

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter encompasses an extensive overview of the research, including the background, formulation of the problem, operational definition, aim of the study and significance of the study.

#### **1.1 Background**

English is widely recognized as a global language and holds significant importance as a means of communication. English has become widely utilized in various local contexts globally (Rahman & Saputra, 2021), highlighting the need to recognize the crucial role of vocabulary in English learning. The acquisition and expansion of vocabulary hold significant importance in effective communication and are essential in the natural process of language acquisition (Zimmerman, 1998). Reading, writing, listening, and speaking rely on vocabulary, making its development vital in language learning. To enhance language skills, it is crucial for learners to acquire vocabulary. According to Indriyani (2019), vocabulary acquisition involves the process of acquiring new words in a language. Investing effort in vocabulary acquisition is crucial for learners aiming to enhance their overall language proficiency. By building a solid vocabulary foundation, individuals can improve their language skills and confidently engage in various language activities.

Learners have access to a broad number of various strategies that they may use to improve their vocabulary acquisition, and they can employ these strategies in various ways. Nowadays, learners make significant use of internet-based media, and many educators even encourage it since learning media is a source of learning (Berlian et al., 2021). One of the digital platforms, known as Webtoon, is now being used as a learning resource. The general population has shown great interest in the Webtoon application. Webtoon is derived from the phrase "website of the cartoon" and refers to comics published online and prepared to be seen on a computer or mobile device. This program naturally appeals to younger generations, notably the

Z generation (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2018), since it offers a range of genres, beautiful visuals, easy to access, and potential for aiding language learning.

The shift from textbook-based learning to digital online-based learning has also occurred Blake (2021), and one of the preferred platforms is Webtoon. Higher education students have utilized Webtoon to enhance their vocabulary. The participants in this research are an example of such students. They leverage their reading hobby to improve their vocabulary acquisition simultaneously. When reading webtoons, they always encounter at least a few unfamiliar words, which they then search for the meanings to understand the story they are reading in the Webtoon. They believe that, besides entertainment, webtoons can also be used as a learning medium for them.

Research about vocabulary acquisition from Webtoon have been conducted previously. In their 2022 research study, Castillo-Cuesta and Quinonez-Beltran aimed to explore the use of digital comics for enhancing EFL vocabulary learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Nofrian et al. (2023) focused on improving students' vocabulary through the use of manga. Building on this research, Azizah & Hamid (2022) investigated the effectiveness of comic strips in enhancing students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. However, there remains a lack of research on vocabulary acquisition from webtoons among higher education students, highlighting the need for a comprehensive exploration of this area.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

Drawing from the previously mentioned context, the researcher appears to formulate the research question, "How do Webtoons support higher education students for their vocabulary acquisition?"

## **1.3 Operational Definitions**

### **1.3.1 Webtoon**

Webtoon is a combination of "web" and "cartoon" (comic). The comic may be characterized as an animation that depicts characters and tells a story

about the image. In this study, the Webtoon is a Korean comic that uses/translated into English.

### 1.3.2 Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition entails the act of acquiring and learning new words or expressions within a language. In the context of this study, vocabulary acquisition focused on acquiring new words, knowing the meaning or the translation.

### 1.3.3 EFL Students

In the context of this study, EFL students refer to higher education students who actively read Webtoons in English and are aware that they acquire new words from these Webtoons.

## 1.4 Aim of the Research

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of using Webtoons as a tool for vocabulary acquisition among students.

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

### 1.5.1 Practical Use

From a practical side, this study will inspire readers to use Webtoon media as one of their learning media to learn vocabulary, especially for learners who feel bored with other vocabulary-learning media.

### 1.5.2 Theoretical Use

From the theoretical side, this study will provide inspiration or new ideas for teachers and learners, both inside and outside the classroom, to develop their vocabulary through Webtoons.

### 1.5.3 Empirical Use

From the empirical side, Webtoons can be considered or used as a medium for learning vocabulary in class.