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| Students’ Perception of LINE Webtoon Application and its Impact on Their English Reading Habits and Skills |
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Abstrak

Membaca adalah salah satu dari empat keterampilan dasar yang harus dikuasai siswa dalam kecakapan berbahasa Inggris. Berbagai platform literasi digital, termasuk Aplikasi LINE Webtoon, memungkinkan membaca di komputer, tablet, dan perangkat seluler. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki persepsi siswa tentang penggunaan aplikasi LINE Webtoon dan bagaimana hal itu memengaruhi kebiasaan dan keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris mereka. Penelitian ini dilakukan di salah satu perguruan tinggi swasta di Yogyakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, dengan partisipasi enam mahasiswa jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif diterapkan dalam penelitian ini, dan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara. Dalam wawancara tersebut, para siswa menceritakan pengalaman membaca mereka menggunakan LINE Webtoon. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menggambarkan bahwa mereka tertarik menggunakan LINE Webtoon dikarenakan ilustrasi yang menarik, penggunaan bahasa yang mudah dan sederhana, cerita yang berhubungan dengan kehidupan sendiri, dan mereka menantikan kelanjutan cerita, dan menggunakan pendekatan khusus untuk membaca LINE Webtoon. Sebagai hasil dari membaca dari LINE Webtoon, para siswa melihat adanya perubahan dalam kebiasaan membaca mereka, yang dicontohkan dengan meningkatnya rutinitas dan durasi membaca mereka. Dampak positif lain dari penggunaan LINE Webtoon adalah peningkatan kosa kata dan tata bahasa.

*Kata kunci:* LINE Webtoon, kebiasaan membaca, keterampilan membaca, pengalaman

**Abstract**

Reading is one of the four basic skills that students should master in English proficiency. Numerous digital literacy platforms, including LINE Webtoon Application, enable reading on computers, tablets, and mobile devices. The objective of this research was to investigate students’ perceptions of using the LINE Webtoon application and how it impacted their English reading habits and skills. This study was conducted at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, with the participation of six students majoring in English Language Education. The qualitative descriptive research design was applied in this study, and data were collected through interviews. In the interviews, the students shared their reading experiences using LINE Webtoon. They described their feelings of being intrigued by the illustrations, the use of easy and simple language, discovering relatable stories, looking forward to the continuation of the stories, and their specific approach to reading from LINE Webtoon. As a result of reading from LINE Webtoon, the students noticed a change in their reading habits, as exemplified by the increase in their reading routine and duration. Another positive impact of using LINE Webtoon was their improved vocabulary and grammar.

*Keywords:* LINE Webtoon, reading habits, reading skills, experience

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading is one of the four basic skills in learning a language. According to Noor (quoted in Akarsu & Daremez, 2014, p. 86), reading is an essential academic language skill in the learning environment for all second and foreign language learners. Reading itself can help students acquire more knowledge and information. According to Dalilan (2021), people whose hobby is reading will read all types of reading materials with various aims in order to satisfy their need to acquire as much information as possible.

Technology has become an integral aspect and a necessity in our daily lives. In this era, technology facilitates our lives in numerous ways. People in the 21st century rely more on computer-based or digital resources than on paper-based resources due to the influence of technology. There are now numerous computer-based resources such as e-mail, online news portals, instant messaging applications, and online videos. The internet and ICT are becoming increasingly vital information sources, and literacy is required for successful use of information resources (Coiro et al., 2008, as cited in Leu, et al., 2011).

Nowadays, digital literacy has altered the reading habits of individuals. There are numerous digital literacy platforms that can assist individuals in reading on their computers, tablets, or cellphones. Access to digital periodicals and newspapers online is simplified, and developers can more readily update their data (Akarsu & Daremez, 2014, p. 86). Furthermore, there are applications created just for leisure reading, including those that specifically publish digital comics. Some popular applications that can be found in the Play Store or App Store are for example *Webtoon, Kakao Page, Mangatoon, Tapas, etc.*

One of the most popular digital comics platforms among students is LINE Webtoon, because it can be downloaded for free and provides daily access to thousands of comics, with the exception of early access to get ahead of other readers by purchasing the application coins. The comic layout of LINE Webtoon is aesthetically pleasing due to its vertical paneling and layout. As stated by Astabrata (2019), the reader can view each panel in more detail by scrolling because several panels are not displayed on a single page. In addition, users of LINE Webtoon can become creators themselves by publishing their own comics in the Kanvas section, which can then be easily accessed and read for free (Bentri, Magh'firoh, & Tahitu, 2021).

Due to the variety of comics on offer in LINE Webtoon, students' reading habits can be improved. LINE Webtoon is appropriate for fostering reading proficiency, and reading with LINE Webtoon is an enjoyable activity (Indah & Wibowo, 2021). Green stated that strong reading habits can expand knowledge (as cited in Florence et al., 2017). However, some people tend to become bored when reading, especially when learning a language, because the subject matter is uninteresting. By using LINE Webtoon, students can improve their reading habits because the application contains comics with interesting plots and images. According to Wulandari et al. (2019), the use of images makes reading more engaging.

This study focused on the LINE Webtoon application due to its popularity among students. Regarding the application, Muyassaroh et al. (2019) asserted that LINE Webtoon can serve as a learning media because of its engaging storylines and themes. Students can also comprehend readily due to their use of simple sentences. With this context in mind, the researchers aimed to investigate the students' use of LINE Webtoon in relation to their English reading habits. The purpose of this study was also to determine how students perceive the impact of LINE Webtoon on their English reading skills.

Some students, especially those learning a foreign language, find reading to be tedious. This is due to overwhelming vocabularies discouraging some students from reading. Due to the integration of technology into daily life, the use of technology can aid in the improvement of reading habits and enhance them further. Furthermore, some reading applications provide engaging topics for reading. Therefore, reading from these applications is more suitable for students since they can relate to the story's topic or theme.

The existence of the LINE Webtoon application can be utilized to overcome reading boredom. It is possible to make use of this application to improve students’ reading habits. With the assistance of LINE Webtoon's illustrations and engaging topics, students can readily select reading material suitable to their preferences. Additionally, LINE Webtoon is available in many languages, and users can select their preferred language. This means that anyone can utilize LINE Webtoon to improve their reading skills in multiple languages.

In linking LINE Webtoon to reading habits, however, a number of complications may arise. For example, the paid stories in LINE Webtoon are considered a constraint because viewers cannot freely access them, which then impels them to visit illegal sites. In addition, the digital literacy required to use LINE Webtoon varies depending on whether it is used for entertainment or learning. Furthermore, teachers' and students' perspectives differ on the impact of LINE Webtoon on English reading habits, as do their perceptions of the significance of LINE Webtoon for their reading abilities.

This study was intended to investigate students' perceptions of the LINE Webtoon application in relation to their reading habits. It discussed their experiences using LINE Webtoon. It also examined how students perceived the impact of the LINE Webtoon Application on their reading skills. Participants in this study were limited to students majoring in English Language Education at a private institution in Yogyakarta, East Java, Indonesia. The research was based solely on the students' perceptions, not those of their lecturers. This study employed the qualitative method, wherein data was collected through interview questions. These were the two questions addressed to the participants: "How do students of the English Language Department perceive the impact of using LINE Webtoon on their English reading habits?" and “How do students of the English Language Department perceive the impact of using LINE Webtoon on their English reading skills?”

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of using the LINE Webtoon application on students' reading habits and their perceptions of the significance of using LINE Webtoon on their English reading skills.

**METHOD**

This research applied a qualitative approach with descriptive qualitative research design. Using in depth interview with the interview guideline as the research instrument, this research involved six students as the participants. The participants were selected based on some criteria, namely the students are from batch 2019 and they have already completed their second semester. The reason why choosing students of batch 2019 is mainly that they are still involved with some courses that use reading as a course requirement. There is also a high possibility that they use digital platforms for reading activities. The second criterion is that they actively use LINE Webtoon Application for at least one year, actively reading LINE Webtoon in English language. Another additional criterion is that they can routinely read 2-3 times a week using Webtoon. In order to meet the criteria, the researcher conducted a small-scale survey to filter the participants that meet the criteria. The researcher asked about how active they were in using the application, what language they used when reading the Webtoon, and the purpose of reading Webtoon. From the selection process, the researcher chose six participants pseudonymized as Intan, Rara, Afifah, Mira, Karina, and Aliyah. To analyze the data, the research did the transcribing, member checking and coding. Member checking was conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

From the data interview, the researchers discovered similar experiences shared amongst the respondents. These similarities include their interest in reading comics, impatience or eagerness for the next issue of their favorite story, and reading habits. The findings are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

**Students were interested in reading LINE Webtoon due to its illustrations.** During the interview, a majority of the respondents stated that they became interested in reading LINE Webtoon due to its appealing illustrations. Participant 1, Intan, stated, "LINE Webtoon is supported by artistic illustrations, so I am not easily bored" (P1.4). In addition, participant 3, Afifah, stated, "Usually, I am bored when reading, but using LINE Webtoon makes me enthusiastic to read because of the illustration" (P3.4). Similarly, Aliyah, participant 6, stated, "Because the illustration is artful, it is more enjoyable even though I have to read it in English" (P6.5). All participants shared the same experience when reading from LINE Webtoon, demonstrating that the illustrations were what triggered their interest. The illustrations made their Webtoon reading activity enjoyable.

The participants' experiences align with the findings of Hidayat et al. (2019), who stated that the content of digital comics is more engaging and stimulating for students than printed books. The use of illustration enhances the readability of Webtoon (Wulandari et al., 2019). The application LINE Webtoon is designed specifically to publish digital comics. This application therefore can attract students’ interest to read, especially with captivating illustrations that easily attract the attention of the readers.

**LINE Webtoon used easy and simple language.** The participants shared that their experiences reading stories on LINE Webtoon were easy. One participant stated, "The words on LINE Webtoon are understandable". Rara, participant 2, also mentioned, "To be honest, I can understand the words because the language is more straightforward". The statements of the participants revealed that when reading from LINE Webtoon, the participants found the words to be simple and easy to understand. Simple language was used. This became one of the reasons the participants continued reading from LINE Webtoon.

Due to Webtoon's simple language, the participants were able to comprehend the stories, as evidenced by their responses to the interview questions. This finding supports the claim from Muyassaroh et al., (2019) that LINE Webtoon uses simple sentences. Muyasaroh recommended LINE Webtoon as a suitable learning media due to its simple language and easily understandable stories for students. This study's finding also reveals that Webtoon's language is simple for students to comprehend, and therefore stories in Webtoon can be considered for use as reading material. With the light reading, students will not be burdened and they can easily appreciate the stories.

**Stories on LINE Webtoon were relatable.** The participants' experiences revealed that the Webtoon stories were relatable to their own lives. Their emotions were carried away by the story they were reading. Intan responded, "Some of the story is engaging and relatable". In addition, another participant, Aliyah, stated, "If the plot is intriguing, it will increase my interest in reading". This explains how certain LINE Webtoon storylines can affect the reader’s interest.

With LINE Webtoon's wide variety of genres, readers can select stories that trigger their interest. LINE Webtoon can be considered for online reading material that will interest today's students, and it will have a long-term effect on their reading habits due to the engaging stories that are relevant to their lives (Djiwandono, 2018). This is due to the variety of titles and genres available on LINE Webtoon. Additionally, stories that are considered relatable to life can create a feeling of connection. Therefore, students who can relate to the story will be more motivated to read it.

**LINE Webtoon stories created a feeling of impatience and anticipation.** In the previous finding, the participants experienced positive emotions as a result of their interest in the storyline. This increased their impatience and anticipation for the next chapter of their favorite story. This is evident from the participants' responses. Aliyah stated, "I am impatient if I must wait a week for the next chapter". She also stated, "Due to my impatience, I tend to save all the chapters first and then read them in order from beginning to end." Based on Aliyah's responses, we can conclude that it is her habit to read from beginning to end once she can download a completed story. Her response also indicated that she can read for extended periods of time. Afifah, another participant, said, "When I read from LINE Webtoon, I become so excited that I lose track of time." The excitement she felt while reading LINE Webtoon immersed her in the story. In contrast, participant number 4, Mira, stated, "I get excited every week when a new chapter is released. I cannot wait to read it." This indicated that Mira had a habit of regularly reading from LINE Webtoons, as she anticipated every new chapter.

It is evident from the participants' responses that they were interested in reading LINE Webtoon to the point where they eagerly awaited the next chapters. Their excitement made them anticipate the story and desire to read it from LINE Webtoon. Therefore, they became more motivated and interested in reading. This finding is supported by Wulandari et al. (2019), who stated that LINE Webtoon motivated students to learn and practice more, thereby increasing their interest in reading. The students' impatience while awaiting the continuation of the story demonstrated their enthusiasm and interest in reading. This enthusiasm prevents the students from becoming bored while reading in English.

**Certain approaches were used in reading from LINE Webtoon.** In describing their LINE Webtoon reading experiences, a majority of the students said that when they discovered new words, they needed a translation tool like Google Translate or a dictionary to understand the meaning of sentences on LINE Webtoon. Intan stated, "I need two devices, one to read from LINE Webtoon and another to access Google Translate". As for Afifah, she stated, "When I encounter unfamiliar words in LINE Webtoon, I will open a dictionary to check their meaning." She also stated, "Now I try to understand the meaning based on the illustration". Participant 5, Karina, revealed, "I sometimes use Google Translate and occasionally look up the meaning of idioms used there. I still need to use it". Therefore, participants had different approaches when encountering new words.

When participants encountered new and unfamiliar words, their curiosity compelled them to discover their meanings. Typically, they try to guess or use a translation tool and dictionary. This demonstrates how their reading habits were formed. It also affects their enjoyment and comprehension of the storyline on LINE Webtoon. They would search for the meaning using various resources, such as a translation tool or a dictionary. As a result, they acquired new vocabulary or idioms. They would also read extensively. This is in accordance with Siregar (2017), who stated that students gain more knowledge if they have the desire to read continuously and for an extended period of time.

This section focuses on the reading habits of the participants. According to the researchers’ findings, there were differences between when participants had and had not used LINE Webtoon. When using LINE Webtoon, they experienced an increase in the frequency and duration of reading. The following paragraphs will elaborate on the participants' reading habits.

**Reading habits were altered after using LINE Webtoon.** There was a difference between the participants' reading habits before and after using LINE Webtoon. Participants’ reading habits began to change as a result of their use of LINE Webtoon, and this difference was observable. Intan stated, “I am quite lazy to read before getting to know the LINE Webtoon application, but after I downloaded LINE Webtoon, there was a feeling of enthusiasm to read”. Similarly, Rara also shared her experience before using LINE Webtoon. Rara stated, "Before, I used to read printed comic books, but because I had to buy them from the store, I feel lazy to read” (P2.12). Using LINE Webtoon was more flexible than purchasing printed comic books because she could read at any time and from anywhere. The participants’ experiences demonstrated how the LINE Webtoon can alter a person's desire to read.

Students’ reading habits formed when they took an interest in reading through LINE Webtoon. This strengthened the claim by Yanti, who argued that incorporating creative media and technology into the language-learning process was intended to increase students' enthusiasm (as cited in Malik & Asnur, 2019). We can also observe how the flexibility of LINE Webtoon can change a person's reading habits. Comic applications such as LINE Webtoon are becoming increasingly popular due to their ease of use, free availability, and vast selection of genres to read (Putri, 2018). The flexibility of LINE Webtoon made it simple for students to read whenever they desired. The availability of different genres on a single platform made it easier for users to find content that matched their preferences. Therefore, as a result of their increased interest in reading, their reading habits changed and became greater than before. Another positive aspect is that LINE Webtoon provides support for authors or comic creators because it is an official application.

**LINE Webtoon increased the routine and duration of reading.** The researchers of this study also discovered that LINE Webtoons increased the reading routine and duration of some participants. Afifah conveyed, “I read more often since I discovered LINE Webtoon. I read almost every day.” This demonstrated Afifah's increased reading routine. Then, with regard to Mira, she stated, "I felt the duration of my reading increased. I often read LINE Webtoon and discover many new stories that I enjoy, so my reading list has grown and the duration has become longer." This means that the more stories she read, the longer she spent reading. According to the participant's response, the increased frequency and duration of reading formed reading habits.

Reading habits can be determined by the intensity, frequency, regularity, and continuity of reading as well as the amount of required reading material (Liu, 2005, as cited in Dalilan, 2021, p. 6). This concludes that participants’ reading habits were formed due to the increase in routine and duration. An increase in duration and frequency indicated a shift in students' reading habits. Students develop reading habits when they are interested in what they are reading.

The second research question of this study was “How do students of the English Language Department perceive the impact of using LINE Webtoon on their English reading skills?” The findings obtained from the interview data revealed that the LINE Webtoon Application was important for them as they felt their vocabulary increased and their grammar improved. The improvement of their vocabulary and grammar indirectly contributed to the development of their reading skills. The following paragraph describes the findings in more detail.

**Reading from LINE Webtoon expanded vocabularies.** The majority of participants highlighted the importance of building their vocabulary. Intan conveyed, “My vocabulary increased from reading LINE Webtoon.” She also stated, "My reading skills improved, and I can now read faster.". The expanding vocabulary enabled her to comprehend some words she had previously encountered in LINE Webtoons. Another participant, Rara, expresses, "The effect is that I can read the written expressions there."

She began to understand some expressions that she would not usually come across. Participant 5 also shared her LINE Webtoon reading experience. Karina stated, "There are many idioms in LINE Webtoon, so I was able to add my vocabulary." It gave her additional knowledge about idioms. The improved reading skills, particularly in terms of vocabulary, is supported by Cimermanová , who argued that comics are a suitable and effective way to foster imagination and build vocabulary. The improvement in the students' reading habits influenced their increased vocabulary. Students become more active in discovering the meaning of the new words. Moreover, the illustrations in LINE Webtoon make the idioms and expressions simple to understand.

**LINE Webtoon positively influenced grammar.** The researcher discovered that one participant's improvement extended beyond vocabulary. Not only did Afifah's vocabulary expand, but so did her grammar. She stated, "Reading also influences my grammar". Her grammar was influenced by her habit of constant reading. While reading from LINE Webtoon, she discovered a variety of sentences. Afifah also mentioned, "My reading skills developed because my grammar got better. I am not confused while reading, and I can also read faster than before." Therefore, she learned grammar through the various types of sentences she encountered in LINE Webtoon, and the influence of grammar led to the improvement of her reading skills.

Koleini and Hashemian (2021) argued that the use of comics helps readers comprehend grammar because the illustrations and sentences in comics are interconnected, allowing readers to infer the use of grammatical structure from the comics. The development of an understanding of grammar when reading LINE Webtoon occurs because the participant is immersed in reading the story. This is also in line with Sandika and Novita (2021), who claimed the use of digital comics influenced students' ability and understanding of grammar. Therefore, continuous reading helped readers understand grammar, and as a result of the influence of grammar, reading skills also improved.

**CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of students of the English Language Education Department in using the LINE Webtoon application and its impact on their English reading habits and skills. In conducting this research, interview style was used as a data collection method. Six English Language Education Department students from a private university in Yogyakarta participated in the interview.

According to the results of the study, students who read LINE Webtoon exhibited enthusiasm and motivation to read more due to the appealing illustration and relatable story. They were also impatient to wait for the story's continuation and felt rushed to read when their favorite story had been released. Some of the students felt a difference in their reading habits after they read from LINE Webtoon. When utilizing LINE Webtoon, they read more frequently and for longer periods of time.

Another finding from this study was the significance of LINE Webtoon on their English reading skills. The majority of students reported an increase in their vocabulary. In addition to their expanded vocabulary, they also became aware of idioms and expressions they had not encountered before. The researchers discovered that LINE Webtoons influenced their grammar. It was believed that their grammar improved after reading from LINE Webtoons continuously.

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