CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Extensive reading offers a large amount of lexical input that can benefit EFL vocabulary mastery and development. Since the expansion and elaboration of vocabulary should be done continually during a lifetime (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005), extensive reading serves as a means to help students master vocabulary in an enjoyable manner, alleviating the stress of traditional vocabulary learning methods. The reason is that extensive reading enables students to read a vast number of texts that match their interests in their leisure so that they are more possibly to acquire and master vocabulary. This notion aligns with Alsaif and Masrai (2019), who discovered a positive impact of extensive reading on students' vocabulary growth over and above the lexical uptake from language classrooms.

One of the expected reading materials for extensive reading is *manga* or Japanese-originated comics. There is a phenomenon concerning *manga* and extensive reading where undergraduate EFL students who savour Japanese pop culture become active *manga* readers and read *manga* extensively. The phenomenon is found in a community named *Shihonbu*, also known as the Siliwangi Japanese Club at Siliwangi University. Through the preliminary study, the researcher found that they possess good vocabulary knowledge from reading *manga*. This is also evident in their use of diverse and grammatically correct words, as well as their impressive scores on the Test of English Language Proficiency (TELP). It is a remarkable phenomenon since they managed to master vocabulary through their passion of reading *manga*. Jungst (2008) revealed that *manga* fans are highly attentive and critical of the English translations they read. Additionally, it has been a massive global phenomenon in many developed countries (Cools, 2011; Holt & Fukuda, 2020), including Indonesia.

Regarding this phenomenon, some studies had examined the effectiveness of comics in improving EFL students' vocabulary mastery at the high school level; for instance, the studies conducted by Juliana (2021), Priatin et al. (2021), and Sari et

al. (2021). Through the test, observation, and interview, they discovered that using comics effectively improves vocabulary mastery and raises students' learning motivation since they find it interesting and can provide enjoyment in learning vocabulary. Nevertheless, Juliana (2021) mentioned that students still face obstacles in utilizing comics due to the limited time provided in the classroom. Therefore, it is suggested that reading *manga* be done extensively outside the class time so that students have more time to read. Because regardless, *manga* contributes to language learning and can be an effective learning medium since it is an engaging, popular, understandable, and easy-to-read visual genre (Budi, 2020; Mekki, 2022). Along with technological development, presently, everyone can access the digital version of *manga* on many websites for free anytime and anywhere. Its digital version is easily accessible through online or offline apps via computers and smartphones (Devi et al., 2020; Khusniyah, 2021; Sarada, 2016).

However, there are still limitations to the previous studies. None of them incorporated long-term readers with higher education levels. It is valuable to explore the phenomenon by incorporating participants with higher education levels to ensure that *manga* is an appropriate vocabulary enrichment medium for all learner levels. Furthermore, long-term readers are also essential to consider since, to obtain reliable and thorough data, participants must possess sufficient experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In addition, in Juliana's (2021), Priatin's et al. (2021), and Sari's et al. (2021) studies, there was no concern about probing the contributions of reading digital *manga* on EFL students' vocabulary mastery. Besides that, the previous researchers did not give freedom for students to choose comic titles based on personal preferences, although it might be valuable to consider students' reading preferences. It aligns with Nation and Waring (2013), who claimed that a vast range of learning will occur if students have interesting language input for themselves.

Therefore, to fill the gap, this study incorporates undergraduate EFL students who are active, long-term *manga* readers. Furthermore, this study is focused on the contributions of reading digital *manga* extensively to each aspect of EFL students' vocabulary mastery. This study is expected to add scientific explanations and

verifications of what contributions *manga* or comics offer so that it effectively improves students' vocabulary mastery, as stated in the previous studies. This research is valuable since it can contribute theoretically, practically, and empirically regarding using digital *manga* for vocabulary mastery in the EFL context.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The formulation of the problem in this study is "What are the contributions of digital *manga* in the extensive reading context to EFL students' vocabulary mastery?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terminologies used in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this study.

1.3.1	Vocabulary Mastery:	Vocabulary mastery refers to vocabulary knowledge obtained by students as the form of contributions from reading digital *manga* extensively. This knowledge encompasses various aspects of vocabulary, including its form (written and derivative forms), meaning (word meanings and associations) and use (grammatical functions, collocations, and practical use of words).
1.3.2	Extensive Reading:	Extensive reading refers to the independent reading of a large number of texts within digital *manga* selected based on the students' preferences and conducted outside of class.
1.3.3	Digital *Manga:*	Digital *manga* is the website-based Japanese comics that have been translated into English by bilingual Japanese-English translators who are deemed capable of maintaining the quality of translation results as meaningful as their source

text. Unlike other comics, the reading order in the *manga* is always from right to left. Basically, *manga* consists of various genres and contains dozens to hundreds of chapters. In its chapterization, several chapters that discuss the same topic are grouped together into specific story arcs (e.g., Luxury Liner Arc, Public School Arc, Green Witch Arc, and Blue Revenge Arc).

1.4 Aim of the Research

This research aims to investigate the contributions of digital *manga* in the extensive reading context to EFL students' vocabulary mastery, ranging from its form, meaning, and use.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study adds scientific explanations and verifications of *manga's* contributions to vocabulary mastery, further enriching the literature on EFL vocabulary mastery through *manga* comics. It expands on available studies that primarily only focus on the effectiveness of using comics in improving EFL students' vocabulary mastery. Additionally, this study can serve as a foundational reference for future research endeavours in this area.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

Practically, this research contributes to EFL teachers and students by suggesting alternative or complementary media for facilitating EFL students' vocabulary mastery that could be applied in the long run while developing and sustaining a love of reading habit.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance   Empirically, this study contributes by providing concrete evidence of vocabulary mastery through extensive reading of digital *manga* in the EFL context. None of the previous studies investigated this topic with the same method, and none incorporated participants with the same characteristics as in this study.