EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON WEBTOON: READING ACTIVITY

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Abstract: *Nowadays, the digital era offers many creative platforms to help EFL students gain more English knowledge and comprehend all English skills, particularly reading. Leisure reading, like Webtoon, is the most popular platform for practicing reading among millennials. Webtoon is a digital comic with a colorful design and various stories for readers to enjoy. Nowadays, the digital era provides many creative platforms to assist EFL students in gaining more knowledge in English to comprehend all English skills, especially in reading. The most platform for practicing reading millennials use is leisure reading, such as Webtoon. Webtoon is a digital comic with a colorful design and has many kinds of stories that eager readers to read. Therefore, this research seeks to determine EFL students' perceptions of both state and private universities about Webtoon on reading activity. This study was a quantitative research design. The data were gathered through questionnaires distributed to the students. The result revealed a positive perception of the students toward using Webtoon as reading reactivity.*

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to learn English in this era, which has become a benefit for students should take advantage of. One of them is that technology has developed and created something new that can support the education world, especially during the pandemic time that requires the teacher and students to master the technology and get to use digital activities (Prayudha, 2021). We cannot avoid technology in this period of globalization and the fourth industrial revolution since it has ingrained itself into our daily lives and the educational system (Katemba, 2021). English teachers have started using computer technology to engage students further and boost their interest in learning English (Katemba, 2022; Katemba 2019). Students are encouraged to find as many sources as possible and learn independently. Students can explore videos, e-books, and other digital platforms that catch their attention and provide a range of content in understandable ways to support their studies as long as they have an internet connection (Erya & Pustika, 2021; Yuliani & Purnama Sari, 2022).

Further, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online language learning became increasingly popular for teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Katemba & Sinuhaji, 2021). Therefore, these developments are expected to benefit English learning, particularly reading development, because EFL students can access it more easily anywhere and anytime to learn English.

Reading is one part of learning English. By reading, we can enrich ourselves to gain information, language, experience, reading skills, and a mindset (Erya & Pustika, 2021). However, students need some help with reading, such as a lack of vocabulary and motivation (Aulia & Zainil, 2020; Shehu, 2015; Siyabi, 2017). In addition, Nurjanah (2018) stated that the lectures must be made aware of the student's difficulties in reading. Mostly, the lectures were too stiff to make the learning activities. Meanwhile, many people want to read because it is related to themselves or it is useful or not. That is why most students do not like reading. Meanwhile, reading is the most important skill that EFL students should have (Erya & Pustika, 2021). If it were not, how could they read their written text in English? As a result, numerous platforms have created innovative and enjoyable ways to read to fill this need so that they can use their smartphones in productive ways.

Many studies have discussed and proved that Webtoon is a good reading tool. First, research conducted by Novanti & Suprayogi (2021) entitled "Webtoon's Potentials to Enhance EFL Students' Vocabulary" investigated the use of Webtoon to enhance EFL students' vocabulary. The population is high school and college students in Lampung province. The results of this study stated that Webtoon helped them create new words through the design. Second, the study conducted by Indah & Wibowo (2021) entitled "An Analysis of Reading Literacy for College Students Through Webtoon as Interactive Learning" yielded positive results because the students' interest was increased. Their study was conducted on college students in the 3rd year of As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University 2020/2021 and took five randomly. Then, the study conducted by Erya & Pustika (2021) focused on 50 students of the English Education study program at the Faculty of Arts and Education, Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia, and had a positive impact.

Thus, previous research has found that Webtoons improve vocabulary, reading comprehension, and reading interest. This study seeks to fill the gaps by discovering private and public college students' perceptions of Webtoon as a reading activity at various universities, levels, and majors throughout Indonesia, including Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara. This study's novelty demonstrates that Webtoon can be a good aid for a reading activity, and it has been proven in Indonesia, nationwide. Therefore, this study aims to seek answers to the following questions: (1). What is the perception between public and private students using Webtoon in reading activities? (2) Are there any significant differences between female & male students' perspectives on using Webtoon in reading activity? (3). Are there any significant differences based on their age by using

Webtoon in reading activity? (4) What are the most popular majors among students who use Webtoon as a reading tool?

LITERATURE REVIEW

One aspect of learning English is reading. According to Manalu (2019), learning is only possible with texts (modules, textbooks, articles, handouts, and other written sources). Generally, reading is an activity when you can understand and conclude the content (Indah & Wibowo, 2021). Reading provides us with knowledge, a language to talk, experience, reading skills, and a mentality, all of which can help us improve (Erya & Pustika, 2021). Furthermore, a reading activity does not only mean reading a book but all the print and digital text as long as we can read. Thus, if an EFL student needs to gain reading knowledge, they will be deprived of daily contact, intellectual growth, higher education, job success, professional advancement, and language acquisition domains (Manalu, 2019). The following challenges are how to make the students have a reading habit. However, students face other reading-related issues, such as more vocabulary and enthusiasm (Aulia & Zainil, 2020; Shehu, 2015; Siyabi, 2017). That is why most students do not like reading.

Additionally, students require reading material that will assist their reading with media appropriate to their age and current platforms. For those ages 17 and above, leisure reading will fit the reading activity. For busy college students around 19 and above, leisure reading is also called recreational reading (Jansen, 2019). Thus, lecturers must adapt to the nowadays platform to make an attractive language activity.

The term "webtoon," created in South Korea, is a composite word constructed from the words "website" and "cartoon." Webtoon episodes are readily available to readers for browsing, downloading, or purchasing. Kusumawati (2019) stated that students who study using technology could help them with reading because it can promote students' interests. In addition, students are no longer necessary for assessment purposes. With technology, they can explore it by themselves (Gürleyik & Akdemir, 2018). As a result, EFL students can find some platforms that bring them to love reading through stories, such as Webtoon and Wattpad (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021; Al Falaq et al., 2021). These are the most famous platform that teens use for reading, mostly almost have access, and this platform can develop students' motivation for reading (Erya & Pustika, 2021; Fitri & Ulsi Qodriani, 2016; Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021).

A study conducted by Indah & Wibowo (2021), "An Analysis of Reading Literacy for College Students Through Webtoon As Interactive Learning," showed that interactive learning results, especially in reading, because it is simple and easy to access. Webtoon not only assists students with reading skills but Prahastiwi & Kamil (2023), in "The Use Line Webtoon In Extensive Reading Activity for Students' Motivation," showed that students could obtain vocabulary and pronunciation.

Webtoons or webcomics that originated in South Korea provide a colorful design with beautiful drawings packed into a digital comic to enhance the student's sense of the story. Many studies state that leisure reading could help students improve their language and reading skills. According to Ali & Razali (2019), leisure reading helps students gain knowledge and academic advancement. Furthermore, comics can help students develop their English skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Mitra & Keziah, 2019). Therefore, this medium can be appropriate for reading knowledge, and the students feel excited when attempting new things, and it will be exciting for them.

METHOD

This research was a quantitative study in which data was gathered using questionnaires. This study was intended for tertiary EFL students at public and private universities who did their reading through webtoons. In this study, the primary instrument was a questionnaire with a self-designed survey that included items on a linear scale with answers ranging from strongly agree to agree to neutral to disagree to strongly disagree. The researcher used Google Forms to distribute the questionnaires, and the respondents responded on Google Forms. This study includes 20 questions about students' perceptions of Webtoon reading and reading knowledge. The data were collected: first, researchers chose a sample of respondents from the broader population. The researchers shared the questionnaires with students enrolled in tertiary institutions, both private and state/public, through Google Forms. The students who participated in this study were those using Webtoon. Thus, there were 93 respondents from 34 Universities, 47 respondents were from state/public university students, and 46 respondents were from private university students, with 68.8% composed of females and 31.2% of males.

The instruments and questionnaires were pilot tested. It was given to 35 students from Universitas Advent Indonesia. Thus, there are 20 valid questions with a measure greater than 0.05, and the reliability is 0.835.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 (versions) to determine the significant difference using an independent sample t-test to answer research questions 1–3. If the results were less than alpha level 0.05, it indicated a significant difference. If the alpha level is greater than 0.05, it indicates no significant difference. Then, the researchers used Excel and manually tallied the results to answer research question four. Following that, the researchers hinted at it in their findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The researcher summarized the data in Excel and then calculated the number of students who responded to each statement. The following table provides a summary of the data totals.

Table 1.
Students' Perception, Personal feelings, and Reading Knowledge

Students' Perception	1. 59.1% of students strongly agreed that Webtoon is easy to access anytime.
	2. 34.4% of students agreed that Webtoon can help them to learn English.
	3. 39.8% of students agreed that Webtoon can help them improve their English.
	4. 38.7% of students, Webtoon can help them improve their academic language.
	5. 54.8% of students strongly agree that Webtoon is an attractive reading tool.
Reading Knowledge	1. 46.2% of students agreed that Webtoon can enhance their reading comprehension.
	2. 32.3% of students agreed that they are inspired to improve their reading knowledge by the language used in Webtoon.
	3. 35.5% of students agreed that their reading interest develop after reading through Webtoon.
	4. 33.3% of students that look up the definitions of words and phrases on Webtoon before continuing to read.
	5. 39.8% of students agreed that Webtoon provides language that easy to understand.
	6. 36.6% of students strongly agree Webtoon can help them become more interested in reading.
	7. 30.1% of students agreed that Webtoon can empower them to control their own learning.
Students' personal feelings	1. 51.6% of students strongly agreed that they read Webtoon in their free time.
	2. 23.7% of students strongly agreed that they ever bought the next episode of the story from Webtoon.
	3. 44.1% of students strongly agreed that they prefer online comic than print comic.
	4. 48.4% of students strongly agreed that they read Webtoon in their spare time.
	5. 51.6% of students strongly agreed that the design makes them eager to read.
	6. 36.6% of students that Webtoon give them new insight into current issue.
	7. 52.7% of students strongly agreed to read another story while you wait for the new episode.
	8. 26.9% of students strongly agreed that they ever purchased the upcoming episodes because they were curious.

Based on the initial indication of how students view Webtoon, the researcher can conclude that most student replies agree that it is an engaging reading tool that can assist them in learning English as Prahastiwi & Kamil (2023) stated that Webtoon is an aid for reading. The researcher obtained the same results. Furthermore, Yuliani & Purnama Sari

(2022) found a positive response to Webtoon as an educational tool that improves their language skills.

The second indicator shows that Webtoon assists them in reading comprehension through the language that Webtoon provides making them eager to read and read. Kim & Yu (2019) define a Webtoon Short narrative as an online cartoon that uses user-friendly and straightforward language.

Furthermore, the third indicator shows their interest in reading through Webtoon, result a positive response. 26.9% of the students were inquisitive and purchased the upcoming installment covering the entire week. The researchers can conclude that they have an interest in reading. They spend their free time making reading a recreational activity (Jansen, 2019).

Students feelings when viewing Webtoon for their reading knowledge are described in the affective reaction. This response focuses on the opinions and perceptions of students regarding the Webtoon on reading.

The perception between public and private students using Webtoon in reading activities.

The following information in table 2 Means of Public and Private university

Table 2
Public and Private University

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
State/Public University	47	76.36	12.854
Private University	46	75.74	14.198

The mean (M) score for public students was 76.36, and the for private university students was 75.74. Both responder groups appeared to be quite similar. In addition, public university students performed better than private university students. The data were subjected to the independent samples t-test to examine the significance of the difference in mean scores between students attending public and private schools. The outcomes are displayed in Table 3 below:

Table 3.
Independent sample t-test of both state/public and private pupils

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means
	F	Sig.	t	Sig. Two Sided
Equal variances assumed	1.186	.279	.222	.825
Equal variances not assumed			.222	.825

The table shows no statistically significant difference in the mean score between students from state/public colleges and those from private universities. This is due to the value exceeding the specified significance threshold (0.05). As a result, no discernible differences between students at state/public and private schools were verified.

There are significant differences between female & male students' perspectives using Webtoon in reading activity.

The following information is provided in table 4 to compare the statistics of female and male students:

Table 4.
Comparing female and male

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	64	75.22	14.844
Male	29	77.90	9.741

The mean (M) score for female students was 75.22, and for male students was 77.90. Here, male students performed well in reading knowledge than females. To determine the significance difference in mean scores between female and male students, the data were subjected to the independent samples t-test. The results show in table 5 below:

Table 5.
Independent sample t-test of both female and male students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	t	Sig. Two Sided
Equal variances assumed	8.545	.004	-.887	.377
Equal variances not assumed			-1.033	.305

According to the table, there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores between female and male respondents. This is because the value is greater than the significance threshold stated (0.05). Therefore, it is confirmed that there are significant differences between female and male students.

There are any significant differences based on their age by using Webtoon in the reading activity.

The following information is provided in table 6 to compare the statistics of students ages 17-22 and 23-27 years old:

Table 6.
Descriptive statistics for ages 17-22 years old and 23-27 years old

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
17-22 years old	79	75.78	12.864
23-27 years old	14	77.57	16.951

Students aged 17 to 22 received a mean (M) score of 75.78, while those aged 23 to 27 received a score of 77.57. As a result, students between the ages of 23 and 27 outperformed those between the ages of 17 and 22. The data were subjected to the independent samples t-test to examine the significance of the difference in mean scores between two categories of students. Table 7 below displays the results:

Table 7.
Independent sample t-test of pupils in the 17–22 and 23–27 age ranges

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	t	Sig. Two Sided
Equal variances assumed	2.187	.143	-.456	.650
Equal variances not assumed			-.376	.712

The table shows that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores between students aged 17 to 22 and those aged 23 to 27. This is due to the value exceeding the specified significance threshold (0.05). As a result, the initial null hypothesis was verified—that there are no discernible differences between students aged 17 to 22 and those aged 23 to 27.

The most popular majors among students who use Webtoon as a reading tool.

There are varied majors that use Webtoon as their reading activity. From 93 respondents there are 36 majors and 1 unknown. Table 8 shows:

Table 8
Percentage of varied students' major

Majors	Percentage
Aquatic resources management	(6.45%)
Marine Science	(2.1%)
Forestry	(2.1%)
Science	(2.1%)
English Education	(6.45%)
Information Management	(1.0 %)
Biology Education	(2.1%)
Philosophy	(2.1%)
Management	(3.22%)
D4 Financial Accounting	(1.0%)
Psychology	(3.22%)
Accounting	(12.10%)
Business Administration	(1.0%)
Veterinary Science Department	(2.1%)
Medical Sciences Department	(3.22%)
Agribusiness Department	(1.0%)
Mathematic Education	(2.1%)
Dentistry	(2.1%)
Tarbiyah	(1.0%)
Public Health	(3.22%)
Technology of Agriculture	(1.0%)
Information System	(6.45%)
Law Department	(5.37%)
Informatics Engineering	(3.22%)
Indonesian Education and Literature	(1.0%)
Early Childhood Education Department	(2.1%)
Primary School Teacher Education Department	(4.30%)
Economics Development	(3.22%)
Family Welfare	(2.1%)
Fashion	(2.1%)
Aquaculture	(1.0%)

Civil Engineering	(1.0%)
International Relation Department	(1.0%)
Environmental engineering	(1.0%)
Special education	(1.0%)
Midwifery	(1.0%)

Table 8: Accounting had the greatest percentage of survey respondents of any major due to the fact that there were 11 accounting students. Accounting used Webtoon as a reading resource.

Discussions

The study's objective was to examine the hypotheses experimentally. Therefore, the study's primary objectives were the following hypotheses: (1) Webtoon reading results show no significant differences between state/public and private EFL students. (2) There are significant differences between female and EFL male students through reading Webtoon. Reilly et al. (2019) supported the findings by saying a significant difference in reading is that females performed better than males. In contrast, the researchers found that male students performed well in reading. They agreed that Webtoon can enhance their reading comprehension and inspire them to improve their reading activity. In addition, Webtoon can increase their reading activity because it provides simple language. Moreover, they can learn new words or phrases at the same time. (3) Students between the ages of 17 and 22 and those between the ages of 23 and 27 are similar. Millennial generation Z was born between 1995 and 2012, and Rahmat et al. (2018) claimed that they performed a study to identify problems with reading comprehension across faculties and discovered them. Also, respondents in this study are between the ages of 17 and 27 and fall within the same age range. They are the millennial generation Z. This explains why there were no appreciable differences in the categorization between the two years.

Our research showed that using Webtoons for their reading activities benefited EFL students. Whether the type of university, gender, age, or major, Webtoon is a good tool for their reading activity. Besides Webtoon is easy to access (Indah & Wibowo, 2021), Webtoon can increase students' motivation in reading comprehension (Erya & Pustika, 2021). Learning with computer technology can increase student engagement and spark an interest in learning the language (C. V. Katemba, 2019, 2022). Then, Novanti & Suprayogi (2021) Webtoon provides students with benefits in enhancing vocabulary, making the language easy to understand.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the statistics and analysis above that there is no significant difference in Webtoon reading performance between students in private and state. The researchers

then discovered that male students did well in reading. Furthermore, there are no significant differences between students between the ages of 17-22 and 23-27 because they belong to the same generation, the millennial generation Z. Also, accounting was the major that used Webtoon the most in their reading activities because accounting majors made up the bulk of the population who answered the questionnaires. Also, respondents said that Webtoon's attractive visuals can help them enhance their reading comprehension, which is another reason why they prefer reading online comics over print comics.

Students aged 17 to 27 can easily access Webtoon. Despite most of them accessing it in their spare time because Webtoon provides beautiful and colorful drawings for entertainment, Webtoon is also an aid for learning activities such as reading. We live in a digital age where we must engage with technology. Webtoons demonstrated that reading can take place both in print and online, which is one of the advantages of Webtoons as a digital reading platform. Additionally, webtoons can help students improve their vocabulary because the illustrations help students understand the content. People can then enjoy reading because they are reading something relevant to them. Thus, Webtoon offers a variety of genres from which students can choose. As a result, students are more interested in the story, and some of them may purchase it or wait for the next episode in the coming week. As a result, Webtoon is an excellent reading aid for students. Students can use Webtoon as a reading tool to make reading more enjoyable. Furthermore, teachers can use Webtoon as a reading tool in the classroom because Webtoon increases students' interest in reading. Furthermore, getting students involved with technology can positively impact them.

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