

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the research problem or research question, the objective of the study, the hypothesis of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation, and the definition of key terms. Those steps will be discussed in this section.

A. Background of the Study

In recent years, the phenomenon of reading and writing fanfiction on the AO3 (*Archive of Our Own*) platform has been widely discussed and has become increasingly popular among young people, including language learners. This phenomenon became a hot topic in online communities that use English for communication, especially on the social media platform called X (formerly Twitter). Various public opinions and discussions have emerged stating and suggesting that reading fanfiction on AO3 is effective for improving English language literacy. In fact, some users mentioned that reading original works on AO3 can help readers discover new vocabularies, understand complex sentence structures, and gain information about cultural contexts not obtained from formal academic materials. This phenomenon became the starting point for researchers' interest in exploring the relationship between fanfiction reading activity on AO3 and English literacy in greater depth.

English literacy does not merely encompass conventional reading and writing skills, as it involves not only understanding explicit textual information but also interpreting implicit meanings, developing contextual vocabulary, and engaging

with texts in meaningful ways. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2011, Chapter 1), modern literacy includes the ability to understand, interpret, and use texts across various social contexts and digital media. This implies that reading activities require not only the ability to comprehend textual content but also the capacity to interact critically with the texts being read. With the advancement of the digital era, the ways individual access, produce, and interact with English texts have undergone significant changes. Consequently, contemporary learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL learners) are faced with a far more dynamic and diverse scope of literacy. To support language learning, they no longer rely solely on formal academic texts but also engage with non-formal texts such as social media, online forums, and user-generated creative works, including fanfiction. In this context, the development of English literacy presents new opportunities through more contextual and authentic language learning.

One non-formal medium that can be used to access English texts is fanfiction, particularly through the platform AO3 (Archive of Our Own). AO3 serves as an online space that provides a wide range of fan-created written works on an international scale, encompassing diverse genres, vocabulary usage, and cultural contexts. Fanfiction offers exposure to authentic and communicative English texts, as these works are produced by native speakers as well as English language learners for expressive and creative purposes. Through AO3, readers not only enjoy narratives but also interact with a global community of writers and readers, thereby expanding their language exposure and supporting the development of English literacy. This perspective aligns with Krashen's (2004) view in *The Power of Reading*, which emphasizes that exposure to pleasurable, meaningful, and self-

selected reading can facilitate natural language development. Krashen (2004, p. 21) states that *“Reading is the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, and advanced grammar”*. Therefore, reading fanfiction on AO3 can be considered a form of literacy practice that supports the development of English literacy by enabling readers to engage with authentic, communicative, and engaging texts.

To strengthen this indication, the researcher conducted a pre-survey using Google Forms involving 48 respondents and included their English Literacy (LBE) scores from the UTBK examination. The results showed that 30 respondents (approximately 61%) agreed that reading fanfiction on AO3 could improve their English literacy. In addition, the mean English literacy scores ranged between 700 and 800, suggesting a potential positive relationship between fanfiction reading habits and English literacy.

Based on the pre-survey findings and the observed phenomena among digital media users, this study seeks to explore whether there is a relationship between readers’ engagement with reading fanfiction on AO3 and their English literacy. This study does not measure English literacy directly through language proficiency tests; instead, it examines the relationship based on the frequency, intensity, and perceptions of AO3 use in relation to English literacy. Accordingly, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how non-formal media such as AO3 can function as a medium for developing English literacy in the digital era. The emerging phenomenon indicates that AO3, as a fanfiction platform, has been shown to enhance learners’ motivation, positive perceptions, and engagement in reading English texts. Previous studies have primarily focused on students’

perceptions (Austin & Santoso, 2023; Zhai et al., 2021) or on technical aspects of digital literacy (Silberstein-Bamford, 2024). Other research has measured reading ability directly using statistical tests (Fauriza, 2024). However, a research gap remains in the limited number of studies employing correlational methods to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of AO3 fanfiction and English literacy.

Meanwhile, the importance of AO3 as a subject of study lies in its unique characteristics compared to other fanfiction platforms. AO3 is non-profit, ad-free, and managed by its own user community through the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), making its literary environment more inclusive and freer from commercial pressures. AO3 also provides highly detailed metadata features, such as tags, character relationship categories, content warnings, and story summaries. This makes it easier for readers to choose readings according to their interests and language abilities. Thus, AO3 is not only a place to share works, but also a space for independent learning where users can actively explore English, understand variations in language style, and develop digital literacy through interaction with texts and the global community.

Furthermore, AO3 can be seen as a form of participatory digital literacy practice. Readers are not only consumers of text, but also contributors through comments, reviews (feedback), or even spin-off works. This process creates a dynamic and interactive literacy cycle, in which users are continuously involved in reading, writing, and interpreting English-language texts. Therefore, AO3 functions not only as a platform for entertainment, but also as an authentic, community-based language learning environment.

B. Research Question

1. Is there any significant correlation between EFL learners' engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) and their English literacy?
2. To what extent does EFL learners' engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) predict their English literacy?

C. Objective of the Study

1. To examine the correlation between EFL learners' engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) and English literacy.
2. To examine the extent to which EFL learners' engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) predicts their English literacy.

D. Hypothesis of the Study

1. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Learner engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) and their English literacy.
2. H_1 : There is a significant relationship between Learners engagement on Archive of Our Own (AO3) and their English literacy.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical

This study is expected to provide empirical evidence of the correlation between learners' engagement with fanfiction on AO3 (*Archive of Our Own*) and their English literacy. By exploring how readers interact with non-formal, user-generated texts, this study can contribute the body of literature on digital literacy.

2. Practical

For Teachers and Students, this research shows the potential of fanfiction as an enjoyable and interactive source and reference for reading that can enhance English literacy, including text comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and sensitivity in reading authentic texts.

F. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is focuses on examining the relationship between learners' engagement with fanfiction on AO3 (*Archive of Our Own*) and their English literacy. The participants are readers of AO3 who are learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and have experienced formal or non-formal English learning. English literacy in this study is conceptualized as a broad construct that includes engagement with English texts, contextual vocabulary development, meaning interpretation, and interaction with texts in digital environments. Engagement with AO3 is examined through respondents' self-reported frequency, intensity, and perceptions of their engagement in reading fanfiction on the platform. The pre-survey that has been conducted will not be used as primary data.

The limitations of this study are that it does not measure English literacy skills through tests, but only examines the relationship based on the frequency, intensity, and perception of AO3 usage on English literacy, with the fandom limited to anime/manga, K-pop and video games. It also does not assess the initial English skills of AO3 readers, nor does it consider other influences on the English literacy of AO3 readers, such as formal classes or other media.

G. Definition of the Key Term

1. Fanfiction

Fanfiction is fictional stories created by fans based on existing original works. In fanfiction, writers can develop new stories using characters, settings, and plots taken from a work according to their imagination and creativity.

2. AO3 (Archive of Our Own)

AO3 (Archive of Our Own) is a non-commercial website containing fanfiction, fanart, fanvideos, and podfic created by fans. AO3 is a platform created and managed entirely by fans.

3. EFL learners' engagement on AO3

EFL learners' engagement with AO3 refers to the extent to which learners of English as a Foreign Language actively interact with fanfiction on the Archive of Our Own (AO3) platform. In this study, engagement is operationalized through learners' self-reported frequency and intensity of reading fanfiction, as well as their perceptions of involvement and interest when engaging with English texts on AO3. This construct reflects behavioral and affective dimensions of engagement in a digital reading environment rather than formal instructional use.

4. English Literacy

English literacy in this study is ability to engage with English texts beyond basic reading and writing skills, including understanding overall meaning, interpreting implicit messages, developing contextual vocabulary, and comprehending various text genres in digital environments.