

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Vocabulary is an important aspect in English, but vocabulary learning is still a problematic problem because students start to lose interest in learning vocabulary. They have difficulty in learning vocabulary which makes them consider vocabulary as one of the most difficult things in learning English by Wulandari and Lestari, (2019). Even though vocabulary is an essential aspect of English, learning vocabulary still emerges as a problematic issue since English learners started to lose interest in learning vocabulary. They have difficulties in learning vocabulary which makes them perceive vocabulary as one of the most difficult things in learning English. However, this can be overcome by bringing something extraordinary and interesting to arouse English learners' interest by Csabay (2006), for instance using a comic application, in this case, Webtoon.

Technology brings people to see how the world develops from year to year. So many things that seem impossible but slowly become possible. In today's era, there are many innovations created to facilitate human life, not only for daily needs but also for other things. Humans often feel attracted to something that we can see directly with the eyes, because the brain is faster to receive stimuli from the eyes or it can be said that the eye is the sense of sight that dominates the other senses. Seeing this fact, many people are competing to make something creative to attract people visually, not only by applying technology in it, but also involving

English as part of the innovation they make. English is one of the many languages most widely used by many countries in the world therefore people need to study it as a medium of communication among nations and as a bridge of information from all over the world. In the context of Indonesia, English is a foreign language, unlike in Malaysia as a second language or Australia as a first language. Due to this position, the government stipulates that English needs to be mastered and taught in education units. For this reason, English has become a compulsory subject for all levels of education from elementary school to university level. Because most Indonesians are English as Foreign Language Learners, learning English is still limited to be learnt in schools. This makes English skills not entirely sufficient for some students. Therefore, not a few students who need to take additional courses outside school or university to improve the English language skills of their Haryanto (2016). In today's digital era, many teenagers use mobile phones in their learning, few of them read books directly, most of them like to read through mobile phones, one of which is a Webtoon application.

Webtoon is an online reading book in the form of comics that uses various languages, one of which is English. Webtoon application is very popular by many people, because it is very easy to read and we do not need to buy books like comics and others. Reading on a Webtoon does not bore the reader because the story is illustrated. Therefore when someone uses the application Webtoon, it will not be difficult because it is not boring. Comics are real, and the use of real content

is very important in language teaching and learning. Teaching using visuals helps students understand the contents and helps students to learn vocabulary.

The phenomenon is that high school students use the webtoon application every day and some use it in their spare time. The problem faced by students in this study is difficulty understanding limited vocabulary to acquire new vocabulary. The webtoon application by students is used to better understand the new vocabulary contained in the webtoon application.

Autonomous Learning is a learning system where students take initiative, are motivated, accept their responsibilities, and learn the way they want. In this study, participants learn on their own volition. Therefore, regarding the gap in this research is that previous research did not examine vocabulary learning, only focusing on students' perceptions of using webtoons to improve reading comprehension skills, therefore in this research the researcher wants to examine students' perceptions of webtoons for autonomous vocabulary learning, this study aims to determine the perceptions of high school students about the use of digital comics applications for vocabulary learning. Vocabulary is the inseparable aspect of a language, especially in English. Whatever the language is, humans need the vocabulary to build up the language itself. According to Zimmerman, vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to typical language learning (Zimmerman, 1998). This shows that improving vocabulary would not be something questionable anymore. As a result, knowing vocabulary is the essential process of initiating a communication process using a certain language.

Apparently, a study conducted by Khoiriyah (2010) shows that Comic Strips facilitate learners in vocabulary growth through visual media (pictures) or illustration. Studies reported the use of online Comic strip applications is beneficial to English learning, particularly learning vocabulary (Khoiriyah, 2010). Most of them reported the findings that exposed teachers' points of view. Meanwhile, the other studies that discussed English learners' perceptions of using a comic application in learning vocabulary are relatively limited. Therefore, regarding the gap in the existing literature and research, this study is aimed to investigate the students' perception about the use of the digital comic application, in this case, Webtoon, in learning vocabulary. It is expected that the results of this study might be becoming other references focusing on English learners' perceptions on the use of the digital comic application, which is in this case Webtoon.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

**1.2.1.** A research question addressed in the present study is "What are the students' perceptions on autonomous English vocabulary learning practices through Webtoon?"

## **1.3 Operational Definitions**

**1.3.1 Autonomous Learning** : Autonomous learning, namely learning that is carried out by setting their own goals, students learn on their own without coercion from other people and the media

used is the webtoon application.

**1.3.2 Perception** : Perceptions that students learn vocabulary through webtoon applications by means of autonomous learning, students can learn on their own without coercion from other people.

**1.3.3 Webtoon Application** : Webtoon application is an application that contains free online stories and images. The preference for comics is so high because it can entertain the reader. It is the reason for making comics as media learning. Webtoon is one of the solutions as teachers to make the class more interesting. In this case, webtoon is the free application to be read.

#### **1.4 Aim of the Research**

This study aims to find out how students perceive the practice of learning English vocabulary independently through webtoon.

## **1.5 Significance of the Research**

### **1.5.1 Theoretical use**

This study contributes to existing theories about Autonomous English Vocabulary Learning through Webtoon: Student Perceptions.

### **1.5.2 Practical use**

This study contributes self-motivation to learning English vocabulary through digital comics in the form of an application called webtoon. Learning vocabulary using the webtoon application is easier than learning English vocabulary through books, because the webtoon application is in the form of digital illustrated comics so that students who enjoy reading webtoon will not feel bored. This webtoon application can also be used as a learning medium by students such as to increase students' vocabulary understanding and can also help teachers so that students can learn on their own through the webtoon application.