

Caricature and Visual Narratives: Strengthening Engagement and Reading Skills in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT. Reading instruction continues to evolve through creative and learner-centered strategies, prompting this study to investigate the pedagogical value of caricature and visual narratives in secondary education. Using a descriptive-correlational quantitative design, data were collected from 204 teachers through stratified proportional random sampling and from 117 students through complete enumeration. Statistical analyses included frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine integration levels, perceptions, and their relationship to student engagement. Results revealed high levels of integration of caricatures and visual narratives in reading instruction, accompanied by strong student engagement, particularly in self-reported reading improvement and self-efficacy. Significant correlations emerged between the extent of integration and student engagement, with notable differences across teacher profile variables. These findings affirm the potential of visual learning strategies to enhance reading skills and foster meaningful engagement among secondary learners.

KEYWORDS: caricature, visual narratives, reading skills development, student engagement, reading instruction, secondary school students, visual learning strategies, self-efficacy

I. INTRODUCTION

As education continues to evolve in the 21st century, the demand for learner-centered and creative teaching methods has become important, mainly in literacy development. Students are growing up in a very visual, digital world, and teachers are seeking more interactive, multi-modal ways to teach reading. One innovative way of teaching reading is using caricature and visual storytelling as teaching tools. The visual formats help learners to understand concepts, engage in narratives, and understand through multi-modal learning experiences. This study examines the pedagogical value of caricature and visual narrative to enhance the reading skills of the secondary students in the Schools Division of Bislig City.

The existing literature offers a compelling validation of visual learning methods as a strategy for reading instruction. Scholars have shown that caricature has beneficial effects in learning environments, specifically reporting that student understanding and retention increase considerably when complex concepts are explained through these exaggerated forms (Kathiah et al., 2024). Similarly, visual narratives are credited with increasing student engagement and learning outcomes, particularly among young learners who find the combination of visual art and storytelling beneficial (Ricci et al., 2024). However, some researchers offer cautionary perspectives, suggesting that visual narrative comprehension skills are not universal and are heavily influenced by a student's cultural background and previous exposure (Cohn, 2019). Additionally, while visual materials may boost short-term interest, some argue that their long-term effect on independent reading skills requires further study. Despite these debates, the evidence largely supports the idea that caricature and visual stories are excellent tools for skill formation when used in a well-thought-out approach.

The present reading crisis in the Philippines is a clear sign that we need new and innovative reading strategies. In reading literacy, the country ranked 77th among the 81 participating countries, as shown in the result from PISA 2022. Fewer than 5% of students scored at or above the minimum level of proficiency. The result of the reading pre-assessment tests administered in the Schools Division of Bislig City School Year 2024-2025 shows that 70.4% of the students in Grades 7 to 10 are at a low level of frustration. Many students did not get enough support from the interventions to understand and read on their own. Teachers observed that students get bored if the lesson is text-based and more interested and responsive when visual materials are integrated. Students similarly expressed that reading with pictures is less frightening and more fun. These realities reflect the constraints of conventional methods of teaching and the need for more interactive and visual teaching strategies.

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The significance of this study lies in its contribution to multimodal literacy literature by providing empirical facts on the effectiveness of visual resources in an emerging world context. The findings may have implications for teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers regarding how to effectively use caricatures and visual narratives in reading instruction. Research can help teachers find practical strategies for use in the classroom that will improve students' understanding, motivation, and engagement. Furthermore, the results can guide schools in implementing culturally responsive and learner-centered literacy interventions suited to the needs of secondary learners in Bislig City. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide empirical support for the integration of visual learning strategies in reading instruction and contribute to the improvement of reading outcomes among Filipino learners.

II. THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDY

This part of the research examined the relationship between existing and relevant literature and studies deemed necessary to better understand the study. The review covered local and foreign works of literature and studies conducted in the country and abroad and presented a synthesis of the topic to fully understand the research and better comprehend the study.

Cognitive Advantages of Caricature in Reading Instruction

Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) and other foreign scholars believe that the exaggerated visual elements in caricatures stimulate different cognitive channels, which help to understand and remember the textual content. The authors find caricature not only stylistic but also a cognitive scaffold for helping learners to process complex ideas more efficiently. Sigrist and Prusse (2024) further observed that caricatures' materials addressed diverse learning needs, especially for those students who were unable to learn from traditional text-only instruction. Results of these studies suggest that caricature helps cognitive processing by giving a visual exaggeration that makes abstract concepts easier to understand.

William, Hayes, and Freire (2025) demonstrated that the inclusion of multimedia caricature elements enhanced the cognitive processing in language classrooms in the Philippine context; that is, Filipino learners benefited from interactive visual aids. Caricature also involved emotional and cognitive mechanisms, resulting in improved student engagement and comprehension (Olabiyyi, Charles, and Donald, 2025). These local studies reveal the versatility of caricature in culturally specific learning contexts, where exaggerated visuals are linked to students' lived experiences. The only difference of this from foreign studies is the cultural and emotional aspect, which is very important in Philippine classrooms.

The cognitive benefits of caricature should be examined in the context of the respondents' profiles in this study, such as teachers' age, years in service, and relevant trainings and students' age, sex, and MPS. These variables might influence how a caricature and visual narrative are integrated in reading activities and to what extent they help comprehension. The study aims to analyze if teachers with more training or longer years of service perceive caricature differently and whether students of different profiles benefit equally from its cognitive advantages. This perspective points to the importance of investigating how the characteristics of respondents influence the use and impact of caricature-based methods in reading instruction.

Motivational Impact of Caricature and Visual Narratives

Foreign evidences have shown that caricature and visual stories stimulate and sustain reading. The utilization of caricature materials had a positive influence on intrinsic motivation, leading to greater persistence and voluntary engagement in reading activities (Thompson & Lee, 2024). Ricci et al (2024) found that visual narratives also increased student enjoyment and interest, but they warned that the increase in engagement could be due to the novelty effect, rather than an increase in knowledge. The results show that caricature and visual narrative are very effective tools for motivation, and the effect is not long-term unless it is included in the instruction.

These findings are consistent with local studies but suggest cultural relevance may be a motivator. Culturally responsive visual strategies improved grade 7 students' participation and engagement (Dela Rosa, Santos, & Yaya, 2024). Martinez (2022) proved that multimodal visuals are useful in learning English. This was solved by motivational factors and provided an environment that helped learning 24/7. These studies' results indicate that Filipino students hold positive attitudes towards visual aids that resonate with their culture and interests, and these visual aids help maintain their motivation long after the initial buzz.

The researcher knows that the motivation from caricatures and visual narratives should be analyzed based on students' engagement variables such as autonomous reading, motivation, behavioral outcomes, and self-efficacy. The study highlights the importance of assessing the perception of the motivational value of visuals by both teachers and students, their functions, and their pedagogical impact. This means the study will not only measure if a caricature creates interest but also if it retains interest over the long term for different student profiles. What matters is if motivational benefits are comparable across ages, sexes, and levels of performance and if they guide the development of culture-responsive and effective intervention plans.

Visual Narratives and Reading Comprehension Development

Studies abroad have proved that visual stories are very useful in enhancing reading comprehension. Students are enabled to work with complex and sequential structures. Cohn and Maher (2022) found that sequential storytelling enhances students' comprehension of complex narrative structures, and Park and Kim (2021) found that systematic exposure to visual narratives

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enhances vocabulary, critical thinking, and interpretive skills. The results highlight the need for scaffolding and guided instruction in order to optimize the benefits of visual narratives. Also, visual and text elements have been intentionally combined, leading to various cognitive pathways and thus enhancing comprehension, according to Myklevold (2022).

Arcilla et al. (2023) made an augmented reality visual novel on *Noli Me Tangere* in the Philippine context, which was successful in solving the comprehension problem of Filipino students. Buque (2022) observed teachers using sequential storytelling to foster literary comprehension amidst technological challenges during the pandemic. Local studies showed how visual narratives could be adapted in resource-poor contexts and how Filipino educators creatively used visual storytelling to overcome barriers. What is different from foreign studies is the focus on adaptability and resilience, which is significant in the Philippine educational context.

The researcher relates the function of visual narratives in understanding directly to perception and integration, especially in terms of the facilitation of understanding, visual-textual relations, and pragmatic functions. The literature suggests sequential storytelling as a way to enhance comprehension; however, the present study will explore if such benefits are felt equally by teachers and students of different profiles. This allows the study to explore whether gains in comprehension vary by characteristics of the respondents, such as teacher educational attainment or student MPS. This alignment is important because the study can later propose focused tactics that improve understanding results taking into account the variety of learners and educators.

Multimodal Approaches and Teacher Implementation

Foreign studies have shown that multimodal approaches with visual and textual components can be effective in improving comprehension and memory. Al-Taj et al. (2024) determined that multimodal integration activated several processing pathways, thus catering for the diverse needs of the learners. Hammond and Schmidt (2023) point out the necessity of teacher training and institutional support for successful implementation, citing a lack of preparation as a common barrier to success. The results show that multimodal teaching is only successful if the teachers have the necessary skills and resources.

Local studies also show the need for teacher training and institutional support. For example, Rio and Delgado (2023) found that professional development and collaboration allowed Filipino teachers to use visual strategies even in the absence of resources. The study validated the importance of institutional support to improve outcomes, but this was also confirmed by Esteban, Calang, and Pagador (2024), who identified persistent barriers such as lack of readiness and resource constraints. These studies underscore the systemic issues faced by Filipino educators, as opposed to resource-rich environments often highlighted in foreign studies.

The researcher believes that for multimodal approaches like caricature and visual narratives, the readiness of teachers, relevant training, and institutional support should be assessed. The study aims to find out the extent of integration of caricature into reading activities; thus, teacher profiles such as years in service and highest educational attainment are important in understanding the challenges in implementation. Thus, the study will explore whether teachers with stronger professional backgrounds utilize visuals more effectively and whether students perceive these efforts as beneficial to their learning experience. The importance is to establish the gaps between teacher capacity and student expectation, and it will help in formulating the proposed intervention plan for systematic integration.

Student Engagement, Reading Fluency, and Self-Efficacy

Studies on international education have consistently shown that visual learning resources enhance student engagement and self-efficacy. Visual resources were found to lead to increased persistence and independent reading (Wilson & Davis, 2024). Visual strategies were associated with increased reading self-efficacy (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). Competent readers are more involved in literacy activities and show higher comprehension (Chen, Sakyi, & Cui, 2021). The findings indicate that the visual learning strategies can improve the cognitive outcomes and boost the students' confidence in their reading skills.

These findings are supported by local research but also indicate gains in fluency and learner preferences. Sandicho and Padilla (2023) found out that Filipino struggling readers became more fluent when thematic visual scaffolds were used, and Casiano and Palacio (2022) found out that students significantly prefer visual learning strategies. The importance of systematic resource development, along with the study of Gumonan and Bug-os (2021), who created validated teacher-made visual materials in support of the development of fluency, is evident. Results showed that Filipino students were positively impacted by visual strategies that stressed fluency and confidence consistent with foreign perspectives of self-efficacy.

The researcher views that the student's engagement with caricature and visual narratives should be contextualized in autonomous reading, motivation, behavioral outcomes, self-reported improvement, and self-efficacy. Research has shown that visuals increase fluency and confidence. However, in this study we will examine whether such results are associated with student profiles such as age, sex, and MPS. This will ensure that the study captures the relationship between the level of engagement of diverse learners and the level of integration of caricature. The alignment is significant, as the study can offer interventions that can improve not only the reading fluency of Filipino students but also their confidence and independence.

Synthesis

The literature reviewed generally indicates that caricature and visual narratives are effective pedagogical tools that can enhance reading comprehension, motivation, fluency, and self-efficacy. These visual strategies have been demonstrated to activate cognitive pathways, sustain learner engagement, and scaffold struggling readers in both foreign and local contexts. We know from international research the cognitive and motivational value of overdimensioned imagery and sequential narration. Local research has highlighted the importance of cultural relevance, flexibility, and teacher preparedness in resource-poor settings. The overall evidence indicates that caricature and visual narratives are not on the periphery but at the core of successful reading instruction, particularly when they are systematically and strategically integrated into multimodal approaches.

The consistent findings across contexts show the universal benefits of visual learning, while the inconsistent findings show the unique challenges and opportunities in the Philippine educational system from the researcher's perspective. The findings underscore the need to develop caricature and visual storytelling not only to enhance understanding and memory but also to engage with the cultural identities and lived experiences of the learners. The literature also highlights the importance of training teachers and institutional support in the successful implementation of visual strategies. Teachers are more successful when they are equipped with the skills and confidence to employ visual strategies. This is in line with the goal of the present study, which is to look into possible ways of helping Filipino learners with reading difficulties through reviewing innovative, culturally responsive, and cognitively supportive instructional practices.

The findings have significant implications for practice and theory. The combination of caricature and visual storytelling suggests how exaggerated visuals and sequential narration can tap into cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of learning, thus increasing the potential of multimodal literacy, in theory. Results indicate that practice should be in the areas of teacher professional development, resource development, and culturally relevant instructional design to improve visual learning as per education stakeholders. Thus, the present study views caricature and visual narratives as important agents of change in bridging the gaps in reading comprehension, motivation, and fluency while contributing to the higher goal of developing confident, independent, and culturally grounded readers in the Philippine setting.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to determine the pedagogical value of caricature and visual narratives in developing reading skills. Data were collected from 204 secondary school teachers and 117 grade 9 students of the Bislig City Division. At the strategic level, the descriptive phase mapped the respondents' profiles (teachers' professional backgrounds and students' mean percentage scores) and their perceptions of instructional integration and students' engagement. The correlational phase explored statistical relationships and differences among these variables without experimental control. This quantified structure eventually formed the present environment of visual narrative application and served as a data-based basis for the Enhanced Reading Intervention Plan. The framework is focused on optimizing resource development, faculty training, and sustainable classroom practices to effectively improve student reading fluency, comprehension, and overall engagement.

3.2 Research Participants

The study consisted of 204 secondary school teachers and 117 grade 9 students of Bislig City Division during the school year 2025–2026.

3.3 Research Instrument

The study used researcher-made questionnaires to collect quantitative data regarding teachers' and students' caricatures and visual narrative integration for reading skills development. The instruments were aligned to the objectives and indicators of the study, focusing on levels of integration, perceptions, and engagement. They assessed respondents' demographics, operational integration, cognitive and affective perceptions, and behavioral and psychological engagement.

The teacher's survey consisted of three sections: (1) demographic and professional profile, (2) frequency of integration in terms of visual content, functions of visuals, pedagogical value, and scaffolding, and (3) teachers' perceptions of integration in terms of fluency games, comprehension support, visual-textual connections, pragmatic functions, and overall learning experience. The student survey was split into four sections: (1) demographic and academic profile, (2) perceived frequency of integration, (3) student perceptions across similar dimensions, and (4) engagement indicators related to autonomous reading, motivation, behavioral outcomes, self-reported improvement, and self-efficacy.

Five expert validators with higher qualifications and expertise in reading education, research, language instruction, or visual learning were selected to validate the face and content of both instruments. Their comments were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness. A pilot test was carried out with teachers ($n=20$) and students ($n=25$), which confirmed acceptable internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of ≥ 0.70 . Clarity, accuracy, and usability were improved by changes from the validator and pilot feedback.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

Data collection was done in a systematic sequence to ensure orderly, ethical, and accurate acquisition of quantitative data. The first stage was the preparation and planning stage, which was the formal approval of the Schools Division Office of Bislig City, Public Schools District Supervisor, and the school heads of the participating public schools in Bislig 2C District. After the approval of the request letters, the researcher prepared the validated closed-ended questionnaires, prepared informed consent forms, identified the target respondents, and coordinated with the school heads to schedule the data collection in such a way that it would not disrupt the classes and regular school activities as much as possible. This stage established the baseline protocols needed to implement instructional methods to ensure that the integration of caricature and visual narrative treatments was structurally aligned with the existing reading development schedules.

During the distribution and retrieval stage, the completed survey questionnaires were distributed and retrieved from 204 teacher respondents in different subject areas and 117 student respondents from four participating schools. The survey collected demographic and contextual information such as the age, sex, subject taught, years in service, current position/designation, highest educational attainment, and attendance at training related to visual learning, multimodal instruction, reading, or technology integration of the teachers. The data from the students included age, sex, grade level, school name, and Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of last quarter. Furthermore, the survey examined the degree of integration of caricature and visual narratives, the perceptions of stakeholders about this integration, and indicators of student engagement such as autonomous reading, motivation, behavioral outcomes, self-reported improvement, and self-efficacy. At the same time, a systematic documentation of active observation of influencing factors, such as students' familiarity with visual text, accessibility of materials, and classroom environment, was done to contextualize the scale responses. Clear instructions were given to all respondents, and they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, collated, and prepared for coding and statistical treatment.

In the data analysis stage, the quantitative data was coded, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. These analyses defined respondents' profiles, mean ratings, significant differences, and significant relationships among study variables. Systematic observation and rigorous measurement of metrics directly informed interpretation of results and how visual aids interact with reading comprehension. This systematic procedure provided reliable evidence of the pedagogical value of caricature and visual narratives in the development of reading skills. Ultimately, the findings led to the development of a targeted evidence-based instructional framework and a strategic reading program, which was the final product of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the mean distribution of the teacher respondents' demographic characteristics in terms of age, sex, years in service, position/designation, highest educational attainment, and relevant training.

The findings revealed that 48% of the respondents are in the age group of 26-35 and 78% are female. In terms of length of service, a large proportion has been teaching for 6–10 years (36%), and in terms of educational attainment, the largest group has a bachelor's degree (59%). Also, technology integration is the most popular training attended (71%), but visual learning methods are still the least attended (39%).

Table 1. Profile of the Teacher-Respondents

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 26 years old	7	3%
	26-35 years old	98	48%
	36-45 years old	64	31%
	46-55 years old	27	13%
	56 years old and above	8	4%
Sex	Male	44	22%
	Female	160	78%
Years in Service	1-5 Years	54	26%
	6-10 Years	73	36%
	11-15 Years	50	25%
	16-20 Years	20	10%

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	21-25 Years	3	1%
	26 Years and Above	4	2%
Position	Teacher I	54	26%
	Teacher II	58	28%
	Teacher III	92	45%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's degree	121	59%
	With Master's degree units	60	29%
	Master's degree	19	9%
	With Doctoral degree units	3	1%
	Doctorate degree	1	0%
Relevant Trainings	Visual	79	39%
	Multimodal Teaching	112	55%
	Reading Instruction	98	48%
	Technology Integration	145	71%

These findings imply that the majority of the teaching workforce are teachers in the early to middle stages of their careers and are developing pedagogical skills. This is in consonance with the findings of Esteban, Calang, and Pagador (2024) that highlighted the gendered nature of the Philippine teaching workforce. The distribution of teachers in the first 10 years of service is consistent with Hammond and Schmidt (2023), who found that younger educators are more open to using visual and multimodal approaches to instruction. Kress and Rowsell (2021) acknowledge this lack of specific training but also the need for teachers with specific training in visual and multimodal pedagogies to meet the demands of contemporary literacy.

Such findings could mean that the current workforce is motivated to keep up with broad technology trends but that specialized visual literacy has not yet been integrated into the typical professional development tracks. The teachers are young and are familiar with technology integration but not necessarily trained with the right artistic or semiotic training to conduct visual narratives like caricatures.

The findings imply that professional development programs should focus on specific visual literacy rather than general ICT. The teaching force is young and flexible, giving the school administrators the opportunity to be strategic and teach in innovative, multi-modal ways. This can help bridge the training gap for visual learning methods, enabling policies to better tap the existing technology fluency of teachers for more engagement in classrooms and diversity in teaching methods.

Table 2. Profile of Student-Respondents

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14 years old	60	51%
	15 years old	51	44%
	16 years old	5	4%
	17 years old and above	1	1%
Sex	Male	54	46%
	Female	63	54%
MPS	86-95 (Closely Approximating Mastery)	11	9%
	66-85 (Moving Towards	41	35%

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	Mastery)		
	35-65 (Average)	58	50%
	16-34 (Low)	7	6%

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the 117 student-respondents. The results show that most of the students are 14 years old (51%) and 15 years old (44%), which is the normal age for their grade level based on the K–12 curriculum. In terms of sex, it is female-dominated with 54% female and 46% male. The academic performance of the students in terms of Mean Percentage Score (MPS) reveals that 50% of the students are at the average level, 35% are moving towards the mastery level, and only a small portion (9%) are in the close-to-mastery category.

The result indicates that the respondents generally follow the appropriate age placement for their grade level and are within the same developmental stage. Also, the higher number of female students may simply reflect the actual class population or enrollment distribution during the conduct of the study. Additionally, female students are often observed to participate more actively in reading-related and language-based activities, which may explain their greater representation in the sample. Furthermore, the average MPS suggests that many students possess basic reading and comprehension skills but still experience difficulties in higher-level understanding, interpretation, and critical analysis. This may be influenced by reading challenges, limited exposure to engaging instructional materials, or differences in learning styles and academic support.

The distribution of these academic outcomes is consistent with the Phil-IRI report of the Division of Bislig City (2024), which reported that there are still a lot of secondary learners at the instructional reading level and frustration reading level. Likewise, Casaldon et al. (2023) found that Filipino learners still have difficulty in reading because of the lack of exposure to interactive and learner-centered instructional strategies. Mayer’s (2021) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning also supports the use of multimodal materials in enhancing adolescent learners’ understanding.

The average-to-low performance scores are the by-product of a latent incongruence of traditional instructional methods and the changing cognitive needs of adolescent learners. Children aged 14-15 are at a crucial stage of cognitive development and may find it difficult to engage with text-heavy materials. This is often why the ‘gaps in reading’ are so evident in local assessments. The data suggest that traditional methods will not move many students from the “middle range” to “mastery.”

This points to an immediate need for pedagogical interventions that leverage visual and interactive elements like caricatures and visual stories to boost engagement and understanding. These multimodal tools can provide teachers with a bridge to students currently in the middle of the creative visual techniques. Bridging these gaps may improve reading scores, but more importantly, they can foster a more inclusive learning environment that is sensitive to students’ diverse literacy needs.

Table 3. Level of Integration of Caricature and Visual Narratives into Reading Activities

Indicators	Teachers Mean	Adj Rating	Students Mean	Adj Rating	Grand Mean	Overall Adj Rating
Visual Content	4.052	Often	4.224	Always	4.138	Often
Functions of the Visuals	4.181	Often	4.314	Always	4.248	Always
Pedagogical Value	4.204	Always	4.098	Often	4.151	Often
Relevant Prompt	4.371	Always	4.098	Often	4.235	Always
Over-all Mean	4.202	Often	4.184	Often	4.193	Often

Table 3 shows the level of integration of caricature and visual narratives in reading activities. The results showed a grand mean overall of 4.202, or “Often.” The specific indicators, Functions of the Visuals, obtained the highest grand mean (4.248), followed by Relevant Prompt (4.235), Pedagogical Value (4.151), and Visual Content (4.138). Students rated the integration higher than teachers on most indicators, including Visual Content and Functions of Visuals, which students rated as “Always”

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integrated. The sole exception was Relevant Prompt, where teachers indicated a higher mean of 4.371 (“Always”) than students’ mean of 4.098 (“often”).

Results suggest that caricature and visual narratives are already embedded in classroom instruction but are not yet consistently integrated as core instructional components. A high score in Relevant Prompt means teachers are intentionally using visuals to scaffold comprehension and contextualization. Alternatively, a low score on Visual Content may suggest that the quality, availability, or consistency of visual materials may need to be improved.

The results support Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2021) claim that multimodal literacy practices are increasingly visible in contemporary classrooms, yet still need systematic institutional support. Furthermore, Mayer’s Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2021) states that the combination of verbal and visual information usually leads to the learners’ positive responses, as the dual coding increases understanding and memory retention. Similarly, Al-Taj et al. (2024) showed that structured visual learning significantly enhanced engagement and understanding in the classroom.

In practical terms, the findings suggest a need for a more synchronized approach to multimodal instruction in which teachers and students have an understanding of the utility of visuals. As students are already quite receptive and rate these tools as “Always” in certain areas, teachers should be encouraged to move from “Often” to “Always” by more purposefully embedding caricatures into the core of their lesson plans. Targeted instruction to address this gap in perception has the potential to elevate the status of visual narratives from “prompts” to integral components of the reading curriculum, maximizing their potential to enhance both comprehension and engagement.

Table 4. Level of Perception in the Integration of Caricature and Visual Narratives

Indicators	Teachers Mean	Adj Rating	Students Mean	Adj Rating	Grand Mean	Overall Rating	Adj
Fluency Games	4.316	Highly Integrated	3.976	Integrated	4.146	Integrated	
Comprehension Support	4.281	Highly Integrated	4.060	Integrated	4.171	Integrated	
Visual-textual Connections	4.211	Highly Integrated	3.972	Integrated	4.092	Integrated	
Pragmatic Functions	4.376	Highly Integrated	4.060	Integrated	4.218	Highly Integrated	
Over-all Learning Experience	4.474	Highly Integrated	4.122	Integrated	4.298	Highly Integrated	
Over-all Mean	4.332	Highly Integrated	4.038	Integrated	4.185	Integrated	

Table 4 shows the overall perception level on the integration of caricature and visual narratives. The grand mean is 4.185, which is equivalent to the descriptive rating of “Integrated.” There are notable differences between respondent groups. All the indicators had high ratings for teachers. All are “ Highly Integrated ” , especially for overall learning experience (4.474) and pragmatic functions (4.376). However, all indicators were rated as “Integrated” by the students, with the overall learning experience being the highest mean of 4.122. Both agreed on the transformative power of these instruments, with the indicator for “Overall Learning Experience” showing the highest combined mean of 4.248 (“Highly Integrated”).

The findings indicate that teachers and students concur that the educational importance of caricature and visual narrative constitutes a method for enhancing the reading experience. Teachers’ perceptions were more positive because they knew the purpose of visual integration was for instruction. The visual material was stimulating and pedagogically helpful for the students, but its deeper pedagogic functions might still be opaque to them.

This is consistent with the findings of Sigrist and Prusse (2024), who found that teachers with high awareness of instructional design value visual materials. Likewise, Cohn and Maher (2022) observed that visual narratives could improve reading comprehension, fluency, and learners’ engagement because they offer structured visual-text support. Visual stories help to acquire vocabulary and develop interpretation skills and critical thinking skills (Park and Kim, 2021).

The low score for Visual-Textual Connections could imply that students continue to require support from the teacher to process visual cues and link them to textual meaning. Learners do prefer visuals, but they do not necessarily achieve deeper understanding of analysis without scaffolded instruction. The results indicate that students should be taught visual narrative

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interpretation and its ideas in texts. Schools should systematically teach visual literacy so that learners can take advantage of multimodal materials both cognitively and pragmatically.

Table 5. Level of Engagement of Students in the Integration of Caricature and Visual Narratives

Indicators	Mean	Adjectival Rating
Autonomous Reading	3.857	Often
Motivation	3.987	Often
Behavioral Outcomes	3.964	Often
Self-Reported Reading Improvement	4.137	Often
Self-Efficacy	4.075	Often
Over-all Mean	4.004	Often

Table 5 presents the data on the level of student engagement of integrating caricature and visual narratives. The overall mean of 4.004 is interpreted as “Often”. The highest among the indicators is Reading Improvement (4.137) followed by Self-Efficacy (4.075), Motivation (3.987) and Behavioral Outcomes (3.964). Autonomous Reading had the lowest mean with a mean of 3.857. All dimensions were rated as occurring frequently. However, the lower score in Autonomous Reading indicates that students use visual aids in guided classroom activities but have not yet transferred this to autonomous reading outside of teacher-led instruction.

The findings indicate that the caricatures and visual stories made students feel more confident, more involved, and more aware of their reading progress. Visuals can act as a motivational and supportive tool for the learners during guided instruction. However, the lower score in autonomous reading indicates that students are still very much dependent on the teacher’s guidance in using visual materials.

These results agree with the findings of Wilson and Davis (2024) who demonstrated that visual learning strategies greatly enhance learner confidence and engagement in reading. Bakar, Ahmad and Yunus (2020) also argued that visual materials can improve learner engagement and enhance self-efficacy. However, Cohn (2019) emphasized that independent visual literacy does not grow overnight and must be scaffolded continuously.

The low score of autonomous reading can be interpreted in such a way that students have not internalized the visual strategies as tools for independent reading. Instead, they connect caricatures and visual stories with teacher-directed classroom activities. This suggests that the visual aspects are valuable in the initial engagement but that sustained independent reading behavior needs to be developed. The findings suggest that teachers should move students away from guided visual instruction toward independent visual interpretation and self-directed reading activities. Schools also need to create visual reading programs that will help students to apply visual literacy strategies outside of the classroom.

Table 6. Significant Relationship between Teacher Profile and Level of Integration

Variables Tested		Computed r	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Visual Content	Age	0.081	0.159	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.077	0.180	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	0.102	0.075	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Position	0.044	0.446	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	0.088	0.127	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Trainings	0.025	0.665	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Functions of Visuals	Age	0.073	0.203	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.103	0.074	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	0.093	0.106	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Position	0.046	0.421	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

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	Educ	0.134	0.019	Reject Ho	Significant
	Trainings	0.003	0.957	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Pedagogical Value	Age	0.073	0.203	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.084	0.144	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	0.093	0.106	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Position	0.082	0.154	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	0.159	0.006	Reject Ho	Significant
	Trainings	0.017	0.768	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Relevant Prompts	Age	0.049	0.255	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.080	0.353	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	0.053	0.064	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Position	0.053	0.099	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	0.183	0.001	Reject Ho	Significant
	Trainings	0.044	0.445	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

Table 6 presents the results on the significant relationship between teacher profile and level of integration. The study revealed that among all the teacher profile variables, only educational attainment was significantly correlated with the level of integration of caricatures and visual narratives. In particular, positive correlations were found for Functions of Visual ($r = 0.134$, $p = 0.019$), Pedagogical Value ($r = 0.159$, $p = 0.006$), and Relevant Prompts ($r = 0.183$, $p = 0.001$). On the other hand, none of the integration indicators were significantly correlated with (a) age, (b) sex, (c) position, (d) education, or (e) relevant training. For educational attainment, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is partially rejected. For all other demographic factors, the null hypothesis is retained.

The results indicate that teachers with higher educational qualifications may have more pedagogical understanding of the functions and instructional value of visual narratives. Teachers' exposure to advanced academic work may assist them in developing the capacity to purposefully use visuals in reading instruction.

The results are consistent with Rio and Delgado (2023), who argued that academic progression improves teachers' instructional decision-making and inclusion of innovative strategies. Similarly, Zhang, Hernandez, and Kumar (2021) reported that teachers with higher levels of pedagogical preparation showed greater confidence in using multimodal approaches. The non-significant results of age, sex, and training suggest that demographic factors alone are not sufficient to explain the successful integration of caricatures and visual narratives. Thus, visual integration is a pedagogical matter, not a matter of individual characteristics.

The results indicate that graduate study and advanced pedagogical training may improve teachers' instructional competence in multimodal literacy. Therefore, schools should encourage teachers to develop their professional skills in visual literacy and in innovative reading instruction.

Table 7. Significant Relationship between Student Profile and Level of Integration

Variables Tested		Computed r	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Visual Content	Age	0.107	0.252	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.236	0.010	Reject Ho	Significant
	MPS	0.200	0.031	Reject Ho	Significant
Functions & Visuals	Age	0.053	0.567	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.094	0.315	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	MPS	0.028	0.762	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Pedagogical Value	Age	0.192	0.038	Reject Ho	Significant

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Relevant Prompts	Sex	0.044	0.638	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	MPS	0.035	0.708	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Age	0.092	0.322	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.201	0.030	Reject Ho	Significant
	MPS	0.118	0.206	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

Table 7 presents the results on the significant relationship between student profile and level of integration. Statistical analysis shows that certain student profile variables namely: sex, Mean Percentage Score (MPS) and age, produced significant correlations with various integration indicators. Sex was significantly related to Visual Content ($r = 0.236$, $p = 0.010$) and Relevant Prompts ($r = 0.201$, $p = 0.030$), while MPS was significantly associated with Visual Content ($r = 0.200$, $p = 0.031$). Moreover, age was significantly correlated with Pedagogical Value ($r = 0.192$, $p = 0.038$). All other correlations were statistically insignificant. Hence, the first null hypothesis is partially rejected.

These findings suggest that demographic and academic characteristics of learners play a role in their perception and interaction with visual materials. Better academic performance in students may be related to better cognitive flexibility when interpreting visual-textual relationships. Similarly, age and sex may influence learners' interests, engagement, and responsiveness to visual narratives.

The result is in line with Dela Rosa, Santos, and Yaya (2024), who emphasized that gender differences affect the learners' interaction with visual learning materials. According to Mayer's Dual-Coding Theory (2021), learners with better cognitive processing abilities are able to combine visual and verbal information better.

The strong association of MPS with visual content suggests that the stronger academic students may be more strategic in using visual materials to support comprehension. At the same time, the relationship between age and pedagogical value suggests that older learners may be more able to appreciate the instructional purpose of caricatures and visual narratives. The findings suggest that teachers should employ differentiated visual instruction, considering learners' academic readiness, developmental maturity, and interests. Instructional materials should thus be varied and responsive to diverse learner profiles.

Table 8. Significant Difference in Perception of Teacher Engagement Grouped According to Profile

Sources of Variation		Computed f	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Autonomous Reading	Age	2.430	0.048	Reject Ho	Significant
	Sex	0.010	0.935	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	5.170	0.002	Reject Ho	Significant
	Position	3.100	0.047	Reject Ho	Significant
	Educ	1.190	0.149	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Training	0.630	0.594	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Motivation	Age	1.130	0.340	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.000	0.958	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	2.200	0.088	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Position	1.790	0.169	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	3.390	0.018	Reject Ho	Significant
	Training	0.430	0.732	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Behavioral Outcomes	Age	1.270	0.280	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.010	0.911	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	5.220	0.002	Reject Ho	Significant
	Position	1.310	0.271	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	3.880	0.010	Reject Ho	Significant
	Training	0.120	0.949	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-reported Reading Improvement	Age	2.370	0.053	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.200	0.655	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	4.250	0.006	Reject Ho	Significant
	Position	2.250	0.107	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	4.050	0.008	Reject Ho	Significant

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	Training	0.210	0.890	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-efficacy	Age	2.860	0.037	Reject Ho	Significant
	Sex	0.720	0.396	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Service	6.920	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
	Position	0.970	0.381	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Educ	6.150	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
	Training	0.320	0.807	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

Table 8 shows that some of the demographic and professional variables are significantly affected by the engagement of teachers in terms of their F-values and p-values. The results showed that Autonomous Reading Age ($F = 2.430$, $p = 0.048$), service ($F = 5.170$, $p = 0.002$) and position ($F = 3.100$, $p = 0.047$) were significant which implied that maturity, tenure and role in the institution affect the autonomous reading practices. The only significant result was found for education attainment ($F = 3.390$, $p = 0.018$) showing that motivation is affected by higher academic qualifications. Behavioural Outcomes were significantly influenced by Service ($F=5.220$, $p=0.002$) and Education ($F=3.880$, $p=0.010$). This is indicative that the observable changes in behaviour are affected by experience and academic background. Also, service ($F = 4.250$, $p = 0.006$) and education ($F = 4.050$, $p = 0.008$) were significant predictors of Self-reported Reading Improvement, which further supported. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is partially rejected for years of service, age, and education but accepted for all other profile variables.

Results indicate that teachers teaching with more experience and education are more aware of the behaviors of student engagement in visual-based instruction. More experienced teachers see more types of learner responses and teaching strategies that can increase student engagement a little bit.

These findings are consistent with those of Hammond and Schmidt (2023), who found that teaching experience had improved teachers' instructional judgment and responsiveness in class. In the same vein, Degorio and Langub (2025) found that professional experience was important for the development of teachers' classroom practices and perceptions of learner behavior.

The lack of significance of sex and training implies that seminars or specific demographic characteristics may not be sufficient to change teachers' perceptions of student engagement. But that seems a better predictor than teaching experience. Findings suggest the need to strengthen mentorship programs and professional learning communities to promote sharing of effective multimodal instructional practices among veteran and less experienced teachers.

Table 9. Significant Difference in Perception of Student Engagement Grouped According to Profile

Sources of Variation		Computed f	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Autonomous Reading	Age	0.390	0.677	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	0.140	0.711	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	MPS	0.450	0.720	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Motivation	Age	0.190	0.828	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	15.160	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
	MPS	1.920	0.131	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Behavioral Outcomes	Age	0.000	0.999	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	9.370	0.003	Reject Ho	Significant
	MPS	2.830	0.042	Reject Ho	Significant
Self-reported reading improvement	Age	0.560	0.572	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	2.890	0.092	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	MPS	0.220	0.883	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Self-efficacy	Age	2.030	0.136	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Sex	15.170	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
	MPS	0.290	0.830	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

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Table 9 shows a large difference in how student engagement varies along demographic profiles with sex being the most important variable. The analysis indicates that there are statistically significant differences based on gender in the areas of Motivation ($F = 15.160$, $p = 0.000$), Behavioral Outcomes ($F = 9.370$, $p = 0.003$) and Self-efficacy ($F = 15.170$, $p = 0.000$). Also, MPS had a significant effect on Behavioral Outcomes ($F = 2.830$, $p = 0.042$), and age did not have a significant effect on any of the engagement indicators. Thus, H_02 is partially rejected, confirming that sex and academic performance are critical determinants of student response to visual integration.

These findings suggest that gender and academic achievement influence learners' emotional and behavioral responses to caricatures and visual narratives. Visual themes, storytelling techniques, and classroom participation patterns may differ from one student to another.

The findings are consistent with Dela Rosa, Santos, and Yaya (2024), who found that the effect of gender disparities has a significant effect on motivating and engaging learners in multimodal instruction. Students with a solid academic foundation are more capable of processing visual and verbal information (Mayer, 2021).

The lack of significant results for autonomous reading suggests that difficulties with independent reading are still common among different demographic groups. This indicates that students will most likely use teacher mediation when using visual materials. The findings suggest that teachers need to adopt gender-responsive and performance-sensitive instructional strategies. Schools should also develop visual reading programs to promote independent reading habits for all learners.

Table 10. Significant Relationship between Level of Integration and Level of Engagement

Variables Tested		Computed r	P-value	Decision	Conclusion
Visual Content	Auto Reading	0.646	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Motivation	0.292	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Behavioral Outcome	0.312	0.001	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self- reported	0.405	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -efficacy	0.371	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
Functions of Visuals	Auto Reading	0.528	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Motivation	0.764	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Behavioral Outcome	0.401	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -reported	0.549	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -efficacy	0.486	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
Pedagogical Value	Auto Reading	0.419	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Motivation	0.536	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Behavioral Outcome	0.780	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self- reported	0.598	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -efficacy	0.492	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
Relevant Prompts	Auto Reading	0.557	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Motivation	0.558	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Behavioral Outcome	0.533	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -reported	0.916	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant
	Self -efficacy	0.652	0.000	Reject H_0	Highly Significant

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Table 10 indicates that each individual aspect of visual integration has a direct and statistically significant relationship with student engagement in each pair, with the p-value being 0.000. The results lead to the full rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0). The three highest correlations were between Relevant Prompts and Self-reported Reading Improvement ($r = 0.916$), Pedagogical Value and Behavioral Outcomes ($r = 0.780$), and Functions of Visuals and Motivation ($r = 0.764$). The lowest correlation was between Visual Content and Motivation ($r=0.292$), but still significant.

The results corroborated the association of all the variables measured and strengthened the argument that the higher the level of structural and purposive integration of caricature and visual narrative, the greater the student involvement. The high correlation of the relevant prompts shows that the visual introduction of teachers is an important factor in the progress of students' reading.

This synergism is still being supported by recent research. Zhu & Atompag (2023) and Taber (2024) stress the importance of constructivist methods, i.e., inquiry-based and scaffolded learning, in enhancing motivation and understanding. Constructivism is appropriate for 21st-century classrooms with critical thinking and collaboration (Rai, 2023). More recent support for the Dual-Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986) has been provided by Wooten and Cuevas (2024), Brinegar (2023), and Li et al. (2022), who demonstrated that multimodal approaches that combine visual and verbal information lead to significant gains in vocabulary learning, comprehension, and engagement.

Overall, findings indicate that the visuals act as a cognitive bridge to alleviate the cognitive load, enhance self-efficacy, and motivate the learners by simplifying reading tasks. Visual storytelling cannot be seen as an ornament but as a basic pedagogical instrument. Professional development should be focused on helping teachers to develop appropriate prompts so that students are able to make direct links between the caricatures and the meaning of the text and develop a learning environment that is highly engaging and academically productive. In addition, schools should institutionalize visual integration as a central instructional strategy for reading instruction and learner engagement.

V. CONCLUSION

The study emphasized the importance of caricature and visual narratives as good teaching tools in enhancing the reading skills of secondary school students in the Schools Division of Bislig City. Findings show that teachers and students are actively using visual content, prompts, strategies, and functions in reading instruction, which indicates that multimodal learning practices are already embedded in classroom pedagogy. Teachers had very positive perceptions of these approaches, especially as facilitators of learning experiences, comprehension, and meeting pragmatic classroom needs. Also, students reported improvements in motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement and in reading performance, but further support for autonomous reading is required.

The results also show the influence of the teacher's educational attainment on the level of integration and student variables such as sex, age, and Mean Percentage Score on dimensions of visual engagement. Crucially, the positive correlations between integration and student engagement suggest that intentional and systematic use of caricatures and visual narratives can facilitate reading motivation, comprehension, confidence, and participation. Such findings position visual learning strategies as not secondary supports but essential teaching strategies to enhance literacy instruction.

To strengthen this integration, schools should emphasize ongoing professional development programs in visual literacy, multimodal instructional strategies, and culturally relevant instructional design. Teachers need support to develop a range of visual reading materials that encourage independent reading, critical thinking, and deeper interpretation of visual-textual materials. Institutional support in the form of resources, collaborative learning communities, and reading interventions using visual storytelling is also important. The proposed Enhanced Reading Instruction through Caricature and Visual Narratives Program is a localized evidence-based framework for enhancing reading comprehension, learner engagement, self-efficacy, and overall literacy outcomes of Filipino secondary learners.

6.0 CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

The authors of this study reviewed and approved the final version of the research to ensure that the study was complete, accurate, and sound. Dr. Jane Cervantes Oropa contributed to supervision of the research, editing of the manuscript, validation of the study framework, and guidance in the statistical analysis and interpretation of data. The study was mainly done by the author Ligie Hallasgo Macapili. This includes the preparation and distribution of research instruments, data gathering, data organization, analysis and interpretation of findings, and the writing of the manuscript. The collaborative nature of the research is evident in the complementary contributions of the authors, which resulted in a comprehensive, ethical, and academically sound research output. The authors declare that there are no other contributors to the completion of this study.

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