

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the problem of the study, objective of the study, hypotheses, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and the last is the definition of the key term.

A. Background of The Research

Technology integration in the classroom has grown more prevalent in the digital age, especially in the teaching and learning of English. Multimedia apps, e-books, and interactive websites are just a few of the technological platforms that offer interactive and engaging educational experiences. Teaching methods and students' acquisition of knowledge have both been significantly affected by these developments. Technology, for example, helps higher achievers' study more effectively while also giving lower achievers other resources to help them grasp the material (Almalki, 2020). However, in order to maximize the potential of technology, teachers need to be proficient in choosing and utilizing the right digital resources in the classroom (Erya & Pustika, 2021). Additionally, in order to increase student involvement and enhance the learning process ultimately, teachers are expected to use innovative teaching techniques (Widiyarti and Noermanzah, 2021). The role of technology in ELT is no longer supplementary but essential, reshaping the way students acquire language skills, especially reading.

Reading is a fundamental skill that is required in the learning of language as well as academic success. Teaching and learning reading skills can be successful by using various strategies meant to enhance the skills of students to decode,

comprehend, and interpret texts. According to Elleman and Oslund (2019), reading comprehension is a complex cognitive activity requiring multifaceted instruction to be effectively taught, measured, and researched. For deepening understanding, instructors employ numerous instructional strategies, including phonics instruction, vocabulary building, and comprehension strategies that increase deeper understanding (Fletcher and Vaughn, 2020; Herrera, 2022). Wahyudin and Rido (2020) stress that students construct diverse reading strategies and learning techniques, requiring diverse pedagogical approaches like guided reading, reciprocal teaching, and extensive reading. Furthermore, Gustanti and Ayu (2021) categorize learning strategies into social/affective, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies, and all these further improve reading capability.

Reading is the process of transforming textual information into meaning, starting with decoding words and ending up in the reader's comprehension. It involves various cognitive processes, such as word recognition, meaning construction, and interpretation within a given context (Nurdianingsih, 2021). Scholars categorize reading into different types, including extensive and intensive reading, as well as skimming and scanning, each serving distinct purposes in language learning (Park, 2020). Several experts in the field of reading, for example, H. Douglas Brown (2007), suggest also that the process of reading comprehension can involve either top-down processing, bottom-up processing, or an interactive combination of these.

Reading is an active process where readers engage with text, drawing on background knowledge, critical thinking, and inference. Smith and Hammond

(2021) found that prior knowledge greatly affects reading comprehension, with those having richer backgrounds interpreting texts more effectively. In language learning, reading proficiency is key to academic success, communication, and personal growth (Lalicic and Dubravac, 2021). As learners improve their reading, they gain access to more information, boosting linguistic and cognitive skills.

Learning reading is a complex process that requires systematic instruction and practice. It begins from building phonemic awareness and then proceeds to word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (Ehri, 2022). Effective reading instruction applies scaffolding approaches that support learners as they build their skills (Narina, 2022). Scaffolding involves providing temporary support to students, which is gradually removed as they become proficient. It enables learners to form deeper comprehension by differentiating instruction and measuring individual progress (Lovsund, 2018). Repeated reading, summarization, and question-answering tasks enable students to develop deeper comprehension and analytical capabilities (Purba and Manihuruk, 2023). Also, having access to diverse texts, which include narratives, expository texts, and digital texts, facilitates a balanced reading experience (Schwabe and Boomgaarden, 2022; McGeown and Wilkinson, 2020).

Despite its importance, many students experience difficulties in reading acquisition. Some of the difficulties include poor vocabulary, poor decoding, and difficulty in understanding complex sentence structures (Coloma and Araya, 2020). In addition, lack of interest and motivation in reading leads to poor literacy levels among the students (Rahmawati and Amayasari, 2022). Traditional reading

materials, such as textbooks, may not be engaging enough to attract students' interest, and teachers find it challenging to foster a culture of reading (Cozart and Frome, 2021). Moreover, learning-disabled students or those with fewer opportunities to access reading materials can struggle with comprehension and fluency (Deng and Tong, 2021). To address such issues, there should be a diversified approach involving differentiated instruction, interactive learning, and technology tools. Through the utilization of engaging and suitable texts and media, teachers can foster a more varied and successful reading environment.

Among various digital media, Webtoon has emerged as one of the great potential tools to enhance learning activities. Webtoon can be considered a kind of visual aid which enhances students' understanding development by providing them with a rich and engaging context in ways traditional text might not. This visual aid is also a great way to help students connect the gap in learning as well as become a helpful tool for ESL teachers when teaching English (Pazaer and Assaiqeli, 2023). Additionally, the usage of media such as comics on Webtoon applications is meant to help students better understand what they are studying (Hartati and Irawan, 2023h).

Especially in reading activities, Webtoon has shown its effectiveness in boosting reading comprehension and motivation. With its appealing visual storytelling content, Webtoon attracts students' attention as well as assisting students in overcoming challenges related to reading comprehension (Asmara, 2021). Throughout the plot and the artwork, students deemed Webtoon's vocabulary and illustrations to be intriguing, and thus they became motivated to learn and

continued reading (Tacuri, 2023). Webtoon offers authentic language exposure, as its stories are often written in natural, conversational English, helping learners develop their vocabulary and contextual understanding (Novanti and Suprayogi, 2021). Moreover, students who read webtoon comics are more likely to develop a comprehensive understanding of the storyline by following the progression of events in the stories (Hartati et al., 2022).

Despite the increasing popularity of Webtoons, actual research into its effectiveness on EFL students' reading comprehension is still lacking. Previous studies (Rahayu & Wiyanah, 2023; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Harpain et al., 2022) have primarily concentrated on student perceptions and motivation, rather than directly evaluating learning results. While doing experimental research, Hamiru et al. (2023) found no significant effect of using Webtoon in reading class, which could be due to poor instructional control or contextual mismatch. This study aims to fill this gap by comparing the effectiveness of Webtoon and traditional materials in improving EFL students' reading comprehension. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for integrating digital media into language instruction. In this regard, the study is entitled **"The Effectiveness of Webtoon in Improving EFL Students' Reading Comprehension."**

B. Research Question

This research aims to investigate the difference in EFL students' reading comprehension skills between learners who are taught using Webtoon and those who are not. The researcher is conducting the research based on this question:

"Is there any significant difference in reading comprehension between

students taught using Webtoon and those taught using school's printed textbook?"

The significance of the treatment was measured statistically using ANCOVA analysis by comparing the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups while controlling the pre-test scores.

C. Objective of Research

Based on the research problem, the research aims to investigate the effectiveness of Webtoon in improving EFL students' reading comprehension by comparing two groups: one using Webtoon (experimental group) and the other using the school's printed textbook (control group). The study will also provide evidence-based recommendations for teachers on integrating Webtoon into reading curricula to boost students' reading skills.

D. Hypotheses

In this study, the hypotheses are stated as follows:

1. Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in reading comprehension between students taught using Webtoon and those taught using the school's printed textbook.
2. Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): There is a significant difference in reading comprehension between students taught using Webtoon and those taught using the school's printed textbook.

E. Significance of The Research

This research has significant implications for various parties, including:

1. Practical Significance
 - a) For Students: This research is valuable for EFL learners as it explores

Webtoon, a contemporary reading tool that aligns with their interests. The study examines Webtoon's effectiveness on reading comprehension, aiming to boost student motivation and engagement and ultimately improve academic performance and attitudes towards learning English. It also encourages students to explore diverse reading materials, sustaining their interest in reading.

- b) For Teachers: The findings will provide teachers with empirical proof about Webtoon's effectiveness to strengthen reading comprehension abilities. Integrating Webtoons into teaching practices may assist in developing an engaging learning environment that accommodates the needs of many different kinds of students. This research may inspire innovative methodologies that leverage digital content, ultimately improving student engagement and learning outcomes.
- c) For Future Researchers: This research will serve as a foundation for future research regarding language education and digital literacy. It opens avenues for exploring various digital tools and their effectiveness in language learning, allowing researchers to examine different demographics and contexts. The methodology can also be adapted for similar investigations, promoting a deeper understanding of technology's role in education.

2. Theoretical Significance

The research will contribute to the empirical evidence on digital media's role in language learning by providing quantitative data on Webtoon's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. The findings will validate the use of digital tools

in education and inform policymakers and curriculum developers about the benefits of integrating contemporary reading materials into language instruction.

F. Scope and Limitation of Research

This study examines EFL learners in a specific educational setting, comparing the reading comprehension levels of students using Webtoon as a reading tool with those using printed school textbooks containing narrative texts. It specifically investigates the effectiveness of Webtoon content, including visual storytelling and engagement factors, on reading comprehension development.

However, the study has limitations. The sample is limited to the tenth-grade students at SMKN 3 Kediri, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The text type used in this research is also limited to narrative text, excluding any other text types. Additionally, variations in students' exposure to Webtoon and the exclusive focus on this digital tool may overlook the potential benefits of other multimedia resources.

G. Definition of Key Term

To prevent misconceptions, here are definitions of key terms used in this study:

1. **Reading Comprehension:** Reading comprehension refers to the ability to comprehend and evaluate written content. It includes recognizing words, understanding sentences, and making guesses based on context. Good reading skills involve summarizing, thinking critically, and linking ideas in the text.
2. **Reading media:** Reading media is any resource that helps people read and

understand text. This includes digital platforms like Webtoon, as well as traditional materials such as textbooks, e-books, and reading apps.

3. Webtoon: Webtoon is a digital comic platform from South Korea, known for its vertical scrolling and episodic stories. Published online, webtoons cover many genres and attract a wide audience. They blend visual art with text, making them especially popular among young readers.
4. EFL Students: EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are people learning English in a non-English-speaking country. Their skill levels and exposure to English vary, and they often learn it for school, work, or personal goals.
5. Narrative Text: Narrative text is a type of text which consists of a sequence of events, often organized temporally, and includes elements such as plot, characters, and setting, with the purpose of entertaining, informing, or providing insight.