

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study and lays the foundation for understanding the role of online comics in extensive reading. This chapter includes the background of the study which highlights the importance of reading in language learning and the increasing use of digital and online resources, such as online comics, in educational settings. the researcher then identifies the research problem, research objectives, and research question; followed by the significance of the study, which addresses its theoretical, practical, and empirical contributions.

1.1 Background of the Study

The integration of technology in education has become increasingly common, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Many researchers have highlighted the potential of digital technology to enhance learning outcomes by providing flexible access to learning resources and creating more engaging learning environments (Andriani et al., 2023; Erya & Pustika, 2021; Ranasinghe & Leisher, 2009; Santiana et al., 2021). Through digital platforms, students can access various types of learning materials beyond the physical classroom, allowing them to interact with language input more frequently and independently. For EFL learners, this accessibility is particularly beneficial because it enables them to explore a wide range of English texts that were previously limited to printed materials (Fatimah & Santiana, 2017).

One type of digital reading material that has gained increasing attention is online comics. Online comics present stories through a sequence of panels that combine textual and visual elements, which may help readers understand the narrative more easily while maintaining their interest in the reading process. These comics are widely distributed through websites and dedicated platforms such as Webtoon, MangaToon, Tapas, and KakaoWebtoon, making them easily accessible to readers at any time (Radeswandri et al., 2021a). Because online comics integrate visual and textual information, they can provide contextual support that may assist

readers in understanding vocabulary, grammar, and narrative structure while keeping the reading experience enjoyable.

In language learning contexts, online comics can also be integrated into extensive reading activities. Extensive reading is a reading approach that encourages learners to read large amounts of engaging and comprehensible texts in order to develop reading fluency, comprehension, and motivation (Fatimah et al., 2019, 2020; A. N. Permatasari & Wienanda, 2023a). In many English education programs, this approach is formally implemented through an Extensive Reading course, where students are encouraged to select reading materials based on their interests and read them regularly outside the classroom. Through structured activities such as reading logs, reflections, or discussions, the course aims to cultivate positive reading habits while strengthening students' language competence (Fatimah et al., 2022a; Garvey, 2018a). Because extensive reading emphasizes learner choice and enjoyable reading materials, online comics have the potential to serve as an appropriate medium for supporting students' engagement in reading activities.

In one university in Tasikmalaya, an educator implemented online comics as reading materials in an extensive reading course. During the second semester, students in the English Education Department were assigned to read online comics based on their personal preferences and record their reading experiences in a reading log. The log required students to summarize the story, evaluate the content, and connect the narrative with their personal experiences, allowing them to interact more deeply with the texts (Fatimah et al., 2022a). The activity lasted for a week, during which students explored comics from various online platforms and genres according to their interests.

Initial observations from this activity showed varied responses among students. Some students reported that reading online comics increased their motivation and encouraged them to continue reading even after the course ended. However, other students indicated that the activity did not significantly influence their motivation and that they did not continue reading comics afterward. This variation suggests

that the effectiveness of online comics as reading materials may depend on how students perceive and experience them during the learning process.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential benefits of comics in language learning. For instance, Lo et al. (2022), Nafisah and Pratama (2020), and Roozafzai (2012) reported that comics can support students' reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading motivation by providing visual context that helps readers understand the narrative more easily. In addition, reading motivation has been recognized as a crucial factor influencing students' reading behavior and academic performance (Barber & Klauda, 2020). However, many EFL students still demonstrate low motivation to read, often perceiving reading as time-consuming, effortful, or uninteresting (Wilkinson et al., 2020). Because online comics combine visual narratives with textual information, they may provide an alternative reading format that can make reading activities more appealing to students.

Several studies have also explored the use of online comics in extensive reading contexts. Fatimah et al. (2022), for example, examined activities in an online extensive reading classroom and found that such activities could enhance students' reading motivation and language competence. However, the study relied primarily on questionnaire data and suggested that future research should use additional data collection methods, such as interviews or observations, to obtain deeper insights into students' experiences. Similarly, Robbani and Khoirutunnisa (2021) investigated the use of online English comics as reading materials and found that they contributed to students' vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and critical thinking.

Although these studies demonstrate the potential benefits of online comics in language learning, they mainly focus on the implementation of online comics as instructional materials and their general educational benefits. Limited attention has been given to students' viewpoints regarding the use of online comics in extensive reading activities, particularly in relation to how these materials influence their reading motivation and reading habits after the course ends. Therefore, this study aims to examine students' viewpoints on the use of online comics as reading

materials in an extensive reading course and to explore how these materials influence students' reading motivation beyond classroom requirements. To achieve this objective, the study employs online semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions and experiences.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the question of this research is: "What are students' perceptions of reading online comics in building reading motivation?"

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretations, the researcher has explained the keywords of this research.

1.3.1 Online Comics

Online comics refer to a series of comic strips that are primarily published and distributed through the internet; it has many genres, styles, and themes, as they are also accessible to their readers through websites, social media platforms, or dedicated webcomic platforms such as Webtoon, MangaToon, KakaoWebtoon, Tapytoon, and others. These comics, characterized by their combination of text and visuals, are used as part of extensive reading activities to engage EFL learners and foster the students' reading motivation.

1.3.2 Extensive Reading Course

An extensive reading course is one of the courses that English Education Department students take in one of their semesters. It is a course in which students are encouraged to read various texts for enjoyment, including comics, novels, newspapers, and other types of texts.

1.3.3 Students' Viewpoint

Students' viewpoint refers to the students' perspective on a particular subject, issue, or situation. In this study, it refers to their perceptions of reading online comics in building reading motivation. It reflects students' beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and interpretations based on their experiences and familiarity with reading

online comics. These viewpoints were explored through semi-structured interview questions designed to elicit students' experiences, feelings, and opinions about reading online comics. The interview instrument used to collect these responses is presented in Enclosure 2.

1.3.4 Reading Motivation

Reading motivation, within the scope of this study, refers to the students' observable behavior and psychological characteristics that are evident as a student's intrinsic and extrinsic drive, enthusiasm, and sustained interest in engaging with reading online comics as their reading materials.

1.4 Aim of the Research

According to the research question, this study aims to investigate the students' perception of using online comics in building their reading motivation. Understanding students' perspectives on the effectiveness of online comics may provide insights for educators in integrating digital media into language learning. In addition, this study seeks to contribute to existing literature by examining students' engagement and motivation when using digital reading materials such as online comics.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Uses: The study will contribute to the existing information on the use of online comics in extensive reading courses by exploring students' perceptions of this approach. It will provide insights into how online comics can be used to build reading motivation.

1.5.2 Practical Uses: The findings of this study can be used by educators and teachers to design a more effective reading program that incorporate online comics. It can also help in selecting suitable materials for extensive reading courses and in creating a more engaging learning environment.

1.5.3 Empirical Uses: This study will give empirical evidence on the effectiveness of using online comics in extensive reading courses. It will contribute to the ongoing discussion on the role of visual literacy in reading and the benefits of using alternative reading materials in the classroom.