

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

H. Background

Language plays an essential role in human life as it serves as a tool for communication and a medium for expressing ideas. In the process of language learning, there are four core skills that students need to master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interrelated and cannot be separated from one another. Among them, reading is a particularly vital skill, as it forms the foundation for developing other language abilities. Through reading activities, students can absorb a wide range of information, expand their vocabulary, understand language structures, and gain a broader understanding of the culture associated with the language (Dolean & Prodan, 2023).

Reading is not merely an activity of recognizing letters and words; it also involves understanding the content, interpreting meanings, and evaluating information critically. In language education, reading skills are crucial because they support students' linguistic and cognitive development. This skill also aids comprehension in other subjects presented in textual form, making it important to develop reading abilities in a structured manner within educational settings (Rahmi & Marnola, 2020).

According to Nuraini (2019), reading also positively impacts speaking and writing skills. Students who regularly engage in reading are better able to express ideas with well-structured language and a rich vocabulary. Additionally, through reading, they can learn about sentence structure, writing style, and logical reasoning found in texts. Therefore, reading not only functions as a means of gaining information but also as

a source of implicit language learning.

Good reading skills enable students to acquire knowledge from various fields and train them to think critically (Handayani et al., 2021). However, in reality, students' reading ability in Indonesia remains low. According to the 2019 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, Indonesia ranked 62nd out of 70 countries in reading literacy. This data reflects that the majority of Indonesian students struggle to understand texts, particularly in identifying implicit meanings, drawing conclusions, and connecting information to appropriate contexts.

The issue of low reading literacy is also evident in the results of the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), where Indonesia ranked 41st out of 45 participating countries, with an average score of only 405 points far below the global average. Moreover, Indonesians' interest in reading is notably low. Based on the reading interest index, the score is only 0.09, meaning that out of every 100 people, only nine read one book per year. This indicates that the reading culture in Indonesia is still very weak and requires serious attention, especially from educational institutions.

A similar condition can be observed at the local level, such as at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah. Based on observations and input from teachers at the school, many eleventh-grade students face difficulties in understanding reading texts. These difficulties are evident in their low performance in answering text-based questions, drawing conclusions from the information presented, and interpreting word and sentence meanings within the context of the reading material.

Poor reading comprehension not only affects students' academic performance in English language subjects but also impacts their

understanding of other subjects that require text mastery, such as history, sociology, and geography. Several key factors contribute to weak reading comprehension, including students' low interest in reading, limited availability of engaging reading materials, and monotonous, uninspiring teaching approaches. Many teachers still rely solely on textbooks, which often fail to spark students' interest.

In fact, engaging and contextually relevant instruction can increase students' motivation and understanding of the material. In this regard, the teacher's role as a facilitator is crucial. Teachers are expected to present contextual and interactive learning media that encourage active participation and foster student autonomy in learning (Febrita & Ulfah, 2019).

In today's digital era, technological advancements have opened up new opportunities in education, including the development of learning media. One digital platform that is particularly popular among teenagers is Webtoon a comic-based application that presents illustrated stories in a vertical format, easily accessible through mobile devices. Webtoon offers various story genres that resonate with teenagers, presented in a visually appealing, colorful, and interactive manner. This makes Webtoon a potentially powerful tool for enhancing reading skills in educational contexts.

Webtoon has several advantages that support the improvement of students' reading literacy. First, its colorful and visually engaging presentation captures students' attention and fosters reading interest, especially among those who dislike traditional text-based reading. Second, as a digital platform, Webtoon can be accessed anytime and anywhere, offering flexibility in reading. Third, its content is often closely related to teenage life covering themes like friendship, family,

school, and digital experiences making it easier for students to understand and emotionally connect with the stories.

Fourth, Webtoon provides a deeper reading experience through a multimodal approach, combining text, illustrations, and other visual elements. This approach greatly benefits students who are visual or kinesthetic learners in understanding storylines and conveyed contexts. Fifth, some Webtoon platforms include interactive features such as comment sections, discussion forums, and rating systems, which encourage student engagement and foster more active and reflective discussions about the reading content. With these advantages, Webtoon serves as a creative and relevant alternative learning medium to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Despite its potential, the use of Webtoon as a learning medium in schools, especially in English learning, has not yet been optimally explored and systematically analyzed. Although Webtoon has been implemented at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah, its use is still limited in terms of structured instructional design and academic evaluation. This condition may stem from limited teacher understanding regarding effective integration of Webtoon into the teaching process, insufficient training in the use of digital learning media, and the common perception of Webtoon as merely a form of entertainment. Therefore, further research is needed to analyze how Webtoon can be adapted as a learning medium to improve students' reading comprehension.

In the context of learning at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah, the use of Webtoon as a learning medium represents a promising and innovative step, especially considering students' high interest in digital and visual media. Integrating Webtoon into the learning process can effectively bridge the gap between students' familiar digital world and educational

goals. By incorporating Webtoon, teachers can create more engaging, contextual, and interactive learning experiences, helping students better understand reading texts and sharpen their critical thinking skills.

Moreover, using Webtoon in teaching and learning supports the creation of a more inclusive and responsive learning environment that accommodates diverse learning styles. This media can also increase students' active participation, encourage independent learning, and foster a positive digital literacy culture in schools. Therefore, the integration of Webtoon is not merely an effort to capture students' attention but a strategic move to deliver meaningful, relevant, and sustainable learning.

Based on this rationale, this study aims to analyze the use of the Webtoon application as a learning medium in reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah. The findings of this research are expected to provide insights into the role of Webtoon in language learning and contribute to solutions addressing the challenges of reading comprehension in high school students.



I. Limitation of The Problem

The limitation of this research is the focus on analyzing the use of the Webtoon application as a learning medium in reading comprehension among 11th-grade students at SMAN 6 Bengkulu Tengah.

J. The Research Questions

Based on the background above then the researcher formulated the research questions as follows :

1. How is the Webtoon application used as a learning medium in students' reading comprehension skills?
2. What are the students' perceptions of the use of the Webtoon application as a learning medium in reading comprehension skills?

K. The Research Objectives

The research objectives of this research

3. To analyze how the Webtoon application is used as a learning medium in students' reading comprehension skills.
4. To identify students' perceptions of the use of the Webtoon application as a learning medium in reading comprehension skills.

L. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of theories on media-based language learning, particularly in relation to the use of digital visual media such as Webtoon in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

2. Practical Significance

- a. For Students:

This study is expected to increase students' interest in reading, improve their reading comprehension skills, and provide an

engaging learning experience that aligns with their digital learning environment.

b. For Teachers:

This study can serve as a reference for teachers in developing innovative, interactive, and technology-based reading instruction strategies using digital media such as Webtoon.

c. For Future Researchers:

This study is expected to provide initial insights and references for future researchers who wish to conduct further studies on the use of digital learning media, particularly Webtoon, across different educational levels and subject areas.

M. Definition of Key Terms

Here are the explanations of several terms used in this study to ensure that readers share the same understanding. These explanations also aim to prevent any misunderstandings between the readers and the researcher. The terms are described as follows:

10. Webtoon Application

Webtoon is a combination of web applications and comic books. Created in Korea, Webtoon is based on web comics that were first published by Naver in 2014. This komik can be used as a guide to illustrate characters and all stories related to the gambar. The preference for comics is very high since they can inspire readers. Komik tersebut must be used as educational medium. This komik can also be said in a few other languages, such as English and Indonesian.

11. Reading and Comprehension Skills

Reading is a process to understand the meaning of writing and which needs attention as important matters relating to the information contained in the reading that is read because not all

words in the reading are important things that must be remembered and understood (Gani, 2019). Reading comprehension is a talent that allows us to extract meaning from a text, according to Pamela J. Farris

12. Learning Media

Learning media, according to Miarso, is anything that is utilised to channel messages that can arouse feelings, thoughts, attention, and a desire to learn in order to promote a deliberate, controlled, and purposeful learning process.

