CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a brief explanation of some theories that support the study. The theories are related to the use of Webtoon for EFL student's vocabulary acquisition.

2.1 Vocabulary Acquisition

According to Hatch and Brown (1995), vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that an individual speaker of language might use. It encompasses knowledge of a language's lexical aspects, including meanings, pronunciations, and contextual usage. Steven Pinker, a renowned linguist and cognitive scientist, describes vocabulary as a "mental dictionary" that enables us to access known words, understand their meanings, and recall them when needed (Pinker, 1994.)

Noam Chomsky, an expert in language acquisition, highlights the importance of vocabulary in developing language proficiency, asserting that expanding one's vocabulary is fundamental to enhancing linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1975.) Therefore, vocabulary plays a fundamental role in language as a crucial element for communication, comprehension, and expression. Mastery of vocabulary is fundamental for effective communication, comprehension, and expression in any language. As such, it is one of the major activities in second language (L2) classrooms (Rasti Behbahani, 2021). Educators and researchers recognize that a robust vocabulary is essential not only for language development but also for academic achievement across various subjects.

Vocabulary acquisition is the process by which individuals learn and assimilate new words, encompassing both the understanding and the ability to use these words effectively. Pascual et al. (2022) state that vocabulary acquisition refers to how people increase the number of words they know, highlighting the growth of an individual's lexical repository. This growth is essential for enhancing language skills, as a larger vocabulary facilitates better comprehension, more precise

communication, and greater fluency in both spoken and written language. According to Krashen (1992), vocabulary acquisition is most effectively achieved as part of the natural process of language acquisition through exposure to comprehensible input. Krashen presented five theories of vocabulary acquisition, each highlighting different aspects of how individuals learn new words. The first is the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, which posits that vocabulary acquisition occurs unconsciously, typically through exposure and natural communication, while learning is a conscious and formal process, often taking place in educational settings. The second theory is the Monitor Hypothesis. In this theory, the vocabulary that has been learned serves as a 'monitor' or internal correction tool during language production. This means that learners can reflect on their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to edit their speech or writing as they communicate. However, this monitoring can sometimes lead to over-correction or hesitation, particularly in spontaneous conversation. Third is the Input Hypothesis, which suggests that individuals acquire vocabulary most effectively when they are exposed to words and phrases that are slightly above their current level of competence, often referred to as "i+1." This concept emphasizes the importance of comprehension and meaningful exposure, indicating that learners should engage with vocabulary that challenges them just enough to promote growth without causing frustration. The fourth theory is the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This theory asserts that emotional factors, such as anxiety, motivation, and attitude, can significantly influence a person's ability to acquire vocabulary. A high affective filter—characterized by stress or lack of motivation—can hinder vocabulary acquisition, while a low affective filter creates an environment conducive to the acquisition. Lastly, the Natural Order Hypothesis posits that there is a predictable sequence in vocabulary acquisition that cannot be altered. According to this theory, learners will acquire new words in a specific order, regardless of the teaching methods used. This natural progression highlights the inherent stages of vocabulary development that all learners typically follow.

Vocabulary acquisition can occur through two primary methods: intentional learning and incidental learning. Stratton, (2022) defines that intentional

learning is by the intention of the learner, often through activities such as vocabulary lists, flashcards, and targeted exercises. This method allows learners to focus on specific vocabulary items and ensure they understand both the meaning and usage of each word. In contrast, incidental learning is definitely passive in that it can happen when the focus of attention is on some relevant features of input (Alemi & Tayebi 2011; Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021), such as reading, listening, or engaging in conversations. This method leverages the context in which words are used. Learners will encounter many repetitions of a word incidentally, helping them understand and remember vocabulary through meaningful interactions with the language. Singer (2022) argues that vocabulary acquisition that occurs during non-academic activities such as reading comics or watching cartoons is incidental learning. This is because they indirectly acquire those new vocabularies without the primary intention of learning new words.

Repetition by itself is inadequate for acquiring words. According to Nation (2001), there are three main ways people learn and remember words: noticing, retrieval, and generation. Noticing means paying attention to a word and understanding its importance as part of the language itself. This involves focusing on the word itself rather than its role in a sentence. Motivation and interest are important for noticing. Retrieval is when learners remember a word during a task, which helps strengthen their memory of it. It can be passive (remembering what a word means while reading or listening) or active (remembering how to use a word while writing or speaking). Retrieval doesn't happen if learners learn a word's meaning and form at the same time. Factors like how many words learners know and how long they remember them influence retrieval. Generation happens when learners use words they've learned in new ways. This can mean using a word with a different meaning, form, or in a new sentence structure. Generation can help learners understand words better through reading and listening or help them use them better through speaking and writing.

2.2 Vocabulary Acquisition Through Webtoon as Digital Comic

Media play a crucial role in the educational process, facilitating the teaching and learning process. Visual media, including images, models, and other tools, provide students with an authentic visual experience. They present information in an appropriate, attractive, creative, and formal manner, aiding comprehension and memory (Dzakiah, 2022). Among various types of media used for teaching, visual media are frequently employed.

Vocabulary acquisition through visual media, in this context digital media, has become an increasingly prominent and effective method in the modern era. With the ubiquity of smartphones, tablets, and computers, individuals have unparalleled access to a vast array of digital resources that can enhance their language skills. In their journal, Calvo-Ferrer and Belda-Medina (2021) cite Alsied and Pathan (2013), who state that the use of technological resources can effectively help students learn vocabulary significantly faster than through traditional resources. These tools use multimedia elements like audio, video, and graphics, catering to various learning styles and making vocabulary acquisition more effective. Immediate feedback and adaptive learning paths in digital tools reinforce learning better than traditional methods. Integrating these technologies into study routines provides a more personalized and efficient approach to language learning. As technology continues to evolve, digital media's role in vocabulary acquisition is likely to grow even more significant, offering learners unprecedented opportunities to expand their linguistic horizons.

Vocabulary acquisition through digital comic media is a dynamic and engaging approach to language learning that combines visual storytelling with textual context. Vocabulary acquisition is related to the concept proposed by Stephen Krashen, known as Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), where readers are free to choose the reading materials, enjoyable, and without any pressure. Similiary, readers who choose digital comic for enjoyment without any pressure. Comic books, webcomics, and graphic novels have gained recognition as valuable educational tools, leveraging the synergy of images and words to enhance vocabulary development. Fatimah, et al. (2019) state that comics are art forms that

feature a series of static images in fixed sequence, usually to tell a story. The combination of images and text in comics provides a contextually rich environment that helps reinforce word meanings and associations, making learning more accessible and effective for language learners at various stages of proficiency. A study by Steffensen and Joag-Dev (1984) found that the visual cues in comics can aid in the comprehension and retention of vocabulary, particularly for readers with limited language proficiency. This innovative approach to vocabulary acquisition not only fosters a deeper appreciation for language but also enhances the enjoyment and accessibility of the learning process in the digital age. Furthermore, even if encountering difficulties with a vocabulary term while reading, digital comic readers can directly access translations and explanations related to the vocabulary they encounter, owing to the digital comic format where comics can only be accessed through gadgets.

Webtoons, a popular digital comic application with over 100 million users, serve as a visual learning tool, enhancing vocabulary development through illustrations (Sitinjak et al., 2022). Originating from South Korea with LINE Webtoon by Naver in 2014, Webtoons stand out for their attractive style and smooth animations that captivate readers' attention. The term "Webtoon," combining "web" and "cartoon," signifies its suitability for online reading. According to Widiyarti et al. (2021), citing Tiemensma (2009), comics integrate pictures with words in speech bubbles or captions, making them a form of visual art. Novanti & Suprayogi (2021) note that Webtoons' color design contributes to their attractiveness, using animation effectively to depict characters and narratives vividly.

Webtoons have gained popularity due to their diverse drawing styles, compelling storylines, and broad range of narratives that appeal to readers (Fauziah & Nasrullah, 2023). They engage readers with well-crafted images that enhance storytelling, incorporating features like sounds and moving pictures to create an immersive experience akin to movies or games. This format not only entertains but also connects a global audience who enjoy Webtoons, revolutionizing how stories are consumed online.

2.3 Study of the Relevant Research

Prior to commencing the present study, the researcher undertook a thorough examination of prior research about the utilization of Webtoons as a tool for vocabulary mastery. The researcher investigated a subject matter that relates to the previously mentioned topic, as there is a need for more research on using Webtoons for their vocabulary acquisition. The current inquiry will proceed to discuss in the following order:

Mekki and Manal (2022) conducted research aimed at highlighting the significance of Manga and Webtoons as beneficial reading materials for EFL learners, as well as investigating the substantial impact of reading Manga and Webtoons on English learning. This study also demonstrates how Manga and Webtoons enhance learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, along with their potential benefits in deepening students' understanding of diverse cultures, such as Asian cultures. In this study, more than half of the participants indicated that they sometimes use dictionaries or translators when encountering new vocabulary while reading Webtoons or Manga. The findings of this study revealed that Manga and Webtoons play a significant role in improving students' English language skills.

Ramos (2022) also researched Webtoon, the study aims to know why students choose Webtoons as one of their reading materials and its effect on their education and vocabulary enrichment. According to the study's findings, students utilize Webtoon as reading material because of its accessibility, popularity, and ease of use as long as they have a device and an internet connection. Webtoons are popular among students because they allow them to use their vacation time constructively and educationally.

Ziska (2021) conducted research intending to find a new solution for the instructor by incorporating engaging media into the reading exercise. According to the study's findings, using webtoons story strategies to teach reading comprehension improves students' comprehension. Students appreciate this medium because the Webtoon is simple to understand. Webtoon also includes an

easier-to-understand vocabulary. Furthermore, webtoons do not make students feel bored when reading since the media is bright and colorful, making students want to read.

The recurrent theme among various studies previously cited pertains to using webtoons as a compelling and viable medium worthy of exploration. This study centers on the potential of Webtoons as a tool for enhancing the vocabulary acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.