational English high school class by applying a pre-and post-reading questionnaire. With some exceptions, most of the learners reported having experienced enjoyment and positive attitudes toward reading graphic novels (Eik, 2021, p. 52). As explained previously, enjoyment is linked to (intrinsic) motivation, and it can thus be suggested that the learners experienced some degree of motivation during the

project (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Further, a study was conducted by Ranker (2007, p. 296) in correlation with a first-grade teacher teaching English to Spanish learners. The study investigated the use of comic books as read-aloud material using reading instruction and found that the comics were helpful in terms of visual support and providing interesting and motivating reading material for the learners (Ranker, 2007, p. 304). Thus, the results from these studies suggest that working with graphic novels can lead to increased motivation, at least for some learners.

*2.2.3.4 Language Development and Vocabulary*

Some studies have also found that graphic novels affect learners' language development and vocabulary (e.g., Basal et al., 2016; Öz & Efecioğlu, 2015). Öz & Efecioğlu (2015, p. 80) conducted a mixed methods study in a 10th grade (age 15-16) class in Turkey which aimed to investigate the role of graphic novels in the EFL classroom. The study utilized different data collection methods, including an achievement test after letting the learners read a graphic novel in the EFL lessons (Öz & Efecioğlu, 2015, pp. 80-81). The study found that graphic novels, in general, had a positive effect on the learners' foreign language learning, as well as their vocabulary learning (Öz & Efecioğlu, 2015, p. 87). In addition, Basal et al. (2016, p. 95) conducted a study on university students in Turkey that aimed to investigate the effectiveness of teaching idioms through graphic novels compared to traditional activities. They utilized a four-week experimental study that employed an achievement test before and after the study (Basal et al., 2016, p. 98). The study found that the group that learned idioms through graphic novels performed significantly better than those that learned idioms through traditional activities (Basal et al., 2016, p. 100). Thus, Basal et al. (2016, p. 101) concluded that utilizing graphic novels rather than traditional activities could improve vocabulary development. As such, these studies reveal that graphic novels can be used in language and vocabulary development.

While the studies discussed so far in this section have focused mainly on the advantages of using graphic novels in terms of learning outcomes and increase in motivation in the EFL classroom, the following section will present studies that have focused on teachers' and learners' perceptions of graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

*2.2.4 Learners' and Teachers' Perceptions of Graphic Novels*

As previously mentioned, few studies have investigated learners' perceptions of graphic novels in the EFL classroom. The existing research today has mainly focused on lower- and upper-secondary and high-school learners (e.g., Brænden, 2015; Pishol & Kaur, 2015). For instance, Brænden (2015, p. 26) conducted a study in two EFL classes (10th grade) in a lower secondary school in Norway, utilizing a reading project to read graphic novels. One of her research questions focused on the learners' attitudes toward graphic novels, and questionnaires (pre- and post-reading and post-project) and diary entries were employed during the project (Brænden, 2015, pp. 27-32). The results from the study showed that the learners found graphic novels to be fun, easy, and good to read (Brænden, 2015, p. 55). The learners also expressed that they enjoyed the visuals that came with reading graphic novels, as the visual elements helped them understand the plot better (Brænden, 2015, p. 56). Further, the study also found that graphic novels could be helpful in the EFL classroom, as they could improve motivation and reading abilities, and help develop multiliteracies (Brænden, 2015, p. 1). However, some also found graphic novels difficult, complex, and boring (Brænden, 2015, pp. 31-58). As such, the study revealed that the learners perceived graphic novels to contribute to many advantages in the EFL classroom, and some challenges.

Another study focusing on learners is one by Pishol & Kaur (2015). Pishol & Kaur (2015, pp. 28-31) conducted a study examining Form Four (aged 16-18) Malay EFL learners' perceptions of graphic novels using a multiliteracies approach. A multiliteracies approach focuses on making use of the learners' experience of everyday life and educational experiences (Pishol & Kaur, 2015, pp. 26-27). Combined with a multiliteracies approach, the learners used and read a graphic novel during the study. Afterward, group interviews were conducted to examine their perceptions of the books (and approach) (Pishol & Kaur, 2015, pp. 29-30). As such, Pishol & Kaur (2015, p. 34) found that the learners overall perceived graphic novels as interesting to read. Many of the learners also found the visuals and images in the book to be interesting, educational, and to aid their understanding (Pishol & Kaur, 2015, pp. 31-35). As such, the learners' perceptions of graphic novels appeared to be overall positive.

In addition to this, some studies have also been conducted regarding teachers' perceptions of graphic novels in relation to their teaching and learners, also in lower- and upper-secondary school and high school (e.g., Bravell, 2020; Pishol & Kaur, 2015; Pladsen, 2017). Pishol &

Kaur (2015, p. 29), as previously mentioned, also examined the Form Four learners' teacher's perception of graphic novels using the multiliteracies approach. The study employed a journal writing activity for the teacher and found that the teacher believed the learners were motivated and excited by reading graphic novels. Further, the teacher perceived that the learners became immersed in the learning process and experienced a memorable experience while reading and using the multiliteracies approach along with graphic novels (Pishol & Kaur, 2015, p. 39). As such, it appeared that the teacher perceived graphic novels to lead to an overall positive outcome for the EFL learners.

Another study on teachers' perceptions is a study by Bravell (2020). Bravell (2020, p. 1) researched how EFL teachers in lower and upper secondary schools in Sweden used graphic novels and comics in their teaching. Through semi-structured interviews with nine upper- and three lower-secondary school teachers, Bravell (2020) found that the teachers viewed graphic novels and comics as valuable tools in their language teaching. The participants perceived that graphic novels and comics helped increase the learners' interest in reading as the multimodality made the books more accessible, especially for struggling readers (Bravell, 2020, pp. 20-21). Many participants also emphasized that teaching graphic novels and comics could help the learners develop their vocabulary, multimodal literacy, and analytical and critical thinking (Bravell, 2020, pp. 21-22). However, the study also revealed that the teachers considered graphic novels and comics a stepping-stone toward traditional novels rather than an equally valuable tool in the EFL classroom (Bravell, 2020, p. 22).

Similarly, Pladsen (2017) studied Norwegian upper-secondary school teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward comic books. The study conducted semi-structured interviews with six teachers and found they had limited knowledge of comic books and their use. Pladsen (2017) found that the teachers mainly perceived comic books as entertaining due to being fun, creative, and engaging rather than useful in the EFL classroom. Indeed, the teachers in the study suggested that comic books should be used only as a supplement in the classroom. They explained this by stating that they thought graphic novels had less text, represented an oversimplification, and disturbed image creation. They also said comic books were easier to read than regular books (Pladsen, 2017, pp. 73-87). As such, the study revealed that some teachers perceive comic books as less useful than other books.

Lastly, research on elementary school learners' and teachers' perceptions of graphic novels has not been identified. However, one study has been conducted on learners' general perceptions of literature, which could offer some insight into the thoughts of young learners. In 2017, Howard researched fourth-grade English language learners' perceptions of reading in the EFL classroom. The study participants were three fourth-grade learners in an EFL classroom in the United States, who were interviewed to explore their reading habits, preferences, and what motivated them to read (Howard, 2017, p. 22). The study found that the learners were interested and motivated by books on topics they enjoyed and preferred to read fiction and graphic novels (Howard, 2017, p. 29). One of the participants mentioned that they often avoided long and difficult texts, which might be why graphic novels were at the top of their preferred books (Howard, 2017, p. 29).

Overall, research regarding learners' perceptions of graphic novels has primarily focused on older learners in the EFL classroom. The few studies conducted on older learners have found that they mainly perceive graphic novels to be beneficial in terms of enjoyment, motivation, language learning, and language comprehension (Brænden, 2015; Pishol & Kaur, 2015). Similar perceptions were found among EFL teachers, who also perceived graphic novels to be motivational and accessible for all learners, but also not as valuable as normal books (Bravell, 2020; Pishol & Kaur, 2015; Pladsen, 2017). In terms of younger learners, more research is needed in order to understand their perceptions of reading graphic novels, and the current study will contribute to filling this research gap.

# 3. Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodology and methods utilized in the current research project. The study is a mixed methods case study of a 7th grade class in Norway, employing a combination of observations, a survey, and group interviews. First, an overview of the methodological choices will be explained, followed by an introduction of the sample used for the project. Next, the methods employed in the research will be chronologically introduced and described in detail. Lastly, the chapter will include a reflection on the ethical considerations and a review of the trustworthiness of the research.

## 3.1 Methodological Approach

The research questions are central to any research and should guide all methodological decisions. Answering research questions requires a well-thought-out, appropriate research methodology that can lead to authentic answers. The current study's research question is:

> What are 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project?

In line with this research question, the present study requires a methodology that will lead to opportunities for the participants to express their perceptions of the advantages and challenges of utilizing graphic novels in the EFL classroom. To get both an overview and a more in-depth view of the learners' perceptions, the study employed a mixed-methods research. In a mixed-methods research, the researcher employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24).

Dörnyei (2007) defines qualitative research as "data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods" (p. 24). The primary purpose of qualitative research is to gather data that encapsulates the participants' perceptions in particular contexts by exploring their subjective opinions, experiences, feelings, and views (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). The participants' perceptions can be explored through the standard methods within qualitative research, such as field notes, surveys, interviews, conversations, written texts, and verbal protocols (Mckay,

2006, p. 9). Although these are diverse methods, the data collected through these methods will primarily be gathered in or converted into a textual format (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). The main idea of qualitative research is to collect rich and complex data and details through text, which can further be analyzed and interpreted in terms of the research question(s) (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). Through qualitative data collection, the researcher strives to understand the research area better by allowing the participants to express themselves through words rather than speculating on the subject through numbers and statistics as in quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 40).

Quantitative research, according to Dörnyei (2007), "involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods" (p. 24). Numbers, variables, and statistics characterize quantitative research, often found through quantitative data collection methods such as surveys (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 24-33). For instance, quantitative research mainly revolves around numbers and their representation. In order for numbers to provide information, the researcher needs to assign them meaning, category, variables, and boundaries. For example, a specific number can indicate the number of people who agreed to a statement, while another can refer to the possible answer "agree". Depending on the meaning and context, the number can provide information on various topics within a study. Further, the numbers can be put together as statistics which can provide an overview of the research data, such as the most common answers, thus providing extensive results for the research question(s) (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 32-33).

By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the possibility of bringing out the best of both approaches is possible (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 45). For instance, quantitative data can offer an overview through extensive data, while qualitative data can offer more in-depth explanations of the data. Dörnyei (2007) states that a mixed methods approach can "obtain data about both the individual and the broader societal context" (p. 45), which can potentially answer complex issues. In the current study, quantitative methods were employed to gather information about the class as a whole, which in this case constitutes the 'broader societal context'. On the other hand, qualitative methods were employed to gain more in-depth data about individual learners' perceptions. Thus, using a mixed method approach, with a primary focus on qualitative data, might be beneficial for answering the current research question. As such, the study employed observations, a survey, and group interviews. By utilizing qualitative and quantitative data, the study aimed to explore what the selected groups of

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learners perceive about the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels and also explore whether this data is representative of the class as a whole.

## 3.2 Data Collection

### 3.2.1 Sample

The sample for the study consists of a 7th grade class from an elementary school in Norway. 7th grade learners were chosen as ideal participants because of their expected language proficiency. According to Hasselgreen (2005), EFL learners at the end of year seven are expected to be at an A2-B1 language proficiency level in the Common European Framework of Reference. At this level, the learners should be able to read and understand graphic novels in English for children and young teens, which is necessary for the learners to participate in the current study.

Due to restraints in time and resources, the sampling strategy for the study was a convenience sample. In convenience sampling, the researcher uses those available and willing to participate in the study rather than participants chosen based on specific criteria (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 129). To find available participants, an email was sent to the researcher's previous practice teachers to get in contact with the 7th grade teachers at their schools. One of these teachers volunteered for her class to be in the study, thus making the learners in her class the participants of the research. Although a larger sample could strengthen the generalizability of the study's findings, it was crucial to ensure that the participants acquired sufficient experience reading graphic novels in English through a reading project. Given the limited scope of the current thesis, a reading project with enough resources to let the learners experience graphic novels would not be possible with a larger sample. Thus, a choice was made to only include one class in the research. The participating class consisted of 29 learners aged 12-13, of which 22 agreed to be part of the research through informed consent. Although the class is a convenience sample, they fit into the ideal age and proficiency levels for the study to be conducted in their class.

A smaller sample consisting of eight of the 22 learners was chosen to participate in group interviews. To ensure a comfortable space for discussions, it was decided, together with the

teacher, that there would be one group of girls and one group of boys. The names of the 22 participating learners were written onto pieces of paper and divided into two piles, one for the girls and one for the boys. These were put into two bowls, and papers from each bowl were drawn at random to create the groups. By utilizing this method, the groups would remain randomized in an attempt to avoid any choice bias from the researcher or the teacher (Bryman, 2012, pp. 510-511). However, it was also necessary to have groups that would be comfortable speaking and expressing themselves with others. Thus, seven names from each bowl were drawn and presented to the teacher, who knew the class best. The teacher was tasked with reducing the groups from seven to four learners based on who would be the most comfortable with each other. By picking seven names, the teacher would have some flexibility in case of possible problematic group combinations. The results were two groups of four learners which were put together based on comfortability and comprised of learners of different proficiency levels and attributes.

### 3.2.2 Data Collection Methods

In order to collect data for the study, observations, a survey, and focus group interviews were employed. The data collection was conducted during and after a reading project which aimed to give the learners some experience reading graphic novels before exploring their perceptions. As such, this section includes a chronological overview of the project and the data collection methods.

### 3.2.2.1 Reading Project

Before asking the learners about their perception of graphic novels, it was necessary to ensure that all the participants had some experience with them beforehand. Although some might have previous experience reading graphic novels in English before the project, others might not, which would not suffice when the research was to ask about their perceptions. While there are multiple ways of using and working with graphic novels in the EFL classroom, the most natural form of experiencing graphic novels is to read them. Thus, the current study included a two-week reading project. The reading project was based on the principles of extensive reading, which involved the learners reading a book of their choice over an extended period without the intent of discussing the book or working on tasks afterward

(Susser & Robb, 1990, p. 165). These principles were necessary to follow in order for the learners to form a subjective opinion of graphic novels as a genre and to prevent the results from being linked to one specific graphic novel chosen by someone else and/or specific tasks.

In the first lesson of the project, 46 graphic novels were brought into the 7th grade classroom. The books varied in genre, topics, and size to give the learners a variety of options to choose from during the project (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of books). In the first lesson, the learners were introduced to the medium of graphic novels and given a brief explanation of how they are read in their different forms (e.g., graphic novels, manga, choose your own adventure graphic novels). After an introduction, the learners spent the following three EFL lessons (two 45-minute and one 60-minute lesson, 150 minutes in total) reading the graphic novels.

The learners were supposed to read extensively and uninterruptedly in each lesson. However, the 60-minute lesson proved to be a long time for the learners to sit still and read. Being familiar with the usual energy level of the learners, the teacher suggested a brief activity halfway through the lesson to help shake some restless energy. Although taking a break from the reading could have affected their concentration, based on the teacher's experience, reading for 60 minutes without a break would likely have resulted in some learners losing their concentration regardless due to restlessness and concentration issues. Thus, the suggestion was implemented, and the learners spent a few minutes doing the activity. Afterward, they went back to reading.

*3.2.2.2 Observations*

During the reading project, the researcher utilized structured observations in the classroom. Observation is a qualitative method where the researcher observes the participants' behavior in a specific setting (Bryman, 2012, p. 270). Structured observation involves having pre-determined categories for the observation, which help identify the most relevant aspects of participants' behavior rather than noting down everything that happens. The method of observation aims to gather data by observing natural behavior in a particular context instead of relying solely on second-hand accounts through surveys or interviews (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396). Thus, a part of the current study was to observe the class during the reading project to

see if their behavior would reflect their answers in the survey and interviews, consequently contributing to the triangulation of the results.

The observations were conducted in the learners' classroom during the two weeks dedicated to the reading project. During these lessons, the researcher mainly remained at the front and sides of the classroom to observe the learners' facial expressions and behaviors while sometimes walking around. It was decided before the study that the researcher would be a non-participant observer by not interacting with the learners besides the introduction during the first lesson. By being a non-participant observer, the researcher attempted to avoid any undue influence on the participants' behaviors, although the knowledge of being observed might have influenced their behavior regardless (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 404).

During the observations, an observation form was utilized to write notes using structured pre-determined categories (see Appendix 2). While creating the observation form, it was essential to create categories focusing on behaviors that could reflect their perception of graphic novels. Based on this and drawing on the theory presented in the previous chapter, the observation categories were "student engagement", "on-task/off-task", "books chosen", "comments by students", and "other observations". The category of student engagement aimed to look at the learners' engagement while reading, such as their facial expressions, body language, and energy levels, which might reveal their attitudes about and motivation while reading graphic novels. As such, the observation form included space to note whether the learners looked happy or annoyed, whether they spent time on each page or hurried through them, etc. Further, the observation form focused on their on-task/off-task behavior to observe whether the learners were reading or doing other things. As such, the category could offer insight into their state of focus and interest in reading.

Further, observing the books they choose could link to their preferences for reading. As such, this category included space to note what type of books the learners chose, how much time they spent finding books, etc. In addition, a category was on the learners' comments was included, which could directly show their opinions or indicate their perceptions of graphic novels. Thus, this category included space to note what the learners said during the project. Lastly, any other relevant observations could be added to the "other observations" category if they did not fit the other categories. In total, three observation forms were filled out as the observations took place over three lessons.

*3.2.2.3 Survey*

After the reading project was finished, the learners participated in an online survey about their experiences and perceptions of graphic novels and the advantages and challenges of reading them in the EFL classroom. Mckay (2006, pp. 35-36) defines surveys as written questionnaires that gather information from multiple participants. The information gathered from surveys can be factual (e.g., age, gender, proficiency level), behavioral (e.g., actions concerning specific contexts), or attitudinal (e.g., opinions, beliefs, and interests) (Dörnyei, 2003, as cited in Mckay, 2006, p. 35). As the current study was tasked with determining learners' perception of graphic novels, the survey was mainly used to collect attitudinal information.

The questions in the survey were directed at the learners' experiences, thoughts, and opinions of reading graphic novels (see Appendix 3 for an overview of the survey). Survey questions can be open-ended or close-ended (Mckay, 2006, p. 37). Open-ended questions allow the participants to write their answers, such as "What languages do you speak?". On the other hand, close-ended questions require the participants to select from several pre-specified answers, such as "Do you speak English?" where the answers would be choosing either "Yes" or "No" (Mckay, 2006, p. 37). For the survey utilized in the study, the questions were a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions. By including both types of questions, the learners would be allowed to express their thoughts freely without pre-determined answers from the researcher while also ensuring that some comparable data could be collected from each participant (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 105-107).

The first part of the survey was directed at their prior experience with graphic novels (e.g., "Have you read graphic novels before these lessons?"). Next, the questions were directed at their experience of the project (e.g., "Can you describe how your experiences reading graphic novels in English the past two weeks?"), their perception of the teaching value of graphic novels (e.g., "Do you believe you can learn something from graphic novels in English?"), as well as the perceived advantages and challenges of reading them (e.g., "What do you think are the advantages of reading graphic novels in comparison to other books in the English lessons?").

The survey also included multiple Likert scales, a format of close-ended questions (Mckay, 2006, p. 38). Mckay (2006) states that Likert scale questions ask the participants "to rate an item according to some dimension such as importance, interest, or usefulness" (p. 38). For this study, Likert scales were used as a way for the learners to rank their agreement with multiple statements about graphic novels in the EFL classroom. They were tasked with reading the statement above each Likert scale, then selecting one of five placements on the scale according to how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement (i.e., 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither disagree nor agree, 4: agree, or 5: strongly agree).

The Likert scale statements were developed based on a literature search including empirical and theoretical literature (e.g., Aldahash & Altalhab, 2020; Basol, 2011; Brænden, 2015; Myrnes, 2022; Williams, 2008). The final Likert scale statements were either reformulated direct statements from EFL learners and scholars or conclusions drawn from various researchers based on an analysis of their research data (see Appendix 4 for an overview of the statements). For example, one of the studies used was by Brænden (2015) about 10th grade learners' thoughts on reading and using graphic novels to improve reading skills. Through her data collection, the learners shared multiple statements and beliefs which could be used as statements in the survey. For instance, the learners stated that graphic novels and comics were fun, complex, difficult, messy, boring, required thinking, and more (Brænden, 2015, pp. 31-58). These statements were then reformulated to "Reading graphic novels is fun" and "Reading graphic novels can make reading boring".

Similarly, Basol (2011) conducted a study comparing reading comprehension in terms of traditional texts and graphic novels. He found that the participants obtained very similar results on their reading comprehension tests, comparing the process after reading the different books. These results were reformulated to statements such as "Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader" and "Reading normal books makes me a better reader than reading graphic novels". Another researcher, Myrnes (2020, p. 51), found in his study on graphic novels and mental health that hesitant or reluctant readers were potentially more engaged in interacting with graphic novels than with other books, which resulted in the statement "Reading graphic novels can help those who don't like to read pure text". Aldahash & Altalhab (2020, p. 22), who studied EFL learners' reading comprehension using graphic novels, found that images alongside words were beneficial for the learners. This led to the statement, "The images in graphic novels make reading easier". Lastly, the scholar Williams (2008, p. 14) stated that

some people might see graphic novels and comics as childish, which resulted in the statement, "Reading graphic novels is childish".

In total, 14 different statements were created (see Appendix 4). In order to avoid the implication that there are more advantages than challenges and vice versa, it was decided to have an equal number of statements on the advantages and the challenges. As such, seven statements related to the advantages and positive perceptions of reading graphic novels and seven statements related to the challenges and negative perceptions of reading graphic novels. The order of the statements in the survey was arranged to vary between the advantages and the challenges to avoid having too many from each category after one another (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 111). Further, before the participants answered the survey, it was emphasized that the statements were not facts, but opinions stated by other people.

The survey was written and conducted in Norwegian for the learners to understand the questions and statements better. Mckay (2006, p. 39) recommends writing surveys in the learners' mother tongue to make them more accessible and understandable to learners with limited English proficiency. Further, the survey was conducted in the participants' classroom on their own Chromebooks using a website called Nettskjema.no. Nettskjema is a web-based solution where data can be collected and stored anonymously and safely. From the survey, 18 individual questionnaires were collected from the 22 participating learners. A few of the learners were home from school sick or had computer issues, which resulted in fewer learners participating in the survey. Moreover, one of the questionnaires was removed from the data collected as the participant had answered "Strongly agree" to every statement, leading to the belief that they had not read the statements. Agreeing with all the statements would contradict several of them as they are opposites. Thus, after careful consideration, all the participant's answers were considered an outlier (atypical data) and were removed from the study to avoid them affecting the rest of the collected data (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 204; Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 299). As such, after this process, there were 17 responses considered during the data analysis and results.

*3.2.2.4 Focus Group Interviews*

After the survey, focus group interviews were conducted with two groups of four learners (see Section 3.2.1 for an explanation of how the groups were selected). An interview involves an

interviewer asking one or more participants questions related to the research topic (Dörnyei, 2007). When the interview is conducted in a group setting, the participants are meant to brainstorm, discuss, inspire, and challenge each other as a collective group to create insightful data (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144). The group discussions usually follow an interview guide created by the researcher (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 145). For this research, a semi-structured interview guide was created for the groups (see Appendix 5). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with pre-prepared, (mainly) open-ended questions where the interviewer can ask the interviewee to elaborate if needed (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136).

The interviews were conducted in a group room next to the participants' classroom. That way, the interviews could be conducted in the participants' natural environment while simultaneously being uninterrupted. The interview started with some small talk in an attempt to make the learners more comfortable, which Dörnyei (2007, p. 139-140) states is necessary for creating a relaxed environment. After some small talk, the interviewer explained the study's purpose and what would transpire, following a checklist developed before the interviews (see Appendix 6). The checklist's purpose was to give the learners more information on how the interview would be conducted, as well as ensure that the learners knew the purpose of the interview was to explore their perceptions, not to assess them (McKay, 2006, p. 55). After that, the interview started with questions about the books the learners read during the reading project and their thoughts on them (e.g., "What did you think of the book you read?"). Next, they were asked what they believed were the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels (e.g., "What do you think are the advantages of reading graphic novels in the English lessons?").

Further, two activities were included in the interviews in an attempt to maximize the learners' ability to express their views in the unique setting (Punch, 2002, p. 325). Punch (2002) states that "since children tend to lack experience of communicating directly with unfamiliar adults in a one-to-one situation, a more innovative approach such as using task-based methods can enable children to feel more comfortable" (p. 330). Although the current study employs group interviews, employing a task-based method seemed ideal for the learners to feel more comfortable talking in groups. Likewise, having the learners do activities during the interview would likely lead to an increased willingness to communicate, as well as ensure an increased richness of the data collected (Punch, 2002, p. 325).

For the first activity, the learners were given 14 pieces of paper with statements on them (see Appendix 4). These were the same statements from the survey. Some blank pieces of paper were added in case the learners wanted to add their own statements. The learners were then tasked to discuss which statements they agreed with or disagreed with. Through these discussions, the learners would reflect on their own and others' thoughts and opinions on graphic novels. The activity aimed to determine the learners' perceptions of graphic novels with the help of other people's statements about graphic novels. By utilizing others' statements rather than their own, the learners could have more to discuss in case they had not thought about certain aspects of reading graphic novels. For the second activity, the learners were asked to rank the same statements on the advantages and challenges of graphic novels (each category separately), according to which they most agreed with to which they least agreed with. By ranking the statements and explaining their choices, insights could be gained into what the participants value in their education and in terms of graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

As with the survey, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian in order for the learners to speak freely without language being a barrier. This way, the learners are likely to be more comfortable sharing their thoughts and discussing their opinions with others. The interviews lasted about 20 minutes each and were recorded through the app Diktafon. The app was connected to Nettskjema.no, the same web-based solution used for the survey. The recorded interviews were uploaded to Nettskjema, which would store them safely. The recordings, totaling about 40 minutes, were later transcribed verbatim in order to have accurate testaments of the learners' answers, pauses, and tones, which would further make it more manageable to analyze the collected data (Mackey & Gass, 2016, pp. 113-115).

## 3.3 Data Analysis

In research, the data collected must be managed and analyzed in order to answer the research question(s). Conducting a data analysis involves organizing, explaining, and making sense of the participants' answers, and noting patterns, categories, and common themes seen repeatedly throughout the data (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). To properly analyze the data, it is necessary to utilize one of the multiple data analysis approaches existing within quantitative and qualitative research. Although the current research is a mixed-methods study, its primary

focus on qualitative data indicates it would benefit from a qualitative analysis approach. One of the most widely used approaches within qualitative research is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 79), thematic analysis focuses on identifying and analyzing common themes throughout a collected data set. There is no clear theoretical framework for utilizing thematic analysis in research, which scholars Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 81) argue makes it more suitable for various research methods. Without a strict framework, the method makes for a broader range of possible analyses than other methods while still focusing on common patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Because of this, thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate analysis method for the current study. The analysis was conducted in three stages. Firstly, the transcripts from the group interviews and the open-ended questions in the survey were analyzed inductively using thematic analysis. The statements from the Likert scales were deductively sorted into the same themes in the second stage. In the third stage, the observation data were analyzed separately due to their different forms, using thematic analysis inspired by the survey and group interview data.

Although there is no clear framework for conducting thematic analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 70-80) have created a step-by-step guide to analyzing data using the analysis method. The first stage of the current study's data analysis was inspired by these six steps as a guide to analyzing the collected data. The first phase in Braun & Clarke's (2006, p. 87) guide is to familiarize oneself with the data. During this phase, the researcher must read and re-read, review, transcribe, and note down ideas from their collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Thus, the first step of the analysis for the current study consisted of listening to the audio files, transcribing, reading, re-reading, and translating all the data. The audio files were listened to multiple times in order to transcribe everything said in the interviews verbatim in Microsoft Word. Afterward, the transcribed interview and survey data were translated into English. The translations were conducted without changing the meaning of the participants' answers, although some of the sentence structures were altered to be grammatically correct in English. During this process, the researcher made notes of any overlaps between the interview and survey data which could be helpful in the following phases. Based on this initial analysis, it was decided that the analytical process would start with the focus group interview data as these contained richer and more in-depth data than the survey data. However, in each of the steps described below, the researcher would go back and forth between the focus group interview data and data from the open-ended questions in an iterative process.

The second phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide is to generate initial codes. Codes "identify a feature of the data (semantic or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst", which can be taken from the raw data and gathered into relevant categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The first step of this phase was to gather the translated interview documents into a qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. In NVivo, relevant and interesting extracts of the interviews were highlighted and labeled in ways easily recognizable, generating codes such as "language" and "images" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 250). These initial codes were applied to the survey data (open questions), with the option to add more codes if anything new was found. The data was then read and reviewed multiple times until the researcher was positive that all the data had been coded correctly.

After coding the data, the next phase was to search for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). For this step, the researcher must identify a broader level of themes in the initial codes, which can be done through an analysis of the codes and by creating a visual representation through mind maps or tables. After identifying overarching themes, the codes should be sorted according to the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). For the current study, a mind map of the codes was created in order to find patterns in the initial codes. The patterns revealed four possible themes within the data, and the codes were sorted within the different themes. As some codes could be applied to multiple themes, this step became a back-and-forth process between reviewing, refining, and sorting the codes into each theme. After creating the themes, the next phase was to review the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In this phase, the researcher reviews and refines the themes, ensuring every relevant piece of data has been included and is in the correct theme. Thus, the fourth step of the guide was conducted until the themes were thoroughly reviewed and refined.

The fifth step is defining and naming the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). For the survey and group interviews, the overarching themes of the data collection were 1) Engagement and Enjoyment, 2) Format, 3) Language and Skills, and 4) Degree of Difficulty and Understanding (see Table 2 for an overview and explanations).

**Table 2.** *An overview of the study's main themes and their corresponding codes with added explanations.*

| Theme | Codes | Explanation of codes |
|---|---|---|
| **Engagement and Enjoyment** | General enjoyment | Mentions of the learners' enjoyment of reading graphic novels during the project. |
| | Enjoyment of images and less text | Mentions of the images and less text in relation to the learners' enjoyment of graphic novels. |
| | Less enjoyment due to time | Mentions of the learners' enjoyment in relation to the time spent reading graphic novels. |
| | Enjoyment due to variation | Mentions of the learners' enjoyment in relation to the variation within the English lessons. |
| | Less enjoyment in spare time | Mentions of the learners' enjoyment of reading graphic novels outside of the EFL classroom. |
| | Neutral comments | Mentions that remained neutral in terms of the learners' enjoyment. |
| **Format** | Images make reading easier | Mentions of the images making reading easier for the learners. |
| | Images make reading fun | Mentions of the images making reading more fun for the learners. |
| | Less text make reading easier | Mentions of the less text in graphic novels making reading easier for the learners. |
| | Challenge due to order and structure | Mentions of the order and structure presenting a challenge for the learners. |
| | Images are an advantage | Mentions of images as an advantage in general. |
| | Challenge due to images and less text | Mentions of the images and less text presenting a challenge for the learners. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Language and Skills** | General language development | Mentions of the development of language through reading graphic novels. |
| | Development of vocabulary and grammar | Mentions of the development of vocabulary and grammar through reading graphic novels. |
| | Comprehension of language | Mentions of the comprehension of language through reading graphic novels. |
| | Language problems | Mentions of language presenting a challenge in relation to reading graphic novels. |
| | Development of skills | Mentions of the development of skills through reading graphic novels. |
| **Degree of Difficulty and Understanding** | Easier due to images and less text | Mentions of the degree of difficulty due to images and less text in graphic novels. |
| | Difficulty due to order and structure | Mentions of the degree of difficulty due to order and structure in graphic novels. |
| | Difficulty due to language | Mentions of the degree of difficulty due to the language in graphic novels. |
| | Difficult in general | Mentions of the degree of difficulty in general when reading graphic novels. |
| | Struggling and reluctant learners | Mentions of struggling and reluctant learners in relation to graphic novels' degree of difficulty. |

In the second stage of the data analysis, the statements from the Likert scales were sorted deductively into the same themes from the survey and interview data based on the content of each theme. For instance, the statement "Reading graphic novels is fun" relates to the learners' enjoyment, and as such, it was sorted into the Engagement and Enjoyment theme. Moreover, the Likert scale data was managed and transformed into statistics and figures in Microsoft Excel.

While working on the quantitative data in relation to the Likert scales, it was decided that the survey data would be best represented through a quantification of the open questions in the following results chapter. As such, the codes within the different themes would be presented as the main findings of this data. The frequency of the different codes reveals the number of times the learners expressed their perceptions of graphic novels in relation to the code and theme. As such, the data would be best represented in statistical figures, which is often referred to as the quantification of qualitative data, quantitizing, or quantitative translation (Boyatzis, 1998 & Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, as cited in Sandelowski, 2001, p. 231). By displaying the frequency of the codes rather than the number of learners producing the codes, the numerical and statistical data would highlight the significance of the various codes within the different themes (Sandelowski, 2001, p. 231). This way, the analyzed data would be more easily presented and utilized in the process of answering the research question.

The final stage of the analysis involved the analysis of the observations, which was inspired by the analysis used for the survey and group interview data. As the observation form was conducted without talking to the learners, it mainly focused on what could be observed from an outsider's perspective. Thus, the data to be analyzed was primarily observations of the learners' behavior rather than their thoughts, except for a few comments from the learners. As such, the data found that the observations were primarily related to the learners' observed engagement and state of focus. Drawing inspiration from the theme of Engagement and Enjoyment, the observation themes were named 1) Engagement and 2) Focus. These themes, along with the themes from the survey and interview data, display the different behaviors and opinions of the learners in relation to graphic novels. As such, the different themes might help reveal the learners' overarching perceptions of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom.

## 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Mackey & Gass (2016) highlight the importance of maintaining ethical standards when conducting research. Maintaining ethical standards refers to requiring the correct approvals and continuously considering the ethical aspects of the study before, during, and after the research (Mackey & Gass, 2016, pp. 30-32). For instance, before the current study was conducted, the project was registered with the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in

Education and Research (SIKT, previously called the Norwegian Centre for Research Data - NSD). For a project to be approved, the researcher must ensure the data can be collected and stored safely and in line with the SIKT guidelines. As such, the project needed to guarantee the participants' right to information, the safety of their data, and their anonymity. Similarly, given the young age of the participants, parental consent was necessary. Hence, a consent form with detailed information about the project (see Appendix 7) was created to inform the participants and their parents of what the role of the participants would be, how the data would be collected, stored, and remain anonymous, and other relevant information for them to decide to participate in the study or not (Mackey & Gass, 2016, pp. 31-32). The learners were also given adapted information about this orally before the study. If the participants had any questions or wanted to withdraw their consent at any given point, the consent form included ways to contact the researcher, the supervisor, and a data protection officer from the University of Stavanger. The consent forms were signed by the parents and collected by the researcher before the study was conducted.

Further, multiple measures were taken to ensure the data would be legally and safely collected and stored. The researcher kept the observation documents and consent forms under lock and key, and the survey was collected and stored on Nettskjema.no. Nettskjema automatically makes the data anonymous and deletes any electronic trails. The interview audio recordings were also stored on Nettskjema and later transcribed in Microsoft Word on a computer that required a password. The transcribed interviews and observation documents used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. As a result, SIKT approved the research project (see Appendix 8).

When considering potential ethical issues of a study, it is also necessary to focus on the different parts of the research that can unintentionally affect the results. Therefore, researchers must consider their study's potential influencing factors while conducting the research (Mackey & Gass, 2016, pp. 30-32). For instance, the questions used in the data collection methods might impose a bias with how the questions are written and presented (Mckay, 2006, p. 39). To ensure a more objective data collection in the current study, the questions were written as neutrally as possible and reviewed by the study's supervisor before they were utilized. Further, during the interviews, the researcher attempted to mitigate any influence on the participants' responses by, for example, avoiding indicating that an answer was wrong or right (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 141).

Similarly, the use of groups in the learners' interviews was determined strategically to make the learners more comfortable answering questions in the presence of someone (the researcher) who could be perceived to have more power than the learners themselves (McKay, 2006, p. 55). To further combat this, the interviews started by initiating small talk in an attempt to make the learners more relaxed in the interview setting. However, another risk in group interviews is that some learners might not voice their opinions due to others in the group. To combat this, the class's teacher carefully put together groups according to which learners would work best together (after an initial draw, see Section 3.2.1).

Moreover, the reading project was conducted in line with learning aims in the English subject curriculum, e.g., "read and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts "and "read and listen to English-language factual texts and literature for children and young people and write and talk about the content" (MER, 2019b, p. 7). As such, the study followed the English subject curriculum while also ensuring possible learning outcomes for the learners during the project. Overall, all these choices were made before, during, and after the data collection in order to maintain ethical standards.

## 3.5 Trustworthiness

An essential component of conducting research is related to the study's trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to the ways in which the researcher ensures the study's data and results can be trusted. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher must consider the research's credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 231).

Credibility focuses on how credible and truthful the results of the study are. This can be supported by, for instance, collecting data utilizing several research methods and in different situations, and over a period of time to make participants more comfortable with the researcher (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 231). Similarly, using audit trails and exploring alternative interpretations during the data analysis can further contribute to the study's credibility (Cope, 2014). This also means that the researcher has not imposed bias in the interpretation of the data, which leaves the findings as accurate as possible (Cope, 2014). The credibility of the current study stems from the way the research includes multiple methods for data collection, audio recordings, and thorough considerations during the data collection and

analysis. The research data was collected from observations, surveys, and interviews, which means the findings can be collaborated through multiple data sources. Similarly, the data from the audio-recorded interviews ensures a more accurate representation of the learners' voices, further strengthening the credibility of the collected data. Lastly, the data collected were read and re-read, reviewed, and considered through various alternative interpretations, ensuring the most accurate interpretation of the data.

Further, transferability refers to how the findings can be transferable from one context to another (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 232). A study is transferable if individuals not involved in the study, and in a familiar situation, can relate their own experiences and perceptions to the findings in the study. To ensure a study's transferability, the researcher can provide a "thick description" of their findings, context, setting, and participants (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 232). As such, the current study provides detailed descriptions of the study, samples, findings, and context to increase the potential for transferability. The sample and context are similar to the standard Norwegian classroom, as the study was conducted in an intact classroom working according to the national curriculum. As such, transferability to other, similar classroom contexts within Norway is also increased.

Next, Cope (2014) has defined dependability as "the constancy of the data over similar conditions" (p. 89). Research is dependable if others who want to replicate the research using the same methods and similar sample end up with similar findings as in the original study (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 232). To ensure dependability, the research requires detailed descriptions and explanations of decisions behind each choice made during the research process (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 232). To ensure dependability in the current study, the researcher has taken a systematic approach to the observations and data analysis through an audit trail. The research process also remains transparent, increasing the research's dependability.

Lastly, the researcher needs to consider the study's confirmability. Cope (2014) refers to confirmability as "the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints" (p. 89). To ensure confirmability, the researcher must provide full details of the data they are analyzing and interpreting for the study (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 232). In order to ensure confirmability in the current study, meticulous data recording and management have been provided throughout

the thesis. Moreover, Section 3.3 includes transparency of how the codes for the research were developed. The study also employed peer checks through the help of the supervisor of the study in regard to the themes. Further, the researcher practiced reflexivity by considering her position and influence on the study and how she might have contracted and possibly imposed meanings on the research process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 76). This was also applied throughout the whole study in order to improve the study's overall trustworthiness.

# 4. Results

In the following chapter, the results from the research are presented. The chapter has been divided into three sections, each covering the results of one data collection method. Section 4.1 consists of the results from the survey. Section 4.2 includes the results from the two group interviews. Section 4.3 contains the results from the observation forms. Within each section, the results have been sorted into the themes developed in the analysis, as explained in Section 3.3 in the methodology chapter. Each section will concentrate on findings related to the research question, which aims to discover what 7th grade learners' perceptions are of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project.

## 4.1 Results from the Survey

Survey data were collected from 17 participants through an online survey in order to get an overview of the whole class's perceptions of graphic novels in the EFL classroom. The survey included open questions about the learners' experience of the project, their opinion of graphic novels' learning value, and their direct perception of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels. In addition, Likert scales was included with 14 statements about graphic novels. In the data analysis, four themes emerged from the thematic analysis, as seen in Section 3.3. As such, the following section has been separated into parts based on the themes, namely 1) Engagement and Enjoyment, 2) Format, 3) Language and Skills, and 4) Degree of Difficulty and Understanding. These themes provide insight into how the learners perceived reading graphic novels, which will further help answer the research question. In the following section, each theme will be discussed sequentially. As mentioned in Section 3.3, the data will primarily be presented through the frequency of codes within the themes as to highlight the most significant results.

### 4.1.1 Engagement and Enjoyment

Engagement and Enjoyment were among the most prominent themes identified in the survey responses. The questions about the learners' experience of reading graphic novels, their perceptions of the advantages and challenges, and additional comments on the project elicited

the responses within this theme. Overall, 16 learners mentioned whether or not they enjoyed reading graphic novels during the reading project. The 16 learners' engagement and enjoyment were identified in 32 answers throughout the open-question survey data. As such, the theme appeared significant as the responses within the theme were double the number of learners, meaning it was mentioned more than once by most. An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme of Engagement and Enjoyment can be seen in Figure 1.
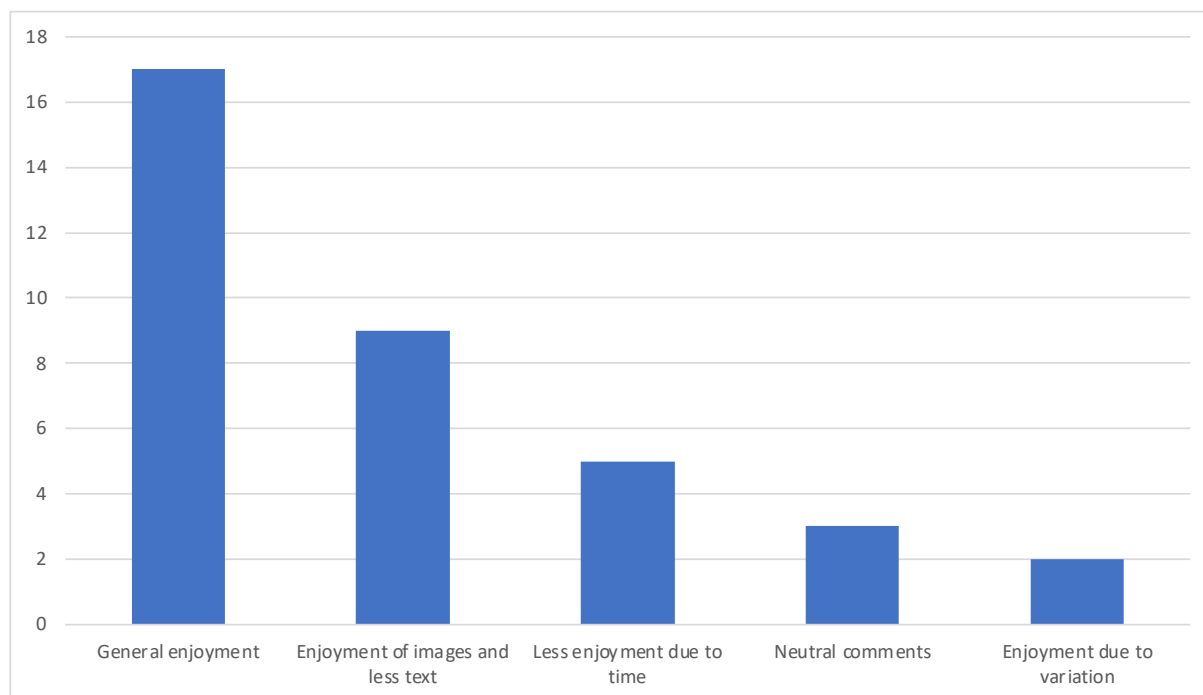


**Figure 1.** *An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme Engagement and Enjoyment in the survey responses.*

Within the theme of Engagement and Enjoyment, 28 of the 32 answers coded in this theme included that reading graphic novels during the project was fun (from 14 learners). Seventeen of these came from 12 learners who mentioned reading graphic novels, in general, was fun, coded as general enjoyment. For example, the learners wrote, "It has been fun and interesting" (L9[1]), "It has been fun!" (L10), and "I found this to be very fun." (L6). These responses suggest that the learners' perceptions of reading graphic novels were closely linked to their enjoyment.

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[1] Each learner has been assigned a unique code; e.g., L9 stands for Learner 9.

In relation to enjoyment, an analysis of the data found that the elements of graphic novels' format affected the learners' enjoyment when reading. Nine learners mentioned that aspects of the format, specifically the images and text, affected their enjoyment of reading graphic novels. Seven of these included that the images in graphic novels make them more enjoyable to read. For example: "There are more images and that makes it more fun." (L1) and "I think it is good that there are images because then it becomes a little more fun to read." (L5). Three of the nine learners mentioned that graphic novels often have less text than other books and, thus, are more enjoyable to read. For example, one learner wrote: "It has been fun to read these books. I like graphic novels because there isn't too much text inside the book." (L3). The learners' comments suggest that the inclusion of images and the less amount of text was linked to the learners' enjoyment of the novel.

In addition to the format, four learners also mentioned that the time spent reading affected their enjoyment when reading graphic novels. Five survey answers included that reading became boring or could become boring after reading for a while. For example, these learners wrote that: "It was fun, but I didn't like reading the whole lesson." (L10) and "The lessons were a bit long sometimes." (L9). When asked what could be challenging with reading graphic novels, one learner answered, "It can quite quickly become boring if we read a lot and for a long time." (L16). Based on these responses, it appears the learners found that too much time spent reading during the project negatively affected their enjoyment. However, it is unclear from the comments whether this was restricted to graphic novels or reading in general.

Lastly, two learners wrote that reading graphic novels was fun as they provided variation to the English lessons. For example, the answers wrote, "It was fun to read them [graphic novels], and it was fun to get a little variation in the English lessons." (L5) and "I think it has been fun since we usually don't read a lot of comic books in the English lessons." (L17). Although not a very prominent code within the theme, these two comments suggest that some learners experienced enjoyment due to the variation of reading graphic novels in the English lessons.

In addition to the survey questions, six of the statements the learners were asked to rate using a Likert scale were associated with the learners' Engagement and Enjoyment. These were included within the theme as the topics were closely linked to the learners' answers within the

theme. For example, three statements focused on whether the learners believed graphic novels were fun, boring, or childish. An overview of these statements and the learners' ratings can be seen in Figure 2.
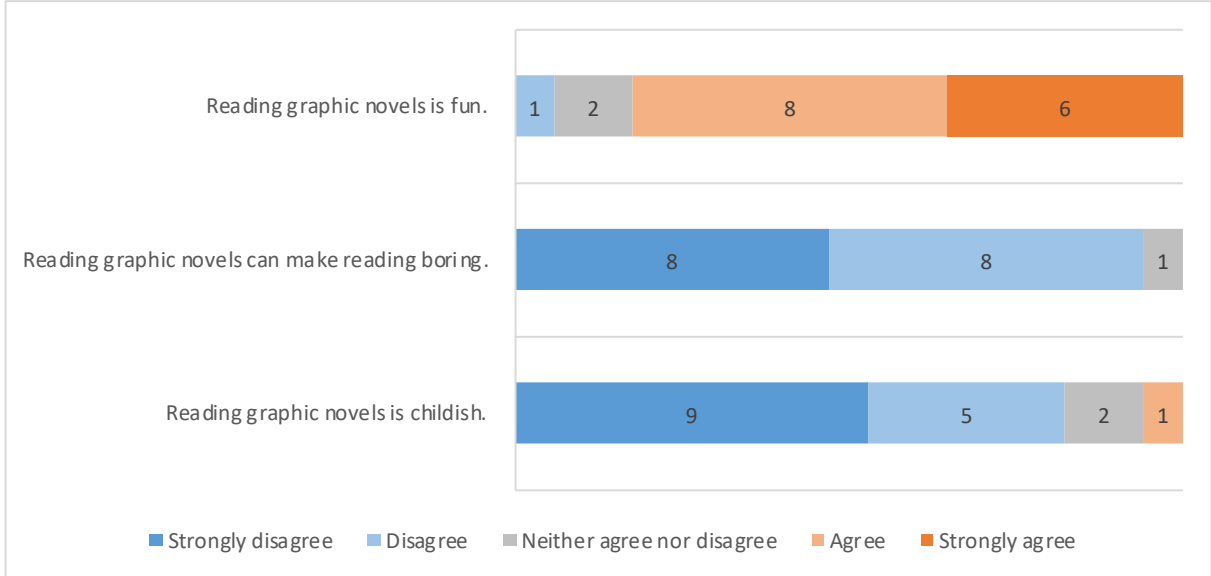


**Figure 2**. *An overview of the rated Likert scale statements on graphic novels related to the theme of Engagement and Enjoyment in the survey.*

As noted in the survey answers, many learners commented that reading graphic novels was fun. The learners' rating of the statement "Reading graphic novels is fun" reveals that most participating learners agree with this, with 14 pupils agreeing or strongly agreeing. These results are supported by the findings from the contrasting statement stating that graphic novels can make reading boring, where almost all the learners disagreed. Additionally, although the learners did not mention it in the open questions, most did not agree that reading graphic novels is childish. As such, it appears most learners found graphic novels to be fun and not childish.

Similarly, some learners mentioned reading in the English lessons in relation to their enjoyment of graphic novels, which could be related to another three statements from the survey. An overview of these three statements and the learners' ratings can be seen in Figure 3.
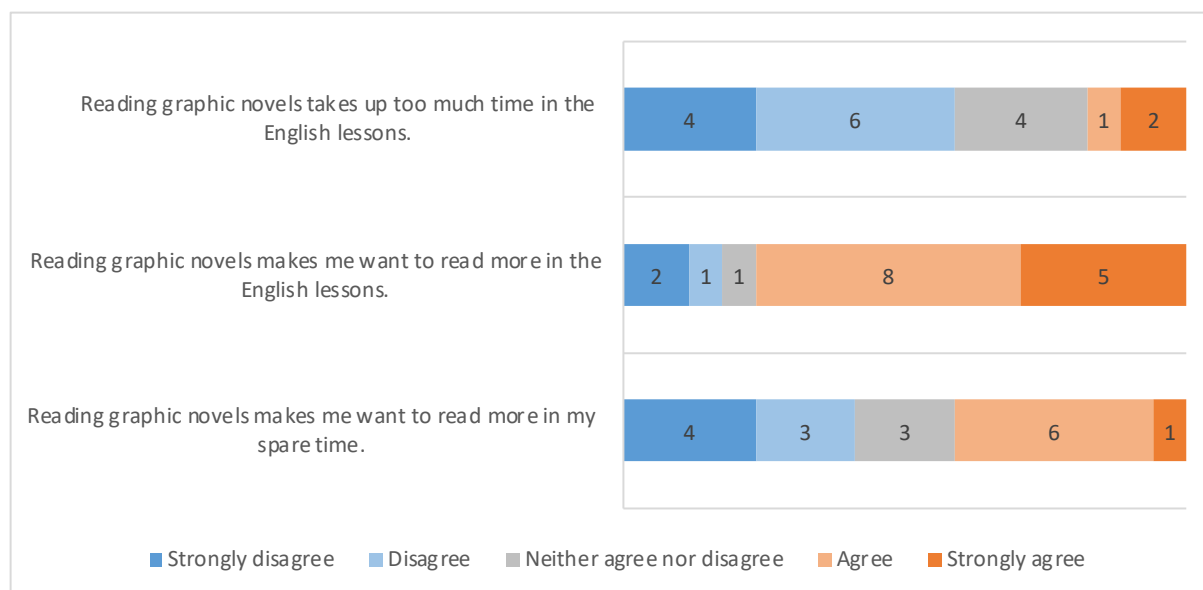
**Figure 3**. *An overview of the rated Likert scale statements on reading graphic novels in English lessons and spare time related to the theme of Engagement and Enjoyment in the survey.*

Some of the learners stated in the survey that the reading took up too much time in the lessons. This was reflected in the rating of the statements, as three learners agreed and four remained neutral to the statement, "Reading graphic novels takes up too much time in the English lessons". On the other hand, over half of the learners found that reading graphic novels did not take up too much time in the English lessons. This was also reflected in the rating of "Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in the English lessons", as a majority of the learners wanted to read more. Additionally, concerning the learners' activity outside of the English lessons, seven learners wanted to read more in their spare time, while the same number of learners did not. Based on these findings, it appears many learners reported to want to want more graphic novels in the English lessons, while only a handful of learners wanted to read more outside the EFL classroom.

*4.1.2 Format*

The Format was another prominent theme identified in the survey responses and included mentions of the different elements of graphic novels' format. When the learners were asked if they had experience with the format before the reading project, 14 said they did, while three remained unsure. Nine of these had also read graphic novels in English before the study. The

questions asking about the learners' experience of reading graphic novels and their perceptions of the advantages and challenges prompted the responses within this theme. Overall, 14 of the learners commented on the elements of graphic novels, such as images, text, order, and structure. Through the analysis of the survey data, mentions of the format were identified in 24 answers. As such, the format appeared to be an essential element the learners considered, as many mentioned it more than once. An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme of Format can be seen in Figure 4.
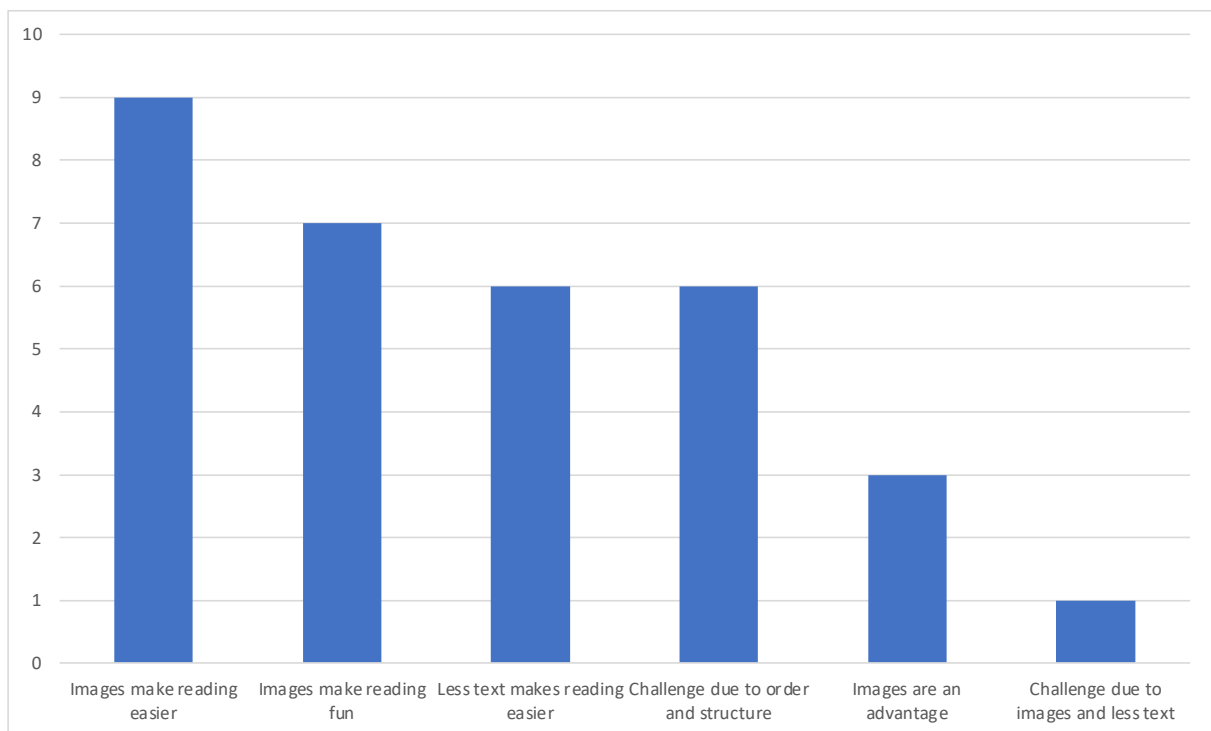


**Figure 4.** *An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme Format in the survey responses.*

Within the theme Format, codes related to the images were prominent, with 17 of 24 comments mentioning these. The 17 comments came from 12 different learners, meaning that almost all the learners who mentioned the format included a mention of the images. As previously mentioned, seven learners commented that the images in graphic novels make reading them more fun. For example, "It is more fun to read through them because they have images." (L2). In addition to this, seven of the learners mentioned nine times all together that images could make reading and language comprehension easier. Some examples include: "It was a little easier to read a graphic novel in English since there were also images." (L12) and "If you didn't understand what the English word meant, then you could look at the images."

(L15). Additionally, images were mentioned by 12 learners when asked about the advantages of reading graphic novels. While many included that the images make it more fun and easier to read, three learners simply wrote that the images were an advantage when reading graphic novels. For example, one learner wrote: "The advantage is probably that there are a lot more images." (L12). As such, it appeared many of the learners perceived images as an advantage when reading graphic novels, with some learners connecting this to a perception that they make reading easier and more fun.

Graphic novels' textual element was another code identified in the survey data related to the format. Five learners mentioned the element of text in six of the 24 comments. As with the comments about images, these learners reported that they found reading graphic novels more fun because they contained less verbal text. For example, one learner wrote, "It has been fun to read these books. I like graphic novels because there isn't too much text inside the book." (L3). Another learner wrote that the books were easier to read because of the smaller amount of text: "The book doesn't have as much text, and then it isn't as heavy to sit and read." (L17). Based on these comments, it appeared that some learners considered that the less text in graphic novels make them easier and more fun to read.

As an exception to this, one of the learners wrote about text and images when answering what they believed the challenges of reading graphic novels were. The learner wrote that a challenge could be that: "maybe that you learn less since there are so many images and less text." (L11). Although not a prominent code within the theme, this comment suggests that some learners might consider the images and less text in graphic novels to lead to less learning.

Lastly, six learners mentioned graphic novels' order and structure as factors affecting their perception of graphic novels. The six learners commented that one of the challenges of reading graphic novels is figuring out which order to read the components within a graphic novel, meaning the text bubbles, panels, frames, and such. For example, some of the answers included: "It might be a little challenging when you don't quite know where to start to read and where you should stop." (L12), "It [a challenge] can be that you don't understand which way to follow or something like that." (L15), and "People can become a bit confused. Since there can be a lot of text and people can become unsure what to read first." (L17). As such,

these comments suggest that some learners might consider the order and structure of graphic novels to be difficult and challenging.

Further, two of the statements from the Likert scale were coded to the Format theme since they addressed images in graphic novels. An overview of these statements and the learners' ratings can be seen in Figure 5.
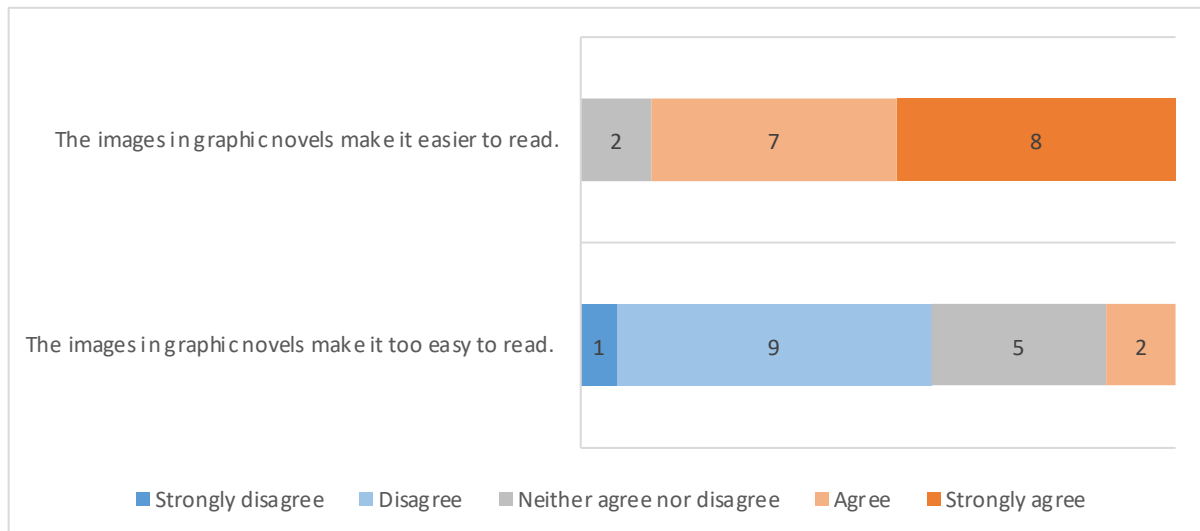


**Figure 5.** *An overview of the rated Likert scale statements related to the theme of Format in the survey.*

In response to the open questions, the learners mentioned that the images in graphic novels made reading easier. The learners' rating of the statement "The images in graphic novels make it easier to read" indicates that almost all participating learners agreed with this. Similarly, over half of the learners did not find the images to make reading graphic novels too easy, although a handful remained neutral. In line with the learners' comments, these findings suggest that the learners mainly found the images in graphic novels make the reading easier, but not too easy.

### 4.1.3 Language and Skills

Another prominent theme within the survey responses included mentions of language and skills. The questions about the learners' experience of reading graphic novels, graphic novels' learning value, and their perceptions of the advantages and challenges elicited the answers

within this theme. Overall, 15 learners mentioned language and skills in relation to graphic novels in a total of 20 answers throughout the survey data. As such, the learners considered language and skills relevant as most mentioned it once, while some mentioned it more than once. An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme of Language and Skills can be seen in Figure 6.
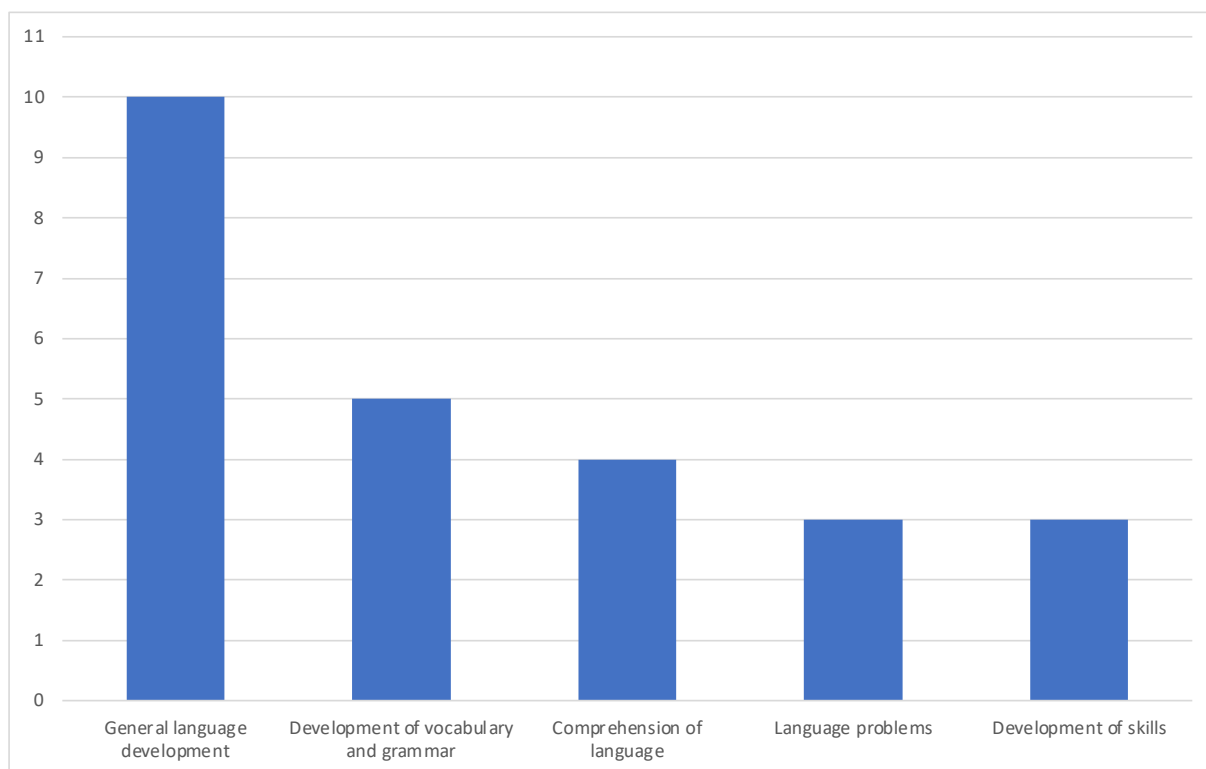


**Figure 6**. *An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme Language and Skills in the survey responses.*

Within the theme of Language and Skills, three of the codes related to the learners' language development. Ten comments by eight different learners mentioned language development in general. These learners wrote that people could learn or improve their English by reading graphic novels. For example, they wrote: "You can learn better English." (L2), "You learn English." (L3), and "Maybe you learn more English." (L13). Additionally, three learners mentioned the development of English through building vocabulary and focusing on grammar altogether five times in the survey data. For example, when asked what they could learn from graphic novels, the learners answered: "To spell better and to get a larger vocabulary." (L9), "You learn a bit how words are written." (L6), and "You can learn new words." (L5). Moreover, four learners mentioned once each that reading graphic novels could lead to a

better comprehension of the language. One learner explicitly stated that you learn to understand English by reading graphic novels (L10). At the same time, another implied the same by mentioning that the visual element in graphic novels can be of support: "You learn maybe a little bit more because there are images and then you understand more what is written there." (L12). These findings suggest that many learners perceive that reading graphic novels can lead to English language development through, for example, building their vocabulary, learning grammar, and understanding English.

On the other hand, three learners wrote that language could also be challenging. For example, two of the learners wrote when asked about the challenges of reading graphic novels: "You have to read in a different way and learn other words." (L9) and that English was a challenge (L8). As mentioned in the previous section, one learner (L11) mentioned that because graphic novels include many images and have less text than other books, people might learn less from them. By writing this, the learner focused on the fact that less text means less English is written in the books, thus, leading to less learning. Thus, the first comments suggest that some learners might find new words in English challenging when reading, although it is unclear from the answers whether this was confined to graphic novels or reading more generally. The last response suggests that some learners might perceive the less text in graphic novels to lead to a lack of language development when reading them.

Regarding skills, three learners mentioned the development of reading skills in the survey. Two learners remarked that reading graphic novels can build someone's reading skills in English, such as "You become better at reading English." (L17) and "You learn to read better in English." (L11). Another learner wrote: "If you don't know English very well, then you learn more, and if you know English, then you learn to read English faster." (L7). As such, the findings show that some of the learners considered graphic novels to be linked to the development of reading skills in English.

Three of the statements from the Likert scale questions were linked to the theme of Language and Skills. An overview of these statements and the learners' ratings can be seen in Figure 7.
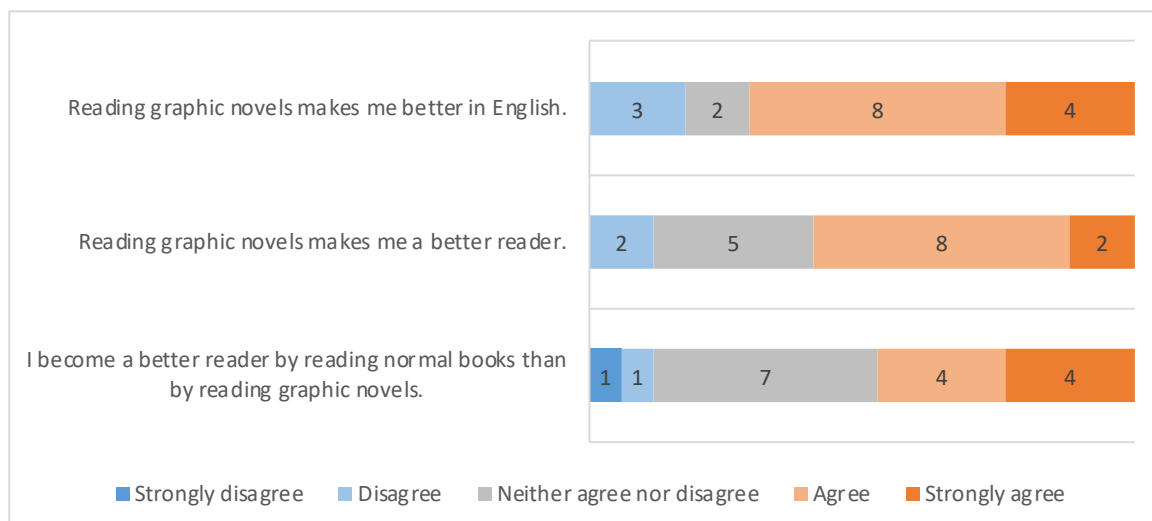
**Figure 7**. *An overview of the rated Likert scale statements related to the theme of Language and Skills in the survey.*

The rating of the statements regarding Language and Skills revealed different results. For instance, the learners' mention of language development in the open survey questions is reflected in their rating of the statement "Reading graphic novels makes me better in English", as a majority of the learners agreed to this. Similarly, a few learners mentioned the possible development of reading skills through graphic novels, and over half agreed to the equivalent Likert scale statement. It should be pointed out, however, that a handful of the learners remained neutral to this, and two disagreed. Regarding the statement, "I become a better reader by reading normal books than by reading graphic novels", eight of the learners agreed. Almost the same number of learners remained neutral to the statement. As such, the findings from the Likert scale questions corresponded with the learners' answers to the open questions, suggesting that some learners believe they can develop their language and reading skills through graphic novels. On the other hand, barely any learners rated that they could become better readers by reading graphic novels than by reading regular books.

### 4.1.4 Degree of Difficulty and Understanding

Another prominent theme found in the analysis of the survey data was the mention of the Degree of Difficulty and Understanding in relation to graphic novels. The questions that prompted the responses within this theme were those asking about the learners' experience of reading graphic novels, graphic novels' learning value, and their perceptions of the advantages and challenges. Overall, 12 learners noted the degree of difficulty and

understanding of reading graphic novels, and the theme was identified in 17 of the learners' answers in the survey. As such, the theme was significant as some learners mentioned it more than once. An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme of Degree of Difficulty and Understanding can be seen in Figure 8.
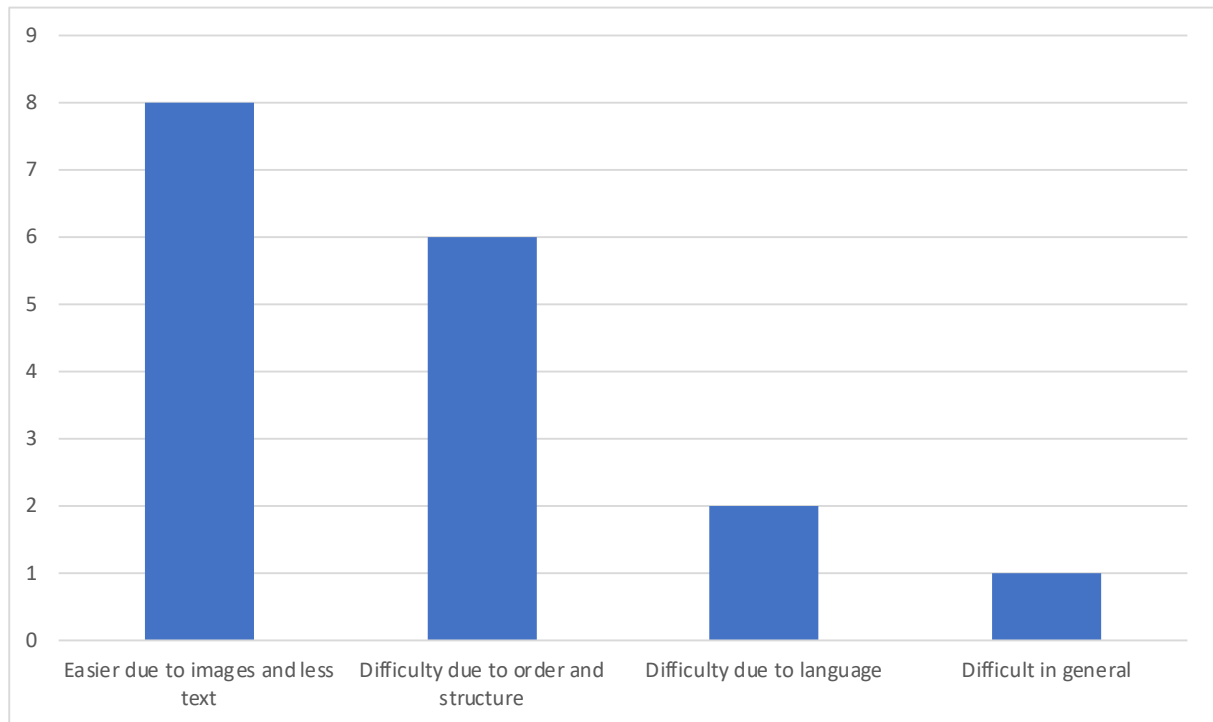


**Figure 8**. *An overview of the frequency of the different codes within the theme Degree of Difficulty and Understanding in the survey responses.*

The analysis found that the learners considered how different elements related to graphic novels could make them easier or more challenging to read and understand. As seen in the previous sections, the learners mentioned how the images and less text in graphic novels could make reading easier and how order and structure could make reading difficult. For example, the learners wrote: "It [graphic novels] is easier to understand because there are also images and not just text." (L10) and "It can be difficult to see where you're supposed to read." (L13). Similarly, the learners also mentioned that language and new words could be difficult when reading. For example, a learner wrote that a challenge could be that: "You have to read in a different way and learn other words." (L9). In addition to this, one learner mentioned that graphic novels could be a bit difficult in general, e.g., "It was a little fun but also a little difficult." (L1). As such, the findings suggest that some of the learners found some elements

of graphic novels to make reading easier, while other elements made reading more challenging.

In addition, three of the statements from the Likert scale questions related to this theme as they focused on whether the learners believed graphic novels were difficult and if they could help learners who might not like reading pure text. An overview of these statements and the learners' ratings can be seen in Figure 9.
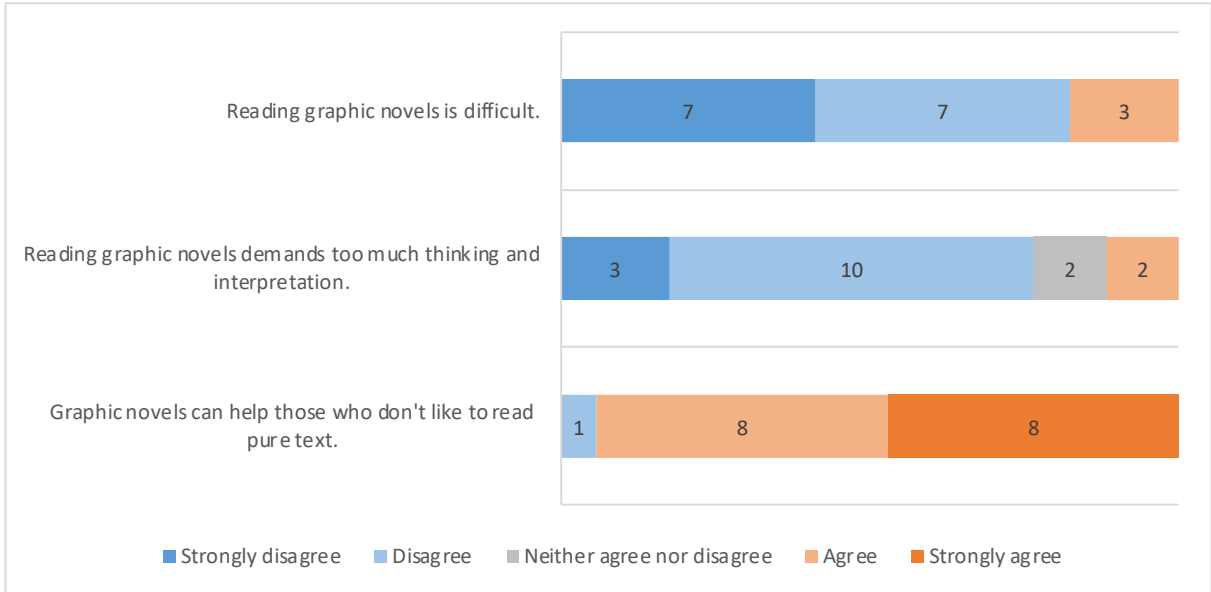


**Figure 9**. *An overview of the rated Likert scale statements related to the theme of Degree of Difficulty and Understanding in the survey.*

The statements reveal that most learners do not believe reading graphic novels is difficult or demands too much thinking and interpretation. Although few learners agreed with the statements, meaning some found them challenging. Additionally, almost all the learners agreed that graphic novels could help those who dislike reading pure text, meaning non-readers and reluctant learners. These findings suggest that most learners did not find graphic novels difficult, even though they could include some difficult elements. Moreover, the results show that most learners believe graphic novels can help reluctant learners.

## 4.2 Results from the Group Interviews

Eight of the 17 learners participated in group interviews, which aimed to provide more in-depth information about the learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels. During the interviews, the learners were asked questions about their experience and perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels and were tasked with two activities. The activities involved the learners discussing the same 14 statements from the survey and ranking them in order of agreement (see Appendix 4). Most of the data reported in the following section were generated from the activities. The section has been divided into four parts according to the same themes as the survey results: 1) Engagement and Enjoyment, 2) Format, 3) Language and Skills, and 4) Degree of Difficulty and Understanding.

### 4.2.1 Engagement and Enjoyment

One of the recurring themes in the interviews was discussions on the engagement and enjoyment of reading graphic novels. A majority of these discussions corresponded with the learners' answers in the survey. For instance, the interviewed learners mentioned multiple times that reading graphic novels during the project was fun, for example: "I could have survived a few more weeks of this. It was pretty fun" (Gunnar[2]). Additionally, when the learners were asked to rank the 14 statements on graphic novels, the groups put "Reading graphic novels is fun" in first and second place, suggesting they agreed with it the most (see Appendix 9). Many of the learners also commented, as in the survey, that a factor affecting their enjoyment of reading graphic novels for the better was the images and the fact that they contain less text. For example, one learner said, "I just really like that there are many images and that there is little text because then it is more fun to read" (Christine). Further, some learners commented that reading for a long time could become boring, e.g., "I think it was okay to read like this here, but the lessons would sometimes be a little bit long" (Frans). These findings correspond with many of the learners' responses in the survey, which indicated that the balance between images and text was closely linked to the learners' enjoyment of graphic novels. Moreover, the interview results correspond with the survey results which found that time might negatively impact the learners' enjoyment.

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[2] All names used are pseudonyms.

Another element mentioned in the group interviews and the survey was the variation in the EFL lessons. In the survey, some learners stated they enjoyed the variation that reading graphic novels provided for them in the EFL lessons. These perceptions were also discussed and elaborated on in the group interviews. For instance, many of the learners expressed enjoyment of reading graphic novels as it was different from what they usually do in English. For example, the learners said, "We normally never read graphic novels. We normally just sit and work on tasks and read long books, so really I think this [reading graphic novels] has been sort of good" (Christine) and "I think it is more fun to sit and read than to work in the workbook and such" (Christine). Additionally, when looking at the statement stating, "Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in the English lessons", most of the learners replied that they agreed to some degree. The learners said, "I want to read more graphic novels in the English lessons" (Christine) and "Yes, agreed, I think so a little yes" (Hans). Further, when asked if it would still be fun if they had to do more than just read the books, one learner replied, "Yes, it is a lot more fun if you can choose if you want to work with a book like that [graphic novels] than a long thick book, then you would rather choose a graphic novel" (Christine). As such, the interview findings elaborate that the learners found reading graphic novels was a contrast to their usual lessons, tasks, and books in the EFL classroom, which appears to have contributed to their enjoyment of reading graphic novels.

The learners also discussed their enjoyment of reading graphic novels in their spare time in relation to the statement, "Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in my spare time.". In the survey, the only data on spare time was derived from the Likert scale, in which many answered that the books did not make them want to read more in their spare time. These perceptions were shared by many of the learners in the interviews, who further elaborated on this. For instance, one learner said, "I don't really think it is that fun reading in my spare time because then I have better things to do, so I don't really agree" (Erik). Other learners also shared this opinion, stating they did not like reading books in general in their spare time: "I don't really like reading in my spare time" (Anne). However, the learners expressed that they would rather read a graphic novel than a regular book if they had to read in their spare time. For example, "If I had to read at home, I would rather read graphic novels than a normal book" (Christine) and "I would rather read graphic novels than a long normal novel with a lot of text" (Frans). In contrast, one learner said he wanted to read more graphic novels but did not have the time for it: "It does make me want to read more graphic novels in my spare time,

but I do other things as well, which takes up more time" (Gunnar). Additionally, when the learners ranked the 14 statements, one of the groups put "Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in my spare time" at the bottom, suggesting they agreed with this the least of the advantages (see Appendix 9). As such, these findings suggest that the learners' lack of wanting to read more graphic novels in their spare time might be related to a lack of wanting to read in general, as well as a lack of time to read. The findings also add that some learners would prefer to read graphic novels than normal books if they had to read in their spare time.

### 4.2.2 Format

Format was a recurring theme in the interviews. The learners' discussion in the interviews found similar findings as in the survey, such as how the images and less text could make reading easier and more enjoyable for the learners. For example, "I just really like that there are many images and that there is little text because then it is more fun to read, and then it isn't so heavy to read with a lot of text" (Christine). When asked to rank the statements on challenges, the learners put "The images in graphic novels make them too easy to read" in first and second place, suggesting they agreed with it the most (see Appendix 9). However, one group clarified that even though they had to rank the statements on challenges, they did not agree with them to a large extent. As such, these findings corresponded with the survey, indicating that the learners believed the images and text made reading easier and more enjoyable.

The learners also discussed the element of order and structure in the interviews. As in the survey, some learners mentioned that it could be difficult to know which way graphic novels were meant to be read. For example, one learner said, "You also might have an image where there are like very many bubbles here and there, and then you don't know which one to start with" (Anne). Another learner said, "I feel like it demands some thinking in order to know which one you should start with and to know like which way the images go since it can be a little bit confusing" (Beate). In addition, one learner who read a manga said when asked about its difficulty: "It was a little bit [difficult]- because I read the wrong boxes a few times" (Hans) and "It was a little weird reading it the opposite way than normal" (Hans). As such, these findings elaborate on the survey findings and suggest that the order and structure might

be challenging as they are different and demand more thinking than what normal books might require from the learners.

*4.2.3 Language and Skills*

Another prominent theme within the interviews was the theme of Language and Skills. In correspondence with the survey findings, the learners in the interviews discussed language development in terms of language comprehension and vocabulary building. For instance, some of the learners mentioned that when reading graphic novels, the images could aid their understanding of difficult words or sentences, e.g., "If there is something you don't understand, then you can look at the images, then you sort of understand it without reading" (Beate). Further, some learners indicated that they could improve their English through the comprehension of unfamiliar English words, e.g., "There can be new words and such that you can learn" (Erik). These findings correspond with the answers from the survey, suggesting that the learners believe they can develop their language through language comprehension and vocabulary building when reading graphic novels.

However, when one of the groups discussed the statement about becoming better at English by reading graphic novels, some appeared to agree to a lesser extent. During the discussion, one learner said, "You do become a little bit better" (Hans), to which another replied, "It depends. It depends from book to book, though, but I think it can make you better in English" (Gunnar). Lastly, one learner said, "I want to say you might become a little better, you don't get any worse at least, but you do become better by reading" (Erik). The same learner said at another point, "They are graphic novels in English, so then I learned a little more because I don't usually read in English" (Erik). Further, when ranking the statements on the advantages, both groups put "Reading graphic novels makes me better at English" in the second last place, suggesting they did not agree with it as much as the other statements (see Appendix 9). As such, these findings suggest that some might agree only to some extent that reading graphic novels can help develop their language, as some link language development to reading English in general rather than reading graphic novels.

In addition to the development of language, the learners also discussed the development of skills. A few learners mentioned this in the survey. However, the interviewed learners further

discussed this through the statements: "Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader" and "Reading normal books makes me a better reader than by reading graphic novels". When discussing these, the learners had mixed responses. A few learners agreed that reading graphic novels could make them better readers. One learner said, "I probably become a little [better at reading]. You do become better since you sort of practice English" (Christine). Another said, "You become a little better by reading at least" (Frans). In addition, the first learner also said, "You probably become a little better, but it depends on how easy the book is though", to which another learner replied, "Yes, it depends a bit on how good you are from the start" (Beate). Moreover, when ranking the statements, one of the groups put the statement "Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader" at the bottom, suggesting they agreed with it the least (see Appendix 9). Thus, while the survey answers indicate that some learners believed they get better at reading through reading graphic novels, these responses suggest that some learners believe this to a lesser degree. Moreover, the interview discussion further suggests that a few believe they only get better if the book is challenging enough.

Additionally, some learners said they believe they become better at reading through regular books rather than through graphic novels. One learner stated, "I would say you become better if you read normal books because then it is more to read" (Hans), while another said, "I don't really learn that much from books in general, but if I had to choose one of them then I think that it is normal books I would learn the most from" (Gunnar). In the other group, one of the learners aired a similar thought, "It could be that you become better [at reading] through normal books, too" (Dina). Through this discussion, the learners' comments suggest that some believe they get better at reading by reading normal books rather than by reading graphic novels, although some remain unsure. These findings correspond with the ratings of the Likert scale statement, "I become a better reader by reading normal books than by reading graphic novels", which revealed similar results.

### 4.2.4 Degree of Difficulty and Understanding

Another reoccurring theme in the interviews was the Degree of Difficulty and Understanding of reading graphic novels. In relation to this theme, the learners discussed whether or not reading graphic novels was difficult. For instance, to the statement "Reading graphic novels is difficult", one learner commented, "I think it isn't that difficult to read graphic novels"

(Hans), to which another said, "I don't think it is that difficult to read graphic novels either" (Gunnar). One of the learners added after everyone had disagreed with the statement that "I think it is easier, really" (Dina). Further, during this discussion, the learners stated, "It is easier to read, and it makes it fun to read in English" (Hans), "I don't think there was anything especially difficult with reading graphic novels, really" (Gunnar), and "I don't think there were any challenges either" (Erik). The learners' statements indicate that many of the learners did not find graphic novels to be difficult, but rather relatively easy to read. Similar results were found in the survey.

Similarly to the survey, the interviewed learners mentioned the format in terms of the degree of difficulty and understanding. First, the learners discussed how the images in graphic novels could make reading easier. For example, one learner stated, "It is easier when there are images, and it isn't that difficult to read graphic novels" (Frans). Moreover, some learners stated that the order and structure made reading more challenging. For example, as mentioned earlier, one learner said, "You also might have an image where there are like very many bubbles here and there, and then you don't know which one to start with" (Anne) when asked about the challenges of reading graphic novels. In line with the survey results, these findings suggest that the learners believe the images in graphic novels can make reading easier. In contrast, the order and structure could make it more difficult, as previously mentioned.

Further, as in the survey, a few learners found the language in graphic novels difficult. For example, some of the learners mentioned unfamiliar words, such as "I didn't think it was anything difficult with reading, but there were a lot of words and such" (Erik) and "It can be difficult to try to read if there are these weird words, but it really isn't that difficult to read" (Christine). Although the learners clarify that they do not find reading difficult, these findings suggest that some English words could be perceived as challenging.

Another element the learners mentioned in relation to graphic novels' degree of difficulty was struggling and reluctant learners. For instance, the learners indicated that graphic novels could be a good option for those who struggle with or do not like reading in English. For example, the learners said, "It can also help those who maybe don't feel like they are very good at English, in a way" (Anne), "Like if you aren't that good in English [...] then it is much easier to start by reading a lot of graphic novels since it is much easier, and you understand more" (Christine), and "It is like an okay start for those who maybe think it is difficult to read long

books" (Beate). Similarly, when the learners were discussing the statement about how graphic novels can help those who do not like to read pure text, the learners agreed and said, "Yes, since it is sort of a lot more fun" (Christine) and "Fully agree" (Frans). One learner added that the images make it easier to read, thus making it easier for struggling and reluctant learners to read as well: "With all the images and all that it becomes easier too, then it goes much faster" (Gunnar). When ranking the statements on advantages, both groups placed "Graphic novels can help those who don't like to read pure text" within the top two spots, suggesting they agreed with this the most (see Appendix 9). Similar findings were found in the rating of the same statement in the Likert scale in the survey, which found that almost all the learners agreed to this. As such, these findings elaborate that the learners believe graphic novels might help struggling and reluctant learners as the books have elements to aid reading and that make it more interesting for all types of learners.

## 4.3 Results from the Observations

This section contains the results from the observations of the participants during the reading project. As mentioned in Section 3.3, the observation data were analyzed separately from the rest due to their different form. The observation data mainly focused on what could be observed, which was the learners' behavior. The learners' observed behavior and comments mainly related to their engagement and state of focus, and as such, the themes for the observations became 1) Engagement and 2) Focus.

### 4.3.1 Engagement

During the three lessons, multiple indicators were observed regarding the learners' engagement in reading graphic novels in the project. A recurring observation during the lessons was that the learners displayed signs of being engaged in the reading and project. This was observed through the learners, for example, smiling and making positive remarks to their fellow pupils, teacher, and the researcher. One of the first examples of this happened during the introduction of the project, where one learner asked, "So we are really just going to have fun [these lessons]?", suggesting that he was excited to read graphic novels. Another indication of the learners' engagement occurred when they chose books to read, where

multiple learners were observed smiling and conversing with their friends about which books to choose.

The graphic novels further appeared to inspire excitement and enjoyment in the learners, which was observed when one learner went up to his friend after finishing his book and whispered enthusiastically about it while gesturing and smiling. Similarly, two learners had decided to read a graphic novel together (a choose your own adventure graphic novel with various endings). They spent two lessons reading and discussing together, smiling and chuckling, appearing engaged in reading the book. The learners' engagement was also observed towards the end of the project when one of the learners went to the teacher to ask if they could continue reading the graphic novels after the project. The notion that some learners wanted to read more graphic novels suggested that they might have experienced enjoyment and excitement when reading. These observations indicate that many learners were engaged when reading graphic novels.

In contrast, it was observed that two-three learners appeared bored or uninterested in the project. This was observed at the beginning of the project when a few learners appeared uninterested in picking a book to read. For example, these learners seemed to move around slowly, appearing as if not wanting to pick a book. Moreover, they spent a long time looking at the books, picking them up before putting them back down multiple times without choosing one to take back to their desk. Particularly one learner's behavior and comments indicated that he might have been bored during the project. For example, the learner asked in one of the lessons, "Do we have to read the whole lesson?". Throughout the project, he commented multiple times that it was "uncreative just to have to sit and read" and "so very boring". In addition to his comments, the learner was observed barely reading in his book and instead looking out the window, fiddling with his water bottle, sighing loudly, and doing other things at his desk. He was also observed going back and forth between his desk and the place with the graphic novels, switching out his books despite not finishing them. These actions suggest that a few learners were not as engaged as others in reading graphic novels during the project.

*4.3.2 Focus*

Further, many of the learners' behavior can be related to their level of focus. For instance, there were multiple indicators of the learners being focused and concentrated. Throughout the lessons, it was noted that most learners remained quiet and on-task, as they were observed to be at their desks with their eyes focused on the pages of their books. Besides the two learners reading a book together, the whole class remained silent. Some learners also asked for noise-canceling headphones to shut out all noise around them. Thus, it was noted that most learners appeared focused while reading the graphic novels.

However, a few learners were also distracted and restless during the project. This was observed through these learners doing other things than reading in their books. For example, it was observed a few times that some learners would look up from their books at other things in and outside of the classroom. Sometimes these would stare into the air for several minutes at a time. It was noted that they appeared distracted and lost in thought. Some of these were the same learners who appeared unengaged in reading, while a few others also behaved distracted at times. Similarly, it was observed that these learners fiddled with things on their desks. They fiddled with their water bottles, bookmarks, pencil case, and other things. They often moved around in their seats, appearing restless. These observations suggest that a few learners did not remain as focused during the project.

# 5. Discussion

In this chapter, the findings presented in the previous chapter will be interpreted and discussed in light of relevant theory and previous research. The chapter has been organized in accordance with the themes from the survey and interview findings. Sections 5.1-5.4 will discuss the learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels as found within each theme in an attempt to answer the research question: What are 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project?

## 5.1 The Learners' Perceptions of the Advantages and Challenges in relation to Engagement and Enjoyment

One of the most noticeable findings from the results was that most learners found reading graphic novels to be enjoyable. Fourteen of the learners in the survey answered that reading graphic novels during the project was fun, which was reflected in their rating of the statements related to the theme, as well as in their discussions in the interviews. The learners' enjoyment was also reflected in many of the learners' behavior and comments during the observations. These findings align with the findings from previous research. For instance, similar perceptions were found in Brænden's (2015, p. 55) study of 10th grade learners, in which the learners perceived graphic novels to be fun to read. Likewise, the learners in Eik's (2021, p. 52) study also found that the learners experienced enjoyment when reading graphic novels. These findings are further supported by the study by Pladsen (2017, pp 73-87), which revealed that teachers believed graphic novels were fun and engaging for EFL learners. In line with previous research, the learners' repeated mentions of their enjoyment of graphic novels suggest that they perceive it as an advantage when discussing the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels.

As remarked by Ryan & Desi (2000, p. 55), enjoyment is closely linked to intrinsic motivation. As most of the participating learners in the current study found reading graphic novels enjoyable, this might suggest that the learners experienced intrinsic motivation in relation to the reading. This finding is compatible with Kennedy & Chinokul's (2020, pp. 165-169) study, which found that learners experienced increased motivation when reading

graphic novels. This is further supported by the perceptions of a teacher in the study by Pishol & Kaur (2015, p. 39), who believed that learners became motivated and excited when reading graphic novels. Moreover, the learners of the current study reported in the survey and interviews a desire to read more in the EFL lessons due to their enjoyment of graphic novels. For instance, one of the interviewed learners (Gunnar) mentioned he could have read for a few more weeks if possible. These findings could directly be linked to motivation, as motivation is defined as a drive and inspiration to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). As such, the learners' comments and reflections about wanting to read more might be an indicator of their motivation in relation to graphic novels. Although the learners did not explicitly mention the word motivation in the study, these findings might indicate that the learners perceive increased motivation as an advantage of reading graphic novels.

Another significant finding concerning enjoyment was the learners' view of the balance between images and text in graphic novels. Many of the learners in the survey and interviews revealed that they experienced enjoyment in relation to graphic novels due to their inclusion of images and the fact that they have less text. In terms of enjoyment, these findings indicate that some of the increased motivation previously mentioned might have originated from their enjoyment of the images and less text in graphic novels. The perceptions of enjoyment in relation to images correlates with the studies by Pishol & Kaur (2015, p. 34) and Brænden (2015, p. 56), which found that the learners perceived the visuals and images in graphic novels to be interesting and enjoyable. As such, this might suggest that the visual element that graphic novels include could potentially have improved the learners' reading experience and motivation to read. Moreover, a study by Howard (2017, p. 29) found that some fourth-grade learners preferred graphic novels likely due to their contrast from long and challenging texts. This relates to the current learners' comments about graphic novels having less text than other books and might explain why some of the current learners link their enjoyment to the fact that graphic novels have less text. As a result, these findings suggest that some learners enjoy reading graphic novels as the images and less text make it more fun and interesting, thus, indicating that this might be perceived as an advantage of reading graphic novels. Moreover, the images and less text might be a contributor to the learners' possible motivation, leading to the belief that this might be perceived as a further advantage.

Moreover, the study found that some learners linked their enjoyment of reading graphic novels to the variation it provided in the EFL lessons. A few learners indicate throughout the

survey and interviews that they usually do not read graphic novels in the EFL classroom and mainly work on tasks in the textbook and workbook. The task of reading graphic novels, thus, provided them with something different than usual. These findings highlight some of the theory and previous studies found in the current thesis. For instance, although the curriculum requires teachers to include various types of text in their teaching (MER, 2019b, pp. 3-8), graphic novels and comic books are often not utilized in the EFL classroom (Lyngstad, 2019; Refsland, 2021). Moreover, teachers have many things that take precedence in the classroom, along with a set number of hours in the curriculum, which leads to little time to read graphic novels, especially extensively (Helgevold et al., 2005, pp. 10-11). Studies on teachers' perceptions (e.g., Bravell, 2020; Pladsen, 2017) also revealed that many teachers might find graphic novels and comic books to be less valuable than other books. As such, with little time, things to do, and the option to use books viewed as more valuable than graphic novels, many teachers might not utilize graphic novels in their teaching. As such, when the learners in the current study were faced with lessons that provided them with something they usually do not do, such as reading graphic novels, they might have experienced increased enjoyment. This might indicate that some learners in the current study perceive the variation in the English lessons as an advantage of reading graphic novels. On the other hand, the learners' enjoyment might not be limited to reading graphic novels but to the variation of the English lessons in general. Thus, it remains uncertain whether this belief is strictly linked to graphic novels or merely any task that would provide variation from their usual lessons. Despite this, reading graphic novels is a task that could provide variation, and a task the learners said they enjoyed, which indicates it might be an advantage in the eyes of the learners.

Another interesting finding from the study is related to the learners' perception of reading graphic novels in their spare time. In the survey, the same number of learners rated that they wanted to read more graphic novels in their spare time as those who did not want to read more in their spare time. These findings were elaborated on in the interviews, where many learners revealed that they did not like reading in their spare time as they had other or better things to do. This corresponds with and might explain the findings in recent reports, which found that children and teenagers are reading less now than before (Forleggerforeningen, 2021; Wagner et al., 2023). These findings suggest that the lack of desire to read in their spare time might be more related to reading in general than reading graphic novels, as demonstrated by the learners' comments, e.g., "I don't really like reading in my spare time" (Anne). However, some of the learners also indicate that if they had to choose between normal books and

graphic novels, they would choose graphic novels, e.g., "If I had to read at home, I would rather read graphic novels than a normal book" (Christine). Despite indicating that they would choose graphic novels over other books, the learners also indicate that they would choose other hobbies and activities over reading. As such, it appears that some of the learners' enjoyment of graphic novels might not be significant enough to extend outside of the EFL classroom. Thus, reading graphic novels is mainly perceived as an advantage in the context of the EFL classroom, despite some also wanting to read in their spare time.

Another finding that stands out from the results reported earlier is the learners' comments about the time spent reading graphic novels. A few learners found that the reading project lessons went on for too long, affecting their enjoyment of reading graphic novels. These findings are supported by the behavior of a few learners during the observations, who appeared unengaged and unfocused during the lessons. This might suggest that some learners perceive too much time spent reading as a challenge when reading graphic novels. An explanation for these findings might be that these learners found it boring to read graphic novels, or that they lost their concentration after some time spent reading. Similar explanations were found in a report by Forleggerforeningen (2021) on children's reading habits, which found that children are reading less possibly due to finding books boring and failing to concentrate while reading. These findings correspond with a study by Brænden (2015, pp. 31-58), who found that some learners perceive graphic novels to be boring. As such, the learners might perceive time as a possible challenge due to a lack of enjoyment of graphic novels and a lack of concentration. On the other hand, it is not explicitly mentioned that this is a challenge strictly related to graphic novels or if it is related to reading for too long in general. The latter explanation is supported by the fact that most learners in the survey disagreed that reading graphic novels takes up too much time in English lessons. However, the fact that a few learners agreed with this statement, along with findings from the observations, might indicate that the time spent reading graphic novels can be perceived as a challenge in the classroom context.

## 5.2 The Learners' Perceptions of the Advantages and Challenges in relation to Format

One of the most significant findings concerning the format of graphic novels was the learners' focus on images and text. For instance, the survey and interview reported multiple comments about how images and less text in graphic novels make them easier (and more fun) to read, along with similar findings in the rating of the Likert scales. Many learners noted that the images especially made the text easier to understand. These results agree with those obtained by Brænden (2015, p. 56), which found that 10th grade learners expressed that the visual elements helped them understand the plot better. As previously mentioned, the brain picks up on different verbal and visual representations when reading graphic novels. It selects, organizes, and integrates information based on essential parts of the text (Meyer, 1997, 2009, as cited in Wong et al., 2017, p. 413). Due to this process, Wong et al. (2017, pp. 413-414) state that the verbal and visual elements contribute to a more thorough understanding of the text. In line with the current study's findings, this might indicate that the learners perceive the images and, consequently, less text to be advantages to reading graphic novels as it aids understanding.

Another interesting finding was a comment by one of the learners in the survey that a challenge of reading graphic novels could be: "maybe that you learn less since there are so many images and less text." (L11). Although not a prominent finding within the current data set, it raises intriguing questions regarding the effect of reading books with less text and more images in contrast to text only. This could be linked to similar findings in the survey, such as the few learners who agreed or remained neutral when asked to rate if the images in graphic novels make them too easy to read. Likewise, both groups of interviewed learners put the same statement in the top two statements they agreed with most. A possible explanation for this might be that the combination of images and less text makes the books too easy for some of the learners, resulting in limited learning. As such, it might be argued that some learners might learn less due to easier reading material in graphic novels rather than in regular books with pure text. Similar perceptions were found in the studies by Bravell (2020) and Pladsen (2017), which revealed that some teachers perceive graphic novels and comic books as less valuable and useful than other books. The teachers in Pladsen's (2017, pp. 73-87) study explained these perceptions by mentioning that graphic novels had less text and that they

disturbed image creation. These perceptions might correspond with the current learners' perceptions, which suggests that graphic novels might be less educational than other books. As such, these findings might indicate that a few learners perceive the images and less text as a challenge related to reading graphic novels, as they might lead to less learning than other books.

Another significant finding regarding the format is the learners' comments on the order and structure of graphic novels. The results found that a handful of the learners found the order and structure of graphic novels to be confusing and challenging, mainly due to how the format is organized and read. These findings relate to the learners' perceptions in Brænden's (2015, pp. 31-58) study, which found that graphic novels could be complex and difficult to read. It might be possible that these results relate to the learners' lack of previous knowledge and experience with graphic novels. If the learners have little prior experience, they might find graphic novels' format challenging as it differs from other books. Especially manga might present a challenge, as it is read in the opposite order than other books (Ricketts, 2013, p. 174). Although the learners were given an introduction to graphic novels at the beginning of the project, with explanations and guides on how to read the different books, it was brief and short. As a result, some learners might have found the order and structure challenging to follow. However, the survey found that 14 learners said they had experience reading graphic novels before the study. As such, this suggests that some might find graphic novels difficult to read despite having experience reading them. Overall, these findings suggest that some learners might perceive graphic novels' order and structure as a challenge while reading them.

## 5.3 The Learners' Perceptions of the Advantages and Challenges in relation to Language and Skills

Some of the study's most significant findings were related to the mention of language. For instance, the study found that many learners believed that graphic novels could lead to the development of language and vocabulary, as mentioned multiple times throughout the survey and interviews. The learners' perceptions of language development are similar to those of the teachers in Bravell's (2020 p. 21-22) study, which found that the teachers believed using graphic novels in the EFL classroom could help the learners develop their vocabulary. These

perceptions are further supported by the studies by Öz & Efecioğlu (2015) and Basal et al. (2016), which found that reading graphic novels could improve EFL learners' language and vocabulary. Moreover, a study by Elley (1991) found that extensive reading, as conducted in the current research, can lead to vocabulary and grammar development. As such, these studies' findings correspond with the current learners' perceptions of language development through reading graphic novels. However, the present study also found through the interview discussions and rating of the statements that some learners believed this to a lesser extent. This was further reflected in the ranking of the statements in the interviews, where one group put the statement "Reading graphic novels makes me better at English" in the second last place. These findings suggest that many of the learners in the study likely perceive the development of English as an advantage of reading graphic novels, although there was some variation in the level of agreement to this.

As mentioned in Section 5.2, the learners found the images in graphic novels to lead to a better understanding of the books. This finding also relates to the development of language through language comprehension. The learners' comments on how images can aid understanding suggest that they comprehend the language better with elements such as images. Jaffe & Hurwich (2018, p. 16) states that the combination of image and text can help improve learners' comprehension skills, leading to better language learning. Similar findings were found in the studies by Wong et al. (2017), Sabbah et al. (2013), and Kennedy & Chinokul (2020), which found that the visual support in graphic novels led to better language comprehension among EFL learners of different ages and proficiencies. Likewise, as previously mentioned, the study by Brænden (2015, p. 56) found that learners understood the plot better due to the images and visuals. In the study by Pishol & Kaur (2015, pp. 31-35), learners revealed similar perceptions, stating they found the visuals to be educational and to aid their understanding. In line with these previous studies, the findings from the current study indicate that many of the learners experienced better reading comprehension due to graphic novels and their visuals, indicating that better reading comprehension might be a perceived advantage of reading graphic novels.

Another finding from the study related to the theme was the development of reading skills. In the survey, the statements about becoming better readers revealed mixed perceptions. Around half of the learners believed that reading graphic novels made them better readers, while five remained neutral. However, around half of the learners believed they become better readers

by reading regular books rather than graphic novels, while seven remained neutral. The interviews revealed similar attitudes. These findings indicate that some learners believe graphic novels could help them develop better reading skills, but not to the extent normal books could. This might relate to the findings in Section 5.2, which discussed that the learners perceived less text and more images as a possible challenge for their learning, as graphic novels might not be as challenging as normal books. Similar explanations might be applied to these findings, as some learners might believe they learn less through reading graphic novels than normal books with more text. Hence, while some learners might perceive the development of reading skills as an advantage to reading graphic novels, others might believe they develop this more through normal books.

## 5.4 The Learners' Perceptions of the Advantages and Challenges in relation to Degree of Difficulty and Understanding

Further important findings in the study related to the degree of difficulty and understanding of graphic novels. For instance, as discussed in the previous sections, the learners discussed how images and the less amount of text in graphic novels could make it easier to read and understand the plot, while some considered the structure and order difficult when reading. In addition to this, a few learners mentioned that language and new words could be challenging at times. However, as previously discussed, the learners found that the images could aid their understanding of the text, as supported by several previous studies (e.g., Brænden, 2015; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Sabbah et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2017). As such, these findings might relate more to the language in English books in general, and not just graphic novels. Regardless, this finding suggests that a few learners might perceive language as challenging when reading graphic novels.

Further, another noteworthy finding in the study related to the learners' discussions of struggling and reluctant learners. Almost all of the learners in the survey rated that they agreed that graphic novels could help those who did not like to read pure text. This belief was shared multiple times throughout the interviews as well. The learners explained that it could help learners who do not like to read, along with those who struggle with reading, as graphic novels are easier to understand because of the images. Similar comments were found in the study by Bravell (2020, p. 20), who found that the multimodality of graphic novels made the

books more accessible for all readers, especially struggling learners. Similar findings were further found in Wong et al.'s (2017) study, in which learners of all language proficiencies demonstrated better reading comprehension with graphic novels than with normal books. Moreover, the current learners added that graphic novels are more fun and, thus, more interesting for those who usually do not like reading. As mentioned in Section 5.1, the learners of the study might have experienced an increased motivation to read as they found graphic novels enjoyable and fun. Thus, as graphic novels can lead to more enjoyable experiences for most learners, it might increase the motivation for those who usually do not read. At the same time, graphic novels include images and a multimodality which can make it more accessible for struggling learners. Therefore, the current study's findings suggest that the learners might perceive the support for struggling and reluctant learners as an advantage of reading graphic novels.

# 6. Conclusion

Graphic novels have become increasingly popular in the past few years among the youth, also in Norway (Clark, 2019; Falk, 2022; Mendoza, 2022). In Norwegian schools, the English subject curriculum has emphasized the inclusion of texts such as graphic novels and comic books (MER, 2019b, pp. 2-14). Studies have shown that including graphic novels in EFL education can lead to various learning outcomes, as well as increased motivation and engagement (e.g., Fredriksen, 2016; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Öz & Efecioğlu, 2015; Wong et al., 2017). However, few studies have focused on what learners' perceptions are of reading and using graphic novels in the EFL classroom, none on elementary school learners. As such, the current study set out to explore elementary school learners' perception of graphic novels, which further aimed to contribute with knowledge about how graphic novels could be utilized and further improved in the EFL classroom. As such, the study utilized a mixed methods research approach employing a survey, group interviews, and observations in order to answer the research question: What are 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project?

## 6.1 Summary and Major Findings

After analyzing the data, the study found that the learners had multiple perceptions about graphic novels. For instance, several advantages were identified within the theme of Enjoyment and Engagement. In line with previous studies, the current study found that the learners perceived graphic novels to be enjoyable and fun, which subsequently might have led to motivation among the learners. The learners also found that the inclusion of images and the less amount of text contributed to this enjoyment. Further, some learners also included that the variation in the EFL lessons that reading graphic novels provided led to further enjoyment of graphic novels, as they usually only worked on tasks and in the textbook. The positive perception of the variation in the EFL lessons were not mentioned in any previous studies, as far as the researcher is aware, and thus contributes to new knowledge on the topic. In terms of the challenges identified within the theme, the study found that some learners perceived that reading for too long affected their enjoyment for the worse, which was also not directly found in any previous research. Moreover, the study found that many of the learners' enjoyment of reading graphic novels did not extend outside the EFL classroom, which corresponded with recent reports on children's reading habits (Forleggerforeningen, 2021; Wagner et al., 2023).

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Several different perceptions were also identified within the theme Format. For instance, the learners revealed that the images and less text made reading easier and more fun, aligning with findings from previous research. Some also believed that the balance between images and text might lead to less learning in the EFL context, something only studies on teachers' perceptions had previously mentioned. Moreover, some of the learners found that the order and structure of graphic novels could be difficult to maneuver, which was identified as a challenge of reading graphic novels.

Further perceptions were found within the theme of Language and Skills. The study found that the learners believed graphic novels could help develop language and vocabulary to different extents. Further, the learners perceived graphic novels to lead to better reading comprehension due to the images. These findings aligned with various previous research. The study also revealed that the learners had mixed perceptions of whether graphic novels could lead to the development of skills, an element not identified in previous studies.

In relation to the theme of Degree of Difficulty and Understanding, the learners discussed struggling and reluctant learners. The study found that the learners believed graphic novels could help struggling and reluctant learners as the images made reading easier and more fun, which aligned with previous studies. Lastly, the study found that language could be a challenge in graphic novels, although this might be the case for all books in English.

As such, the study's overall findings suggest that learners perceive reading graphic novels to include various advantages in the EFL classroom, and some challenges, as is best conveyed by one of the learners' comments during the research: "I could have survived a few more weeks of this. It was pretty fun" (Gunnar).

## 6.2 Implications

The current study set out to answer the research question: What are 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels in the EFL classroom following a reading project? After analyzing and discussing the findings, the study identified

several factors the learners considered when talking about reading graphic novels. These findings had several implications for future teaching in the EFL classroom.

One of the significant implications of the study stems from the learners' enjoyment of graphic novels. The study's findings indicated that most learners found reading graphic novels fun and enjoyable for several reasons. The learners explained they enjoyed graphic novels' balance between images and text and the variation the reading provided in the English lessons. Their enjoyment of reading graphic novels might also have led to a motivation to read more in the EFL classroom, as supported by the study by Kennedy & Chinokul (2020). As such, these findings suggest that graphic novels should be implemented to a bigger extent in the EFL classroom. Providing opportunities for the learners to read and work with graphic novels might lead to increased enjoyment and motivation in the EFL lessons for many of the learners. This has been conveyed through and supported by the studies by Brænden (2015), Eik (2021), Kennedy & Chinokul (2020), Pishol & Kaur (2015), and Ranker (2007). However, the findings also implied that the teacher should pay attention to the time spent reading, as some of the learners might become unmotivated and bored after reading for too long. Moreover, the teacher should also provide opportunities for the learners to become familiar with graphic novels before letting them read by themselves, as some might find the order and structure confusing without a lot of experience.

Implementing graphic novels into the EFL lessons might make the learners want to read more outside of the classroom as well. Recent reports have shown that children read less now than before, which could be addressed in schools (Forleggerforeningen, 2021; Wagner et al., 2023). For instance, conducting a reading project, as in the current study, might lead to more learners experiencing enjoyment in relation to reading, which could further lead to reading outside of the classroom. Helgevold et al. (2005, p. 6) state that a reading project often aims to inspire learners to read more in their daily life. As such, giving the learners opportunities to read, often extensively, in the EFL classroom might lead to more reading in their spare time. As the learners found graphic novels enjoyable and fun, these types of books might contribute to this issue to a greater extent than books with pure text. Thus, implementing reading projects and moments for extensive reading while utilizing graphic novels, such as in the current study, might lead to a stronger desire to read more daily among the learners, even outside of the classroom.

Other implications of the study relate to the learners' comments on the degree of difficulty of graphic novels. Many learners found that graphic novels are easier than normal books, making them more fun to read. The perception that graphic novels are easier than other books mainly derived from their inclusion of images and the fact that they have less text. Due to this, the learners explained that they understood and comprehended the books better. Many learners also believed graphic novels could inspire non-readers and struggling learners to read more, as the images make it easier and more fun to read. These findings suggest that graphic novels should be included to a larger extent in EFL lessons as they might provide visual support for all learners, especially struggling and reluctant learners. According to some of the learners, the improved comprehension of these books might also lead to further language development. This is also supported by various other studies (e.g., Brænden, 2015; Kennedy & Chinokul, 2020; Pishol & Kaur, 2015; Sabbah et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2017). However, if implemented, the teacher should be aware of the learners' proficiency level, as some graphic novels might be too easy to read for some learners. The study found that a few learners might have found graphic novels less challenging and, thus, might believe they lead to less learning. These perceptions were supported by teachers' perceptions in Bravell's (2020) and Pladsen's (2017) studies. As such, learners should be presented with book options that will provide a challenge and inspire further learning in the EFL classroom. Thus, the current study's findings imply that graphic novels should be included and utilized more in EFL classrooms in Norway.

## 6.3 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

There have been several limitations identified in the current study. One of the limitations of the research is its small sample size. Given the small number of participants, the study provides insight into 22 7th grade learners' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading graphic novels, which impacts the transferability. Other limitations of the study include the restraints on time and resources. The learners' perceptions of graphic novels were mainly based on their limited reading experience in the two-week project. Moreover, the class of 29 learners was presented with 46 graphic novels, which means the learners' perceptions of graphic novels as a medium might be linked to their experience with only one or two individual graphic novels. Moreover, time was a further limitation as two weeks is little time for the researcher to establish trust with the participants, making it possible that the learners might not have felt comfortable answering honestly in conversations with someone they

barely knew. Further, another limitation relates to the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data findings. Qualitative data requires the researcher to interpret the data, which leaves the possibility of the researcher applying their own bias in the process. Although actively working to remain unbiased in this process, researcher bias is always possible in any research despite an awareness of it.

In terms of future research, employing a larger sample for greater transferability could be interesting. In addition, to combat limitations such as time, it would be ideal for future research to be conducted with a prolonged engagement to establish more trust with the participants and more time for the learners to read graphic novels. Similarly, including more book options and books of interest to the learners might lead to fewer limitations and different results in future research. Other points of interest for future research could be to conduct similar studies within other grades in elementary schools around Norway, as there are no other studies within this area of research. Moreover, it could be of interest for future research to include elementary school EFL teachers' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of reading and using graphic novels to gain insight into their perspective along with the learners' perceptions.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: List of Graphic Novels in the Reading Project.

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Barks, C. (2015). *Donald Duck: Trick or Treat*. Fantagraphics.

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Brallier, M., & Holgate, D. (2015). *The Last Kids on Earth*. HarperCollins Publishers.

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Chase, J. (2022). *Little Monarchs*. Margaret Ferguson Books.

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Escabasse, S. (2020). *Witches of Brooklyn*. Random House Graphic.

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Shiga, J. (2010). *Meanwhile.* SD Books.

Smart, J. (2016). *Bunny vs. Monkey*. David Fickling Books.

Smith, J. (2005). *Bone: Out from Boneville*. Scholastic Inc. (5)

Stevenson, N. D., Ellis, G., Walters, S., & Allan, G. A. (2015). *Lumberjanes: Beware the Kitten Holy.* SD Books.

Telgemeier, R. (2010). *Smile.* SD Books. (2)

Telgemeier, R. (2014). *Drama*. Graphix.

Ueno, H. (2016). *Big Hero 6 (Vol. 1).* Yen Press.

Yang, G. L. (2006). *American Born Chinese.* Roaring Brook Press.

Yolen, J. & Cavallaro, M. (2010). *Foiled.* First second. (2)

**Appendix 2: Observation Form.**

**Date:**

| Category | Notes |
|---|---|
| **Student engagement (mood, body language, energy)** | |
| **On-task/Off-task behavior** | |
| **Books chosen (types? genres? length?)** | |
| **Comments by students** | |
| **Other observations** | |

**Elaboration of observations after the lesson**

**Appendix 3: Survey.**

# Spørreundersøkelse om grafiske romaner

Disse to ukene har dere lest engelske grafiske romaner i engelsktimene og jeg vil nå spørre deg noen spørsmål rundt dette. Din mening er viktig for meg, så svar så ærlig som mulig på alle spørsmålene. Undersøkelsen er anonym.
Husk at tegneserier og manga teller som grafisk roman!

**Kjønn** (Jente/Gutt/Annet) *

**Har du lest grafiske romaner før disse timene?** (Ja/Nei/Usikker) *

**Har noen av disse vært på engelsk?** (Ja/Nei) * (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Ja eller Usikker» er valgt i spørsmålet «Har du lest grafiske romaner før disse timene?»*)

**Husker du navnet på noen av disse bøkene?** (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Ja eller Usikker» er valgt i spørsmålet «Har du lest grafiske romaner før disse timene?»*)

**Hvis du har lest grafiske romaner før disse timene, har noen av de vært på engelsk?** (Ja/Nei) * (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Ja» er valgt i spørsmålet «Har du lest grafiske romaner før disse timene?»*)

**Kan du skrive litt om hvordan du opplevde å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?** *

**Tror du man lærer noe av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?** (Ja/Nei/Vet ikke) *

**Hva tror du man lærer av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?** * (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Ja» er valgt i spørsmålet «Tror du man lærer noe av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?»*)

**Hvorfor tror du ikke man lærer noe av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?** * (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Nei» er valgt i spørsmålet «Tror du man lærer noe av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?»*)

**Kan du si litt mer om hvorfor du er usikker?** * (*Dette elementet vises kun dersom alternativet «Vet ikke» er valgt i spørsmålet «Tror du man lærer noe av å lese grafiske romaner på engelsk?»*)

**Hva tror du er fordelene med å lese grafiske romaner sammenlignet med andre bøker i engelsktimene?** *
(Tekstboken gjelder også som andre bøker.)

**Hva tror du er utfordringene med å lese grafiske romaner sammenlignet med andre bøker i engelsktimene?** *

Videre kommer det noen påstander om grafiske romaner på engelsk. Husk at dette gjelder lesing på engelsk!

Under påstanden er det en skala med tallene 1, 2, 3, 4 og 5.

Kryss av på skalaen om du er enig eller uenig med påstanden. 1 betyr helt uenig, 2 betyr litt uenig, 3 betyr verken uenig eller enig (nøytral), 4 betyr litt enig, 5 betyr helt enig. Tallene betyr:

**Å lese grafiske romaner gjør meg til en bedre leser.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner er vanskelig.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner får meg til å ville lese mer i engelsktimene.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner får meg til å ville lese mer på fritiden.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner kan gjøre lesing kjedelig.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner er barnslig**. (1-5) *

**Bildene i grafiske romaner gjør lesingen lettere.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner tar opp for mye tid i engelsktimene.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner er gøy.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner krever for mye tenking og tolking.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner kan hjelpe de som ikke liker å lese ren tekst.** (1-5) *

**Bildene i grafiske romaner gjør lesingen for lett.** (1-5) *

**Å lese grafiske romaner gjør meg bedre i engelsk**. (1-5) *

**Jeg blir en bedre leser av å lese vanlige bøker enn av å lese grafiske romaner.** (1-5) *

**Har du noen andre kommentarer til prosjektet med grafiske romaner vi har holdt på med i engelsktimene?**

**\*** betyr at spørsmålet er obligatorisk.

## Appendix 4: Statements used in the Survey and Group Interviews.

**Advantages:**

Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader.

Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in the English lessons.

Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in my spare time.

The images in graphic novels make it easier to read.

Reading graphic novels is fun.

Reading graphic novels might help those who don't like reading pure text.

Reading graphic novels makes me better at English.


**Challenges:**

Reading graphic novels is difficult.

Reading graphic novels is childish.

Reading graphic novels can make reading boring.

Reading graphic novels takes up too much time in the English lessons.

Reading graphic novels demands too much thinking and interpretation.

The images in graphic novels make it too easy to read.

I become a better reader by reading normal books than reading graphic novels.

## Appendix 5: Interview Guide for the Group Interviews.

Hvilken bok eller bøker leste du?

Hva syns du om boken? Hva likte du med den? Hva var vanskelig med den?

Var det noe spesielt du husker fra den?

Hva tror dere er fordelene med å lese grafiske romaner i engelsktimene?

Hva tror dere er utfordringene med å lese grafiske romaner i engelsktimene?

Foran dere ligger det 14 lapper. På lappene står det noen påstander som andre folk har komt med. Det er ikke fakta, men andres meninger. Noen av lappene handler om fordelene med grafiske romaner, mens noen av de handler om utfordringene med grafiske romaner. Deres oppgave er å diskutere de ulike lappene, er dere enig eller uenig med det som står? Her skal dere diskutere som en gruppe, så det er nyttig at alle bidrar med sine meninger her. Dere trenger ikke være enige.

Hvis dere har noen andre påstander dere vil legge til, kan dere skrive disse ned på de blanke lappene.

Etter de har diskutert: Deres neste oppgave er å rangere de ulike setningene, med fordelene og utfordringene seg imellom. Hvilke syns dere er viktigst? Hvilken er dere mest enig i? Hvilke er dere mest uenig i? Ranger de fra den dere er mest enig i øverst og minst enig i nederst.

# Appendix 6: Checklist for the Group Interviews.

- Takk for at dere er villige til å delta!
- Mål med intervjuet (få innblikk i hva dere tenker om grafiske romaner på engelsk, ikke evaluere)
- Hvordan det vil foregå
  - Først vil jeg stille noen spørsmål som dere alle kan svare på
  - Etter hvert vil jeg introdusere to aktiviteter, og noen spørsmål til disse
  - Mens dere holder på med aktivitetene kan det være jeg spør litt videre på det dere sier
  - Lydopptak,
    - Opptakene vil ikke deles med andre, og pseudonymer vil bli brukt i publisering

Regler:
- Bidra til diskusjonen
  - Det er ønskelig at alle skal delta
- Ingen rette og gale svar
  - Alles mening er like verdifull
  - Vær derfor ikke redd for å bidra med nye ideer og tanker, eller å være uenige med hverandre!
- Konfidensialitet
  - Det som blir sagt i dette rommet, blir i dette rommet
  - Gjelder både lærere og andre elever
- Vis hverandre respekt
  - Ikke avbryt
  - Unngå negative kommentarer eller kroppsspråk
- Språk
  - Norsk

**Appendix 7: Consent Form.**

# Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet
## *«Barneskoleelever og læreres oppfatninger av grafiske romaner i engelskklasserommet»*?

Dette er en forespørsel til deg som foresatt om å la ditt barn delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke elever og lærere i 7. klasse sine oppfatninger av å lese grafiske romaner i engelsk klasserommet. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for barnet ditt.

### Formål
Formålet med dette masterprosjektet er å undersøke elever og lærere i 7. klasse sine oppfatninger av fordelene og utfordringene med å lese grafiske romaner i engelskklasserommet. Som en del av prosjektet vil elevene delta i et leseprosjekt der de leser grafiske romaner på engelsk. Grafiske romaner er lengre versjoner av tegneserie-verk, men i dette prosjektet vil også tegneserier og manga defineres under begrepet. Mitt forskningsspørsmål er «Hva er 7. klasse elevers oppfatninger av fordelene og utfordringene med å lese grafiske romaner etter et leseprosjekt?».

### Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Universitetet i Stavanger er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

### Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du får denne forespørselen fordi du er foreldre/foresatt til et barn som går i 7. klasse på skolen der studien skal gjennomføres. Jeg (masterstudent Maren Berentsen) har tidligere vært i praksis på skolen og har på den måten fått kontakt med kontaktlæreren for klassen barnet ditt går i.

### Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Alle elevene i den aktuelle klassen vil delta i leseprosjektet der de vil lese grafiske romaner i engelsktimene. Leseprosjektet vil foregå over en periode på 1-2 uker og kan knyttes til relevante kompetansemål innenfor engelsk. Data vil bare samles inn fra elever hvis foresatte har samtykket til det.

Dersom du velger å la barnet delta i forskningsprosjektet vil det innebære at jeg samler inn en eller flere av følgende data:

Spørreskjema etter leseprosjektet. Dette innebærer å svare på en spørreundersøkelse om elevens opplevelser og tanker rundt grafiske romaner. Undersøkelsen vil ta ca. 10-15 minutter og svarene vil bli registret elektronisk og anonymt.
Gruppeintervju etter leseprosjektet. I mindre grupper vil elevene få videre spørsmål om sine tanker og meninger om grafiske romaner mens gruppen gjennomfører to aktiviteter. Gruppeintervjuene vil vare i ca. 25-35 minutter og vil bli tatt opp med lydopptak.

I tillegg vil jeg utføre observasjoner underveis i leseprosjektet og skrive notater underveis. Disse vil være helt anonyme.

Hvis du lurer på noe om observasjon, spørreskjema eller intervju kan du ta kontakt på forhånd.

**Det er frivillig å delta**
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å la barnet ditt delta, kan du eller barnet selv når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle deres personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for barnet eller deres forhold til skolen og lærerne hvis de ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke seg.

Barnets deltakelse i leseprosjektet vil være den samme uavhengig om de deltar i forskningsprosjektet eller ikke. Spørreskjema vil bli gjennomført i siste time av prosjektet hvor ikke-deltakende elever vil få muligheten til å lese imens. Gruppeintervju vil bli gjennomført i siste time, eller eventuelt i en annen fagtime.

**Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om barnet ditt til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Det er kun masterstudent og veileder som vil ha tilgang til opplysningene under prosjektet.

Lydopptak vil bli tatt via diktafon og lagres i Nettskjema, en sikker løsning for innsamling av forskningsdata. Svar på spørreskjemaet bil også hentes inn og lagres på Nettskjema som anonymiserer data og elektroniske spor. For å sikre anonymitet vil navnet til barnet erstattes med en kode. Navnelisten som kobler navnet til koden og samtykkeskjemaer vil lagres separat fra øvrige data og låses inn.

Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen.

**Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**
Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 16.12.2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med ditt barns personopplysninger anonymiseres og lydopptak og koblingsnøkkel slettes.

Personopplysninger fra lydopptak vil anonymiseres under transkriberingen av opptakene, altså når opptakene skal skrives ned. Personopplysninger fra spørreskjema vil forbli anonymt gjennom hele prosessen. Observasjonsnotater vil bli anonymisert ved innsamling.

**Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**
Vi behandler opplysninger om ditt barn basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Stavanger har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

**Dine rettigheter**
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine og ditt barns rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- Cecilie Waallann Brown (veileder) ved cecilie.w.brown@uis.no eller på telefon: [removed from privacy reasons]
- Maren Wold Berentsen (masterstudent) ved mw.berentsen@stud.uis.no eller på telefon: [removed from privacy reasons]
- 
- Vårt personvernombud: Rolf Jegervatn ved personvernombud@uis.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:
- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Cecilie Waallann Brown                                    Maren Wold Berentsen
(Veileder)                                                          (Forsker/masterstudent)

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# Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *«Barneskoleelever og læreres oppfatninger av grafiske romaner i det engelske klasserommet»* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. På vegne av
_____(navnet til barnet ditt) samtykker jeg til at (sett kryss på den/de som gjelder):

- ☐ det gjøres observasjoner av barnet i forbindelse med leseprosjektet
- ☐ barnet kan delta i spørreskjema
- ☐ barnet kan delta i gruppeintervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger om mitt barn behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

**Appendix 8: SIKT Approval**

# Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger
**Referansenummer**
907619

**Prosjekttittel**
Elementary school learners' and teachers' perceptions of graphic novels in the EFL classroom

**Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**
Universitetet i Stavanger / Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk

**Prosjektansvarlig**
Cecilie Waallann Brown

**Student**
Maren Wold Berentsen

**Prosjektperiode**
29.11.2022 - 16.12.2023

**Kategorier personopplysninger**

- Alminnelige

**Lovlig grunnlag**

- Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 16.12.2023.

**Kommentar**
OM VURDERINGEN Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

UTDYPENDE OM LOVLIG GRUNNLAG for UTVALG 1
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra foresatte til behandlingen av personopplysninger om barna under 16 år. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være foresattes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

UTDYPENDE OM LOVLIG GRUNNLAG for UTVALG 2
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra engelsktlæreren (utvalg 2) til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

TAUSHETSPLIKT
Vi gjør oppmerksom på at forskningsdeltagerne har yrkesmessig taushetsplikt. Intervjuene må derfor gjennomføres uten at det framkommer opplysninger som kan identifisere enkelte elever eller avsløre taushetsbelagt informasjon. Vi anbefaler at du er spesielt oppmerksom på at ikke bare navn, men også identifiserende bakgrunnsopplysninger må utelates, som for eksempel alder, kjønn, trinn, diagnoser og eventuelle spesielle hendelser. Vi forutsetter også at dere er forsiktig ved å bruke eksempler under intervjuene.

Studenten og læreren har et felles ansvar for det ikke kommer frem taushetsbelagte opplysninger under intervjuet. Vi anbefaler derfor at studenten minner deltagerne om taushetsplikten før intervjuet startet.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Vi har vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene, men husk at det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke og hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el. ).

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet!

## Appendix 9: The Learners' Ranking of the Statements in the Group Interviews.

Girls' group ranking of statement on advantages of reading graphic novels

1. Graphic novels can help those who don't like to read pure text.
2. Reading graphic novels is fun.
3. Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader.
4. The images in graphic novels make it easier to read.
5. Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in English lessons.
6. Reading graphic novels makes me better at English.
7. Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in my spare time.

Boys' group ranking of statement on advantages of reading graphic novels

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5. Reading graphic novels makes me want to read more in my spare time.
6. Reading graphic novels makes me better at English.
7. Reading graphic novels makes me a better reader.

Girls' group ranking of statement on challenges of reading graphic novels

1. The images in graphic novels make them too easy to read.
2. Reading graphic novels demands too much thinking and interpretation.
3. I become a better reader by reading normal books than by reading graphic novels.
4. Reading graphic novels can make reading boring.
5. Reading graphic novels is difficult.
6. Reading graphic novels takes up too much time in English lessons.
7. Reading graphic novels is childish.

Boys' group ranking of statement on challenges of reading graphic novels

1. I become a better reader by reading normal books than by reading graphic novels.
2. The images in graphic novels make them too easy to read.
3. Reading graphic novels takes up too much time in English lessons.

4. Reading graphic novels demands too much thinking and interpretation.

5. Reading graphic novels is childish.

6. Reading graphic novels can make reading boring.

7. Reading graphic novels is difficult.