



EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' INCIDENTAL LEARNING FOR ASSISTING READING SKILLS WITH WEBTOON



NILA KHOIRIYAH
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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education



By :

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
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2026**

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DAN PENGGUNAAN BANTUAN KECERDASAN ARTIFISIAL**

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Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diujikan dalam sidang munaqosah.

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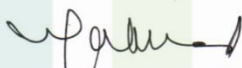
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MOTTO AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MOTTO

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

— *Dr. Seuss*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All sincere gratitude, I thank Allah SWT for His endless mercy, strength, and blessings that guided me throughout the completion of this thesis. Despite the challenges, exhaustion, and moments of self-doubt, I was able to keep moving forward because of His guidance and the support, prayers, and encouragement from many kind-hearted people around me. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who has been part of this meaningful journey.

1. First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved mother, Mrs. Nur Ariyah, whose prayers always accompany every step of my life. Your endless love, patience, sincerity, and sacrifices have become my greatest strength. Thank you for always believing in me, especially when I doubted myself. Your unconditional love has always been the light that guides me through difficult times.
2. Second, I would like to sincerely thank my beloved father, Mr. Tolipin, who has taught me the true meaning of courage, resilience, and perseverance. Thank you for every lesson, sacrifice, and silent support that shaped me into the person I am today.
3. Third, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Mrs. Nadia Faradhillah, M.A., for her guidance, patience, encouragement, and valuable advice throughout the completion of this thesis. Thank you for always motivating me to improve and for guiding me with kindness and understanding. Your support and dedication truly mean a lot to me.

4. Fourth, I would like to thank my beloved siblings, Yulis, Nisa, Shihab, and Zahro, who have always supported their little sibling with endless love, care, and encouragement. You are the reason I continue to grow and become a better person. Thank you for every prayer, laughter, motivation, and warm presence that strengthened me throughout this journey.
5. Fifth, I would like to sincerely thank all participants who contributed to this research. Thank you for your willingness to share your valuable experiences, insights, and time. Your participation and openness greatly helped the completion of this study, and this research would not have been possible without your meaningful contributions.
6. Lastly, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my dear friends, whose names cannot be mentioned one by one but will always remain in my heart. Thank you for all the laughter, memories, support, and togetherness that made this journey lighter and more meaningful. Thank you for always being there during difficult times and for reminding me that I was never alone.

ABSTRACT

Khoiriyah, Nila. 2026. *“Exploring EFL Students’ Incidental Learning For Assisting Reading Skills with Webtoon”*. Undergraduate Thesis. English education department. Faculty of education and teacher training UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid pekalongan. Thesis supervisor: Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

Keywords: *incidental learning, Webtoon, reading skills, EFL students.*

This study explores how EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills and the challenges they experience during the reading process. This research employed a qualitative case study involving five EFL students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and journal reflections, then analyzed thematically using Hulstijn’s (2001) incidental learning framework and Chapelle’s (2001) framework of learning challenges in digital environments. The findings show that participants developed incidental learning through elaboration, rehearsal, and automaticity while reading English Webtoons. Participants used contextual clues, visual elements, and repeated exposure to understand unfamiliar vocabulary, improve comprehension, and read more fluently. However, participants also experienced linguistic challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions, cognitive and affective challenges involving concentration and motivation, as well as pedagogical and technological challenges such as lack of guidance and distractions from advertisements. Overall, Webtoon can support incidental learning and assist EFL students’ reading skills through engaging and contextual reading experiences.

ABSTRAK

Khoiriyah, Nila. 2026. *Exploring EFL Students' Incidental Learning For Assisting Reading Skills with Webtoon". Skripsi.* Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid pekalongan. Pembimbing: Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

Kata Kunci: *incidental learning, Webtoon, keterampilan membaca, siswa EFL.*

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana siswa EFL menggunakan Webtoon sebagai media incidental learning untuk membantu keterampilan membaca bahasa Inggris serta tantangan yang mereka alami selama proses membaca. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kasus kualitatif yang melibatkan lima siswa EFL yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan refleksi jurnal, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kerangka incidental learning dari Hulstijn (2001) dan kerangka tantangan pembelajaran dalam lingkungan digital dari Chapelle (2001). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para partisipan mengembangkan incidental learning melalui elaboration, rehearsal, dan automaticity saat membaca Webtoon berbahasa Inggris. Partisipan menggunakan petunjuk konteks, elemen visual, dan paparan berulang untuk memahami kosakata yang tidak familiar, meningkatkan pemahaman bacaan, serta membaca dengan lebih lancar. Namun, partisipan juga mengalami tantangan linguistik terkait kosakata dan ungkapan yang tidak familiar, tantangan kognitif dan afektif yang melibatkan konsentrasi dan motivasi, serta tantangan pedagogis dan teknologi seperti kurangnya bimbingan dan gangguan dari iklan. Secara keseluruhan, Webtoon dapat mendukung incidental learning dan membantu keterampilan membaca siswa EFL melalui pengalaman membaca yang menarik dan kontekstual.

PREFACE

All praise and sincere gratitude be to Allah SWT for His endless blessings, mercy, and guidance that have enabled me to complete this undergraduate thesis entitled *“Exploring EFL Students’ Incidental Learning for Assisting Reading Skills with Webtoon.”* It is submitted to the English Education Department at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfill one of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education. This thesis study was able to be completed due to a lot of support from several people. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

1. The Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan Prof. Dr. H. Zaenal Mustakim, M.Ag.
2. The Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan Prof. Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag.
3. The Head of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan Mr. Ahmad Burhanuddin, M.A.
4. Mrs. Nadia Faradhillah, M.A. as my supervisor who has provided guidance, support, and time during the writing of this thesis.
5. All lecturers and staff of the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, who have provided knowledge, guidance, and support during my study.
6. My beloved family, especially my mother, who always gives endless prayers, love, support, and encouragement throughout the completion of this thesis.

7. My closest friends, who have always been there to support and encourage me throughout the process of writing this thesis.
8. All parties who have contributed and supported the completion of this thesis in many meaningful ways.
9. As I reach the end of this academic journey, I would like to thank myself for all the hard work, patience, and strength that have brought me to this point.

Pekalongan, June 11, 2026

The writer,

Nila Khoiriyah

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

The lack of interest among students in reading English texts remains one of the problems often found in various English language study programs. Many students do not consider reading to be a voluntary activity, so their interaction with English texts tends to be limited (Duran Bautista & Rendon Marulanda, 2018). When interest in reading is low, students usually read only to fulfill assignment requirements or academic requirements, not because of personal needs or desires. This perspective causes reading to lose its intrinsic meaning, greatly reducing students' opportunities to gain broader exposure to the language (Prinsloo, 2018). In addition, previous learning experiences, coursework load, and academic pressure also shape how students perceive reading (Jackson et al., 2022). Students who have encountered difficulties with reading, or who felt compelled to read in the past, generally carry these attitudes into higher education (Andrianatos, 2019). This condition shows that a lack of interest in reading cannot be viewed as an individual weakness, but rather as a phenomenon that reflects the broader and more complex dynamics of language learning.

Although reading is often associated with formal classroom activities, developments in literacy practices demonstrate that reading skills can also develop significantly outside of formal academic contexts. Reading need not always be tied to learning materials, lecturer instructions, or specific lecture schedules (Pressley et al., 2023). In independent learning, students have the freedom to choose the type of reading material and reading environment that suits their preferences, allowing the reading process to occur more naturally and unstructuredly (Gandari & Jaya, 2024). This situation opens up opportunities for incidental learning, where students acquire language understanding indirectly without explicit learning goals. The development of digital technology has also increasingly expanded opportunities for students to engage in

incidental reading activities in various situations (Frank & Castek, 2017). Through devices such as mobile phones and tablets, students can access digital texts anytime and anywhere, including during their free time. This flexible and ongoing digital reading activity allows for repeated and unintentional language exposure, allowing language understanding to develop incidentally through casual but consistent interactions with texts (Astri et al., 2024).

In the context of independent learning that increasingly utilizes technology, digital media that are close to students' daily lives can be more engaging and appropriate alternative reading material (Pramesworo et al., 2023). One popular medium is Webtoon, a digital comic with a vertical format that is easily accessible via mobile devices. Webtoons offer a different reading experience than conventional texts because they harmoniously combine visual and textual elements (Tacuri, 2023). The presence of images helps readers grasp situations, emotions, and storylines more quickly, allowing for a more intuitive and incidental language comprehension process (Brosch, 2018). The multimodal nature of Webtoon also allows students to utilize visual clues to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions, allowing language learning to occur naturally without direct explanation. Furthermore, the variety of stories offered, such as romance, comedy, and adventure, generally aligns with students' interests, encouraging them to continue reading without feeling overwhelmed (Gingerich & Adler, 2020). With their light, entertaining, and accessible nature, Webtoons have great potential as an out-of-class reading resource that supports incidental learning while providing meaningful linguistic input for language development (Rohmatulhaq, 2024).

Seeing the potential of Webtoons as a source of language input outside the classroom, it is important to understand the skills that we actually want to develop through reading activities. Reading ability is one of the key components for EFL students because it is directly related to their academic development and language skills (Phillips Galloway & Uccelli, 2019). Understanding a text cannot be

separated from mastery of vocabulary (Aprilia, 2019). If students do not master keywords, the flow of thought in the text will be difficult to follow. In addition to vocabulary mastery, a deeper understanding of word meanings and semantic relationships is also necessary for readers to be able to interpret information appropriately (Laufer & Aviad–Levitzky, 2017). Developing reading skills requires repeated exposure to various types of authentic texts, as this exposure helps readers recognize language patterns more naturally (Nation, 2017). The habit of independent reading also plays an important role in building students' fluency and confidence in understanding increasingly complex English texts.

To gain an initial understanding of this phenomenon, the researcher conducted preliminary interviews with five EFL students who regularly read English-language Webtoons. The interviews revealed that the participants voluntarily engaged with English outside the classroom through Webtoon, despite having limited exposure to English in their daily academic activities. They explained that Webtoon was appealing because it provided entertaining stories, visual support, and easy access through mobile devices, making English reading feel less demanding than conventional texts. Although their primary purpose was entertainment rather than language learning, the participants acknowledged encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions that they gradually understood through repeated reading and contextual clues. These preliminary findings indicate that Webtoon may function as a source of authentic English input that facilitates incidental language learning, highlighting the need for further investigation into this phenomenon.

Building on these preliminary findings, as digital literacy plays a growing role in the lives of EFL students, the use of popular media such as Webtoons has become relevant to study as a reading resource that can support the development of reading skills. Asllani and Paçarizi (2021) stated that digital reading has the potential to facilitate incidental vocabulary learning due to its easy access and use in informal contexts. Miclea (2025) also explained that

multimodal digital comics help readers interpret word meaning through visual support, allowing comprehension to occur more naturally and incidentally without direct instruction. While Hernandez (2023) emphasized that webcomics can be a source of authentic and enjoyable input for language learners. However, research specifically examining how the incidental learning process occurs through the use of Webtoon as independent reading for EFL students is still limited, because most previous studies have focused more on perceptions, motivations, or its use as a structured learning medium. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of Webtoon as an authentic input source that supports incidental learning in the context of independent reading for EFL students and is expected to enrich the study of digital literacy-based language learning and incidental learning while providing alternative reading sources that are more contextual, enjoyable, and relevant for students in developing their English reading skills sustainably.

1.2. Identification of The Problem

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, research problems can be identified, including the following:

1. There is a lack of interest in reading English texts among EFL students, resulting in limited language exposure and hindering the development of their reading skills.
2. There is still limited understanding of how incidental learning occurs through digital media such as Webtoon, especially in supporting the development of EFL students' reading skills.

1.3. Limitation of The Problem

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, research problems can be identified, including the following:

1. This study is limited to exploring incidental learning through Webtoon as a medium for developing reading skills among EFL students and does not examine other language skills such as speaking, writing, or listening, nor compare Webtoon with other digital learning media.
2. This study focuses only on a small group of EFL students in one university in Pekalongan who use Webtoon for independent

reading, so the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized to all EFL learners or different educational settings.

1.4. Formulation of The Problem

Based on the background that has been explained, this research is designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills?
2. What are the challenges faced by the EFL students in using Webtoon for Incidental learning in reading?

1.5. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding various terms in this study, the researcher provides several definitions related to research as follows:

1. EFL Student : Students who study English as a foreign language in an environment where English is not the primary language (Desselle & Shane, 2019).
2. Incidental Learning : The process of language acquisition that occurs unintentionally through natural engagement with English-language materials, without any explicit goal of learning (Singer, 2022).
3. Reading skills : Refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate written texts in English according to context (Sari et al., 2024).
4. Webtoon : Digital comics based on visual stories that are accessed through online platforms and used as entertainment and interesting learning media for students (Khotimah et al., 2022).

1.6. Aims of The Research

According to the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to find out :

1. To explore how EFL students experience the incidental learning process in developing their English reading skills through Webtoon.
2. To identify the challenges faced by EFL students during the incidental learning process through Webtoon in developing their reading skills.

1.7. Significance of The Research

1. Theoretical : This research contributes to the development of theories by Hulstijn (2001) about incidental learning in the context of learning to read English through visual-based digital media such as Webtoon.
2. Practical : This research provides benefits for educators as a reference in utilizing Webtoon to create more interesting and natural reading learning for EFL students.
3. Empirical : This research forms the basis for further studies on the application of digital media in facilitating the incidental learning process in English language learning.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. The concept of Incidental Learning

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, incidental learning is an important concept that explains how learners can acquire language knowledge indirectly. The term incidental learning refers to the process of acquiring knowledge that occurs as a byproduct of primary learning activities, rather than from deliberate learning efforts (Hulstijn, 2001). In other words, students do not explicitly intend to memorize or learn specific language elements, but they still acquire vocabulary, structures, or language skills through engaging in meaningful activities such as reading, listening, or interacting (He, 2023). In the context of language learning, incidental learning is often contrasted with intentional learning, in which learners consciously focus their attention on a specific learning task, such as memorizing a vocabulary list (Lu, 2021). Although not always consciously recognized by learners, research shows that incidental learning plays a significant role in expanding vocabulary acquisition and improving reading skills naturally through repeated exposure to the target language (Sok & Han, 2020). Therefore, understanding how incidental learning occurs is an important foundation for designing contextual and communicative learning activities, including in new media such as Webtoons that offer multimodal and authentic texts (Singer, 2022).

One theory explaining the cognitive mechanisms of incidental learning was proposed by Hulstijn (2001). He emphasized that the difference between incidental and intentional learning lies not solely in the presence or absence of intention to learn, but rather in the quality and intensity of information processing that occurs when learners interact

with language input. In his framework, Hulstijn highlights three cognitive aspects that play a crucial role in the language acquisition process: elaboration, rehearsal, and automaticity. These three describe interrelated mental stages in the process of storing and using language information. Through these three components, incidental learning is understood as a gradual process involving in-depth processing of meaning, strengthening memory through repetition, and ultimately achieving more automatic language use (Bakhtiyarzadeh et al., 2024). Thus, this theoretical framework provides a basis for examining how EFL learners can unconsciously acquire language knowledge through engaging and meaningful reading activities, such as reading Webtoons.

The first aspect described by Hulstijn (2001) in the incidental learning process is elaboration, which is the depth of information processing when learners first interact with new words or language forms. This concept is rooted in the depth of processing theory proposed by Craik & Lockhart, (1972), as cited in McLeod, (2023), which states that the more deeply information is semantically processed, the more firmly it is stored in long-term memory. In the context of language learning, elaboration occurs when learners not only pay attention to word form but also relate it to meaning, context, and personal experiences (Elgort et al., 2018). This process requires high cognitive engagement because learners must build new connections between unfamiliar words and existing knowledge (Biseko, 2025). In reading Webtoons, elaboration can occur naturally because the text is presented alongside visual elements, character expressions, and story context that reinforce the meaning of the words (Rizky, 2014). Thus, the relationship between text and images helps readers interpret new vocabulary more deeply without having to consciously memorize it. This rich meaning-processing process is what makes elaboration a crucial foundation for incidental learning in EFL readers (Farias & D'Ely, 2020).

The second aspect that plays a role in incidental learning according to Hulstijn (2001) is rehearsal, namely the process of repeating or repeatedly exposing language information to strengthen its storage in long-term memory. This concept is similar to that proposed by Ward (2020), who distinguishes between maintenance rehearsal, which is simple repetition to keep information active in working memory, and elaborative rehearsal, which is repetition that involves deeper connections between meaning and context. In language learning, rehearsal occurs when learners are unconsciously exposed repeatedly to the same vocabulary or structures in various contexts, thereby increasing the likelihood of the information being permanently remembered (Aubrey & Philpott, 2025). In the context of reading Webtoons, exposure to words and phrases that appear repeatedly in various episodes acts as a form of natural rehearsal (Mubarrok, 2023). For example, everyday expressions, emotional terms, or words used by the main character often reappear in different situations. This repetitive pattern allows readers to strengthen vocabulary understanding without explicit memorization efforts, so that the learning process takes place incidentally but effectively (Nation, 2017). Thus, rehearsal becomes an important mechanism that connects initial processing (elaboration) and the formation of automatic language habits (automaticity) (Schmid, 2017).

The third aspect is automaticity, which is the ability to access and use language information quickly, efficiently, and without excessive conscious effort after going through a process of repeated learning and reinforcement (Shahini, 2025). Hulstijn (2001) explains automaticity as the stage where language knowledge acquired through elaboration and rehearsal becomes automatic, allowing learners to process text and vocabulary without significant cognitive barriers. In the context of incidental learning, automaticity enables second language learners to understand and use vocabulary

and language structures fluently without the need for intense conscious focus (Suzuki, 2023). When reading Webtoons, EFL students can develop automaticity naturally because they are frequently exposed to repetitive language in interesting and multimodal contexts, so this repeated reading helps internalize the language learned unconsciously (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021; Fauziah & Nasrullah, 2023). Therefore, Webtoons not only attract attention but are also effective in triggering the automation of incidental language learning processes, making them a potential medium to support the efficient improvement of English reading skills (Angelica & Katemba, 2023).

2.1.2. Reading Skills in English Learning

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading skills are one of the basic competencies essential for successful language learning (Delfi & Yamat, 2017). Reading not only serves as the primary means of acquiring information but also serves as the foundation for the development of other language skills, such as writing, speaking, and listening (Ali, 2022). In countries where English is not actively used in daily life, reading serves as the primary entry point for learners to understand the structure, comprehension, and cultural context of the target language (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Furthermore, in an EFL environment, reading skills are crucial for academic purposes, as most learning materials are presented in text form. Therefore, effective reading skills are a crucial prerequisite for independent and continuous learning (Wijaya, 2021). In practice, English reading skills encompass several complementary components: skimming and scanning, reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and inference skills (Fauzi, 2018). All these components must be developed in an integrated manner so that readers can comprehend texts effectively and efficiently, while

strengthening their ability to use the language comprehensively.

According to Aritonang et al. (2018), skimming is a fast reading technique aimed at capturing the main idea or overview of a text without reading in detail. This technique allows readers to gain a global understanding of the text efficiently, especially when time is limited. In contrast, scanning is a reading method used to find specific information or details such as numbers, names, or keywords in a text without having to read the entire text in depth (Abidin, 2020). Fauzi (2018) also emphasized that these two techniques are important in reading because they help readers adjust their reading style based on their goals, increasing reading speed and effectiveness in various contexts. In English language learning, skimming and scanning skills are very useful for improving reading abilities for different purposes, making them essential for the development of EFL students' reading skills (Putra et al., 2025).

The second component is reading comprehension, a crucial aspect of mastering reading skills, involving the process of understanding, interpreting, and critiquing the content of the text being read (Roomy, 2022). This process involves more than simply grasping word-for-word meaning, but also integrating prior knowledge with new information gained from the text, resulting in a comprehensive and contextual understanding (Asnawi et al., 2025). Strategies such as summarizing, identifying main ideas, and reflective questioning are used to deepen understanding and improve reading analysis skills (Oczkus, 2018). Building background knowledge and using visual aids are also important in facilitating comprehension, especially for foreign language learners who need to connect new language to broader contexts for more effective learning (Patesan et al., 2018). Thus, reading comprehension is an essential foundation for successful language learning, including in the EFL context.

Vocabulary mastery is the third component, one of the fundamental aspects that determines success in learning to read in English as a foreign language (EFL) (Andriani & Sriwahyuningsih, 2019). According to Achmad & Sujarwo (2022), a high level of vocabulary mastery will have a positive impact on students' ability to understand reading texts comprehensively, because vocabulary is the basic foundation in the process of decoding and understanding meaning. In the context of EFL learning, vocabulary development is not only carried out through traditional approaches such as memorization, but also with contextual methods that connect words to real situations and everyday language us (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Effective strategies in vocabulary mastery include the use of context-rich media, the application of repetition techniques in meaningful contexts, and the integration of vocabulary learning with other reading skills (Haque et al., 2024). Thus, vocabulary mastery is key to improving optimal reading skills for EFL students, as implemented in this study through the use of Webtoon as a learning medium that provides authentic visual and linguistic contexts (Ruqoyyah, 2025).

Finally, inferential skills are the reader's ability to draw conclusions or implicit meanings from texts that are not explicitly stated (Kamagi, 2020). According to Rojabi (2020), this skill is crucial in reading because it helps readers understand context, connect information, and develop deeper interpretations of text content (Soto et al., 2019). In learning English as a foreign language (EFL), developing inferential skills enables students not only to recognize words and sentences but also to understand nuances, the author's purpose, and the implicit meanings contained in the text (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021). Students can develop inferential skills through activities such as answering open ended questions, discussing texts, and engaging in critical thinking exercises that encourage them to make predictions and

connect information more broadly (Alghonaim, 2020). Therefore, mastery of inferential skills is an essential aspect that supports comprehensive reading comprehension, as targeted in this study.

2.1.3. Webtoon as a medium for independent learning

Webtoon is a digital comic format originating from South Korea, specifically designed for online consumption through devices such as smartphones or computers (Jeong, 2020). Originally developed as an adaptation of printed comics (manhwa) for an online portal platform, Webtoon then utilized a vertically scrolling format and colorful visual elements to attract young users globally (Lustrissimi, 2025). In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), Webtoon's multimodal characteristics, which integrate text and images in a contextual, interactive, and easily accessible narrative, demonstrate great potential as a medium for independent learning (Lestari et al., 2025). With a user-friendly interface and storylines relevant to learners' interests, Webtoon can increase reading motivation and support voluntary and scheduled literacy practices at any time (Padma et al., 2025). As a medium that facilitates enjoyable and meaningful reading experiences, Webtoon is worth considering within the framework of incidental learning, namely indirect learning that occurs when students engage in reading activities that are not explicitly aimed at language learning but result in natural language acquisition (Lestari et al., 2025).

Webtoons, with their accessible nature and continuous narrative, provide a space for independent learning for EFL learners (Rizky, 2024). Without explicit learning objectives, learners can explore the stories at their own pace and interest, enjoying the narrative flow, and being naturally exposed to authentic vocabulary, expressions, and language structures. Research by Amalia & Hidayat (2022) shows that entertainment-based digital media like Webtoons can foster

learner autonomy and encourage learners to stay engaged in language learning without formal pressure. Furthermore, Dar et al. (2023) asserted that the integration of text and visuals in Webtoons increases emotional engagement and reading interest, indirectly broadening readers' linguistic exposure. Meanwhile, Ruqoyyah (2025) found that using Webtoons in a language learning context helps EFL learners enrich their vocabulary and increase their motivation to read incidentally. Thus, Webtoons serve not only as a means of digital entertainment but also as an effective medium for independent language learning, where learners acquire new language input through enjoyable and meaningful reading experiences (Kim, 2023).

One of Webtoons' main strengths as a language learning medium lies in its multimodal nature, namely the combination of text, images, color, expression, and visual arrangements that complement each other in conveying meaning (Rahmadani, 2024). This combination allows EFL learners to understand the text's content not only through words but also through visual support that reinforces the context and emotion within the story. According to Mayer (2009) in his Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, presenting information through two processing channels, verbal and visual, can improve retention and comprehension because it helps readers build mental connections between text and images. Similarly, Dar et al. (2023) found that language learning through multimodal media such as Webtoons strengthens semantic processing and accelerates reading comprehension, as learners can rely on visual clues to interpret new meanings contextually. Meanwhile, a study by Rahmadani (2024) showed that the contextual and repetitive format of Webtoons provides opportunities for learners to recognize linguistic patterns and implicit meanings without explicit awareness, which strengthens incidental learning. Therefore, Webtoon's multimodality is

not only an aesthetic aspect, but also an effective pedagogical mechanism to deepen language understanding through immersive and meaningful reading experiences(Dar et al., 2023).

Webtoons as a reading medium have unique and complex characteristics: they are multimodal, contextual, and repetitive, thus offering significant potential for facilitating incidental learning (Dar et al., 2023). The rich combination of text and images in Webtoons allows for natural selective attention, which in turn encourages readers' cognitive engagement through the processes of elaboration, rehearsal, and automaticity, concepts systematically outlined in Hulstijn's (2001) theoretical framework. In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), readers can experience elaboration when they connect information from visual representations with written text, engage in rehearsal when following a recurring serial storyline, and achieve automaticity when their ability to recognize language structures and vocabulary develops without conscious awareness (He, 2023). Thus, Webtoons function not merely as entertainment media but also as effective incidental language learning tools. This theoretical framework provides a strong analytical basis for assessing how EFL students acquire incidental learning through enjoyable and meaningful interactions with Webtoons, while also highlighting their pedagogical implications for the development of multimodal literacy and language skills (Rahmadani, 2024; Hulstijn, 2001).

In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), Webtoons offer significant pedagogical potential as a medium that supports natural incidental learning (Mekki & Daikh, 2022). When learners read Webtoons for entertainment purposes, they unwittingly gain exposure to authentic language in the form of new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and recurring sentence patterns (Kim, 2023).

This process reflects unintentional language learning, where linguistic input is acquired through meaningful and enjoyable reading activities. Hulstijn (2001) asserts that incidental learning occurs when learners focus on the content of the message, rather than the language form itself, but still experience linguistic acquisition through repeated exposure. In a digital context, Ruqoyyah (2025) found that narrative-based media such as Webtoons expand learners' opportunities to absorb the target language through emotional engagement and rich visual contexts. Furthermore, Rizky (2024) underscores that the use of Webtoons in EFL learning increases motivation and natural exposure to English, making it an effective means for developing independent reading skills. Thus, Webtoon can be seen not only as a product of popular culture, but also as an innovative learning medium that bridges entertainment and education, enabling students to acquire linguistic knowledge incidentally and continuously (Dar et al., 2023).

2.1.4. Challenges of incidental learning using webtoon

In recent years, Webtoons have evolved from mere entertainment media into a potential tool for language learning, particularly in encouraging incidental learning (Ruqoyyah, 2025). However, this unintentional language acquisition process does not always occur optimally, as its application in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) faces various conceptual and practical challenges (Kim, 2023). In digital media-based learning, the multimodal interactions offered by Webtoons do not automatically result in effective language acquisition, as learning success is strongly influenced by linguistic, cognitive, affective factors, and the pedagogical context. Chapelle (2001), using an evaluative model in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), classifies challenges in technology-based language learning into three main dimensions: linguistic challenges, cognitive and affective

challenges, and pedagogical and technological challenges. This framework provides a conceptual basis for understanding the sources of obstacles that may hinder the effectiveness of incidental learning through digital media. Contemporary research also strengthens the relevance of this model, such as Rizky (2024) who noted the linguistic complexity of Webtoons that often hinders EFL learners' comprehension, and Ruqoyyah (2025) who highlighted the pedagogical and technological limitations in implementing Webtoons as a language learning medium. Thus, the three-dimensional model proposed by Chapelle (2001), strengthened by these recent findings, serves as a conceptual foundation for analyzing the various challenges faced by EFL learners in acquiring language knowledge incidentally through Webtoons.

One of the main challenges in implementing Webtoons as an incidental learning medium is the linguistic challenge related to the complexity of the language contained within them. According to the framework proposed by Chapelle (2001), the linguistic aspect encompasses the extent to which language input obtained by learners through digital media can be understood and processed to support second language acquisition. In the context of Webtoons, this challenge arises because the language is highly contextual, informal, and often contains idiomatic elements, slang, or dialectal variations not commonly found in conventional EFL teaching materials (Hernandez, 2023). This condition can create a gap between the comprehensibility of input and learners' linguistic abilities, thus limiting the process of noticing language forms. Ounissi et al. (2025) points out that while Webtoons can increase EFL learners' reading interest and motivation, their high linguistic complexity often hinders comprehensive comprehension, especially for learners at lower-intermediate proficiency levels. Furthermore, the reliance on visual context sometimes leads readers to rely on

images to understand the story rather than processing the text, thus reducing the potential for incidental language acquisition (Jajdelska et al., 2019). Therefore, the linguistic challenges in using Webtoons relate not only to the difficulty of understanding diverse language forms but also to the limitations in processing linguistic input in-depth to support effective language acquisition (Dar et al., 2023).

In addition to linguistic challenges, incidental learning through Webtoons also faces interrelated cognitive and affective barriers. According to Chapelle (2001), cognitive challenges arise when learners struggle to process complex language input, while affective challenges relate to motivation and attention to learning. In the context of Webtoons, multimodal formats that combine text and visuals often lead to cognitive overload, as learners must divide their attention between understanding the story content and processing the language (Dar et al., 2023). As a result, focus on the linguistic form is limited, resulting in suboptimal noticing and elaboration processes (De-Vos et al., 2019). On the other hand, affective factors such as motivation and interest do increase, but if not balanced with proper cognitive management, learners can experience distraction or mental fatigue (Leep & Tark, 2022). Thus, a balance between emotional engagement and cognitive capacity is key to ensuring Webtoons truly function as an effective medium for incidental learning (Dar et al., 2023).

Despite its potential as a source of enjoyable, extensive reading and incidental language input outside the classroom, pedagogical and technological aspects present distinct challenges in shaping incidental learning experiences through Webtoons. According to Chapelle (2001), the pedagogical dimension encompasses the extent to which technology can support meaningful language learning for learners. In this context, challenges arise when students use Webtoons without clear learning directions or strategies that help them

recognize the form and meaning of the language they encounter (Dar et al., 2023). Arndt (2019) emphasized that without a learning structure that fosters linguistic awareness, students tend to passively enjoy content and miss opportunities for incidental learning. From a technological perspective, limited access, devices, and the ability to utilize digital features can reduce student engagement with language input (Handayani, 2024). When these two aspects are not properly facilitated, Webtoons' potential as an incidental learning tool is less than optimal, as students focus more on entertainment than on the natural process of language acquisition (Harrison, 2025).

2.2. Previous Study

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of digital media in supporting incidental English language learning, primarily due to its ability to provide authentic contexts, repeated exposure, and emotional and cognitive engagement that encourage incidental language acquisition. One such study was conducted by Putra (2024) in his thesis entitled *Harvest Moon: A Study of Middle School Students' Incidental Vocabulary Learning Processes Through Video Games*. This study examined how the *Harvest Moon* game helps middle school students learn subjects incidentally through gaming experiences. Using a qualitative approach and a case study design, the results showed that the narrative context in the game and repeated language exposure enable students to acquire new understanding without explicit learning. This process occurs due to emotional and cognitive engagement during the game, which strengthens memory and comprehension. However, this study focused on interactive, task-based digital games, so it did not examine the incidental learning process in narrative and multimodal reading contexts such as Webtoons.

Furthermore, research by Sudani and Erliana (2017) entitled *Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition Through Reading Online*

Newspapers also highlighted the role of digital media in incidental vocabulary acquisition. Through a quasi-experimental method on third semester students at IAIN Palangka Raya, the results of the study showed a significant increase in vocabulary mastery after participants read online news texts in English. In addition, students showed a positive attitude towards incidental vocabulary learning because they felt that online media provided a real context and an interesting reading experience. However, this study still focused on a single text-based media (online newspapers) and only measured learning outcomes quantitatively, so it did not describe in depth the cognitive and affective dynamics of learners when experiencing incidental learning in a multimodal context such as Webtoon.

Another study by Aka (2020), titled "Incidental Learning of a Grammatical Feature from Reading by Japanese Learners of English as a Foreign Language," examined the incidental acquisition of grammatical features through reading activities. Involving 157 Japanese high school students, the results showed that participants who received more frequent exposure to the to-infinitive structure as a noun were more likely to be able to recognize and understand this grammatical pattern without explicit instruction. This finding suggests that incidental learning can occur through repeated and meaningful reading. However, this study's focus was limited to grammatical aspects and did not examine how incidental learning can support overall reading skills, especially in the context of more visual and narrative media such as Webtoons.

Meanwhile, Ramos (2022) in his study entitled *Webtoon: A Phenomenological Study on Reading Preferences Among Senior High Students in Quirino National High School* explored the experiences of high school students in the Philippines in using Webtoon as reading material. Using a phenomenological approach and direct interviews, this study found that ESL students chose Webtoon because of its easy availability, popular trends, and ease of use through digital devices. Students felt

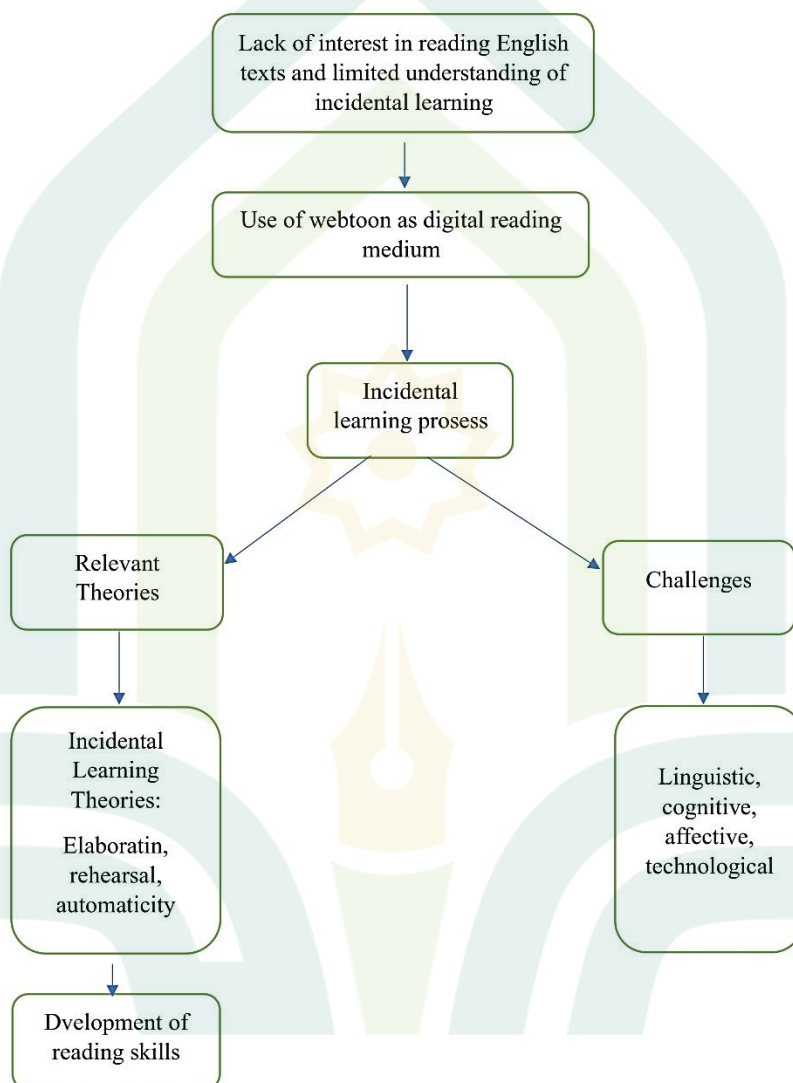
entertained and able to utilize their free time productively by reading Webtoon. In addition, they also reported an increase in vocabulary and understanding of the culture and traditions depicted in the stories. However, this study still focused on general reading preferences and experiences, without examining more deeply the incidental learning process or readers' strategies in acquiring reading skills through interactions with Webtoon.

Furthermore, a study by Tacuri (2023) entitled *The Impact of “Webtoon” as a Digital Reading Tool for EFL High School Students* examined the use of Webtoon as a digital reading tool in high schools in Ecuador. This study used a qualitative approach through three cycles of action research involving reading activities, pop quizzes, and online surveys. The results showed that students responded positively to the use of Webtoon because of its engaging illustrations and storylines, as well as vocabulary that helped them understand the content of the reading. Students also reported increased motivation to read in English because Webtoon was considered a fun medium and suited to the learning styles of Generation Z. However, this study was conducted in a formal classroom context and still focused on perceptions and learning outcomes, rather than on how incidental learning processes occur naturally when students use Webtoon independently outside of class.

Based on the five previous studies: Putra, Sudani & Erliana, Aka, Ramos, Tacuri, it can be concluded that various forms of digital media, including games, online texts, and visual platforms like Webtoons, have great potential in supporting incidental English learning. These media provide authentic, contextual, and repeated language exposure, enabling language acquisition without explicit instruction. However, most previous studies have focused on learning outcomes, perceptions, or motivation, rather than on how the incidental learning process itself occurs naturally when students interact with multimodal media like Webtoons. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by qualitatively exploring EFL students' experiences in the

incidental learning process through Webtoons, in order to understand the cognitive, affective, and linguistic dynamics that emerge during their engagement in meaningful and enjoyable reading activities.

2.3. Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework begins with the identification of key problems faced by EFL students, namely the lack of interest in reading English texts and the limited understanding of how incidental learning occurs in language learning contexts. These issues lead to limited exposure to English, which consequently affects the development of students' reading skills.

To address these problems, this study focuses on the use of Webtoon as a digital reading medium. Webtoon is considered a relevant and engaging platform that allows students to read English texts in a more enjoyable and flexible way. Through this medium, students are exposed to authentic language input in a natural and informal context, which supports independent learning.

The framework then highlights the incidental learning process that occurs when students engage with Webtoon. In this process, students acquire language knowledge unintentionally while focusing on understanding the story. This process is supported by Hulstijn's (2001) theory, which explains incidental learning through three main cognitive mechanisms: elaboration, rehearsal, and automaticity. Elaboration occurs when students connect new vocabulary with context and visual elements, rehearsal takes place through repeated exposure to language across episodes, and automaticity develops as students become more fluent in understanding the language without conscious effort.

Through this incidental learning process, students' reading skills are expected to develop, particularly in terms of vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and inferential skills. Continuous exposure to meaningful and multimodal texts in Webtoon enables students to understand language patterns more naturally and effectively.

However, the framework also acknowledges several challenges that may arise during the process. These challenges include linguistic difficulties such as complex vocabulary and informal expressions, cognitive challenges related to processing multimodal information, affective factors such as motivation and attention, and technological limitations. These challenges may influence how effectively incidental learning occurs and how well students develop their reading skills.

Finally, this conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the initial problems, the use of Webtoon as a learning medium, the incidental learning process supported by relevant theories, and the development of reading skills, while also considering the challenges that may affect the overall learning process.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to investigate how EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills and to explore the challenges they face during the reading process. Qualitative research is used to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections in a natural context through detailed and descriptive data (Creswell, 2018). A case study design focuses on an in-depth investigation of a particular group, phenomenon, or context in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue being studied (Creswell, 2018). This design is appropriate because the research specifically examines the experiences of a small group of EFL students at one university in Pekalongan in using English Webtoon for independent reading activities.

3.2. Research Focus

This study focuses on exploring how EFL students engage in incidental learning through the use of Webtoon as a digital reading medium. The research seeks to understand how students experience incidental exposure to English while reading Webtoon, how this exposure contributes to the development of their reading skills, and what challenges they encounter during the process. In line with the exploratory nature of qualitative research, this study aims to uncover the processes underlying incidental learning rather than to test hypotheses or produce generalizable results (Kumar, 2019). By examining students' learning experiences in an authentic independent reading context, this study highlights the role of Webtoon as a multimodal digital medium that bridges entertainment and language learning, supporting natural language acquisition and the development of reading skills among EFL students.

3.3. Data and Data Sources

Based on the research design used, the data collected and analyzed in this study are qualitative in nature. The data were

obtained from the experiences and reflections of EFL students at one university in Pekalongan in reading English Webtoon as a form of incidental learning for assisting reading skills. The data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews and reflective journals written by the students after reading English Webtoon. The interviews were conducted to explore the students' experiences, perceptions, reading habits, and challenges in using Webtoon to support their English reading skills, while the reflective journals served as written evidence to identify students' learning experiences, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and difficulties encountered during the reading process.

This research was conducted at one university in Pekalongan. The participants of this study consisted of five EFL students who actively read English Webtoon in their daily activities. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience in reading English Webtoon and their willingness to participate in the study. These students were considered to have sufficient exposure to English Webtoon reading activities, enabling them to provide meaningful and reflective insights into their incidental learning experiences in reading. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. The researcher ensured that all participants' personal information and responses were treated with complete confidentiality throughout the research process.

3.4. Data Collection

Two primary methods were employed to collect data for this study: semi-structured interviews and self-reflection journals. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a flexible yet focused exploration of participants' experiences in using Webtoon as a medium for incidental learning in developing their English reading skills. This method enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insights into how students interact with Webtoon, how they incidentally acquire vocabulary and meaning, and what challenges they encounter during the reading process. At the same time, it maintained a consistent structure across participants to ensure the relevance of the data

collected (Creswell, 2013). According to Kallio et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for qualitative research that aims to explore complex learning processes, as they provide opportunities for participants to express their perspectives in their own words while still guiding the discussion within the research focus.

In addition to interviews, self-reflection journals were used as a complementary data source to capture students' ongoing experiences during their independent reading of Webtoon. These journals encouraged participants to document their natural engagement with the text, including the vocabulary they noticed, their understanding of the story, and their reflections on how incidental learning occurred. Through this method, the researcher was able to observe the learning process as it unfolded over time in an authentic and informal context outside the classroom. Reflection journals are considered effective in revealing learners' internal processes and promoting deeper awareness of their learning experiences (Moon, 2006). Furthermore, as stated by Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985), reflective writing supports learners in analyzing their own learning, making it a valuable tool for examining incidental learning processes.

3.5. Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed several strategies based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, namely credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Credibility was established through data triangulation by combining two different data sources: semi-structured interviews and self-reflection journals. This approach enabled the researcher to compare and confirm the consistency of participants' experiences in using Webtoon for incidental learning in reading. By examining both spoken responses and written reflections, the researcher obtained a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the phenomenon.

Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear and systematic research procedure. The researcher carefully documented

all stages of the research process, including the development of interview guidelines, the use of reflection journals, and the steps of data analysis. This transparency allows the research process to be understood and followed clearly.

Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, including the setting, participants, and their experiences in using Webtoon as a reading medium. These descriptions enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts in EFL learning.

To minimize researcher bias, the findings were supported by data obtained directly from participants, including their statements in interviews and reflections in journals. This ensures that the analysis remains grounded in participants' actual experiences.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012). Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data related to EFL students' incidental learning experiences through Webtoon in developing their reading skills. This method is appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in a systematic yet flexible manner.

This study adopted the six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012), namely: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. These stages are also in line with the data analysis procedures stated in the research proposal.

1. Familiarizing with the data

The researcher read the interview transcripts and self-reflection journals repeatedly and listened to the interview recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This process aimed to capture the overall meaning of participants' experiences in using Webtoon as a medium for

incidental learning and to identify significant insights related to reading skills development.

2. Generating initial codes

After becoming familiar with the data, the researcher identified and highlighted relevant data segments. Initial codes were generated to represent meaningful aspects of the data, such as incidental vocabulary acquisition, meaning-making processes, reading strategies, and challenges encountered during Webtoon reading activities.

3. Searching for themes

The initial codes were then grouped based on recurring patterns to identify potential themes that aligned with the research objectives. These themes included patterns of incidental learning, students' interaction with Webtoon texts, and challenges faced during the reading process.

4. Reviewing themes

At this stage, the researcher reviewed and refined the identified themes to ensure their relevance and consistency with the data. Themes that overlapped were merged, while unclear themes were revised to create a coherent and meaningful structure.

5. Defining and naming themes

Each theme was clearly defined and named to represent the core findings of the study. The themes were designed to reflect the essence of students' incidental learning experiences and how these experiences contributed to the development of their English reading skills.

6. Producing the report

Finally, the researcher produced a comprehensive report by presenting the findings in a thematic narrative. The report was supported by direct quotations from interviews and self-reflection journals to provide an authentic and in-depth understanding of how incidental learning occurs through Webtoon and how it influences students' reading skills.

7.

3.7. Research Step

- a. Identifying and developing a list of questions for semi-structured interviews related to students' experiences in using Webtoon as a medium for incidental learning in developing English reading skills.
- b. Preparing guidelines for students' self-reflection journals, including instructions, examples, and aspects to be observed such as vocabulary noticing, comprehension process, and reading experiences.
- c. Selecting and recruit participants purposively based on their experience in using Webtoon for independent English reading.
- d. Conducting semi-structured interviews with participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in using Webtoon.
- e. Instructing participants to write self-reflection journals during their engagement with Webtoon reading activities over a certain period.
- f. Recording the interview sessions to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.
- g. Transcribing the recorded interviews into written form for further analysis.
- h. Collecting and organizing the self-reflection journals from participants as supporting data.
- i. Conducting thematic analysis on interview transcripts to identify patterns and themes related to incidental learning and reading skills development.
- j. Analyzing the self-reflection journals qualitatively to gain insights into students' natural learning processes, vocabulary acquisition, and challenges encountered.
- k. Applying data triangulation by comparing findings from interviews and self-reflection journals to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the data.
- l. Integrating and interpreting the findings from both data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of incidental learning through Webtoon.

- m. Writing the research report, including findings, discussion, and implications for EFL reading development.
- n. Reviewing and evaluating the overall research process, including data collection and analysis procedures, to ensure consistency and validity.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Findings

This chapter presents the findings generated from the thematic analysis of interview and journal reflection data collected from five EFL students who regularly read English-language Webtoons. The findings are organized into themes that reflect the incidental learning processes experienced by the participants while reading Webtoons and their contribution to the development of reading skills.

4.1.1. Incidental Learning through Webtoon in Assisting Reading Skills

This section presents the findings related to incidental learning experienced by the participants while reading English-language Webtoons. The analysis demonstrates that participants developed their reading skills through a series of incidental learning processes that occurred naturally during reading. These processes are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.1.1.1. Elaboration

The elaboration stage refers to participants' ability to construct meaning by linking unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions to contextual elements such as situations, character interactions, and visual cues within the story. In this study, participants did not rely on direct translation; instead, they actively inferred meaning by using contextual information available in the narrative.

Across both journal reflections and interview data, it was found that participants consistently used context as the main strategy to understand unfamiliar words. They connected new vocabulary with the storyline, character

roles, and situational dynamics, allowing them to grasp meaning without translating word by word.

Harry, for example, described how he relied on the flow of the story to understand unfamiliar vocabulary:

"Hari ini aku baca Webtoon The Male Lead is Obsessed with My Health chapter 1. Ada beberapa kosakata yang belum pernah aku temui. Walaupun belum terlalu familiar, aku masih bisa nangkep maknanya karena ngikutin alur ceritanya. Jadi waktu nemu kata baru, aku bisa langsung mengaitkan dengan situasi dan peran karakter di cerita tanpa harus langsung cari arti di kamus. Dari situ maknanya tetap bisa dipahami."(Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026)

" Today, I read Chapter 1 of the Webtoon *The Male Lead Is Obsessed with My Health*. I came across several vocabulary words that I had never encountered before. Even though I'm not yet fully familiar with the language, I can still grasp the meaning by following the storyline. When I encounter a new word, I can immediately connect it to the situation and the character's role without having to look it up in a dictionary right away. That way, I can still understand the overall meaning." (Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Ron showed that understanding could be achieved through situational and action-based cues:

“Walaupun ada beberapa dialog yang nggak langsung aku ngerti, aku tetap bisa nangkep maksudnya dari gerakan dan situasi yang ditampilkan. Jadi nggak harus tahu arti tiap kata untuk ngerti apa yang sedang terjadi.” (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026)

"Even though there are some dialogues I don't understand right away, I can still get the point from the actions and the situation shown. So, I don't have to know the meaning of every single word to understand what's happening." (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition to situational context, visual elements also played an important role in supporting meaning-making. Hermione explained how character expressions helped her infer meaning:

“Grafis atau ekspresi karakter itu kan biasanya memberi gambaran tentang situasi dalam cerita. Nah, dari situ saya bisa menebak perkiraan makna dari kata yang muncul, karena biasanya kata tersebut berkaitan dengan kondisi atau emosi karakter di adegan itu.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"The graphics and character expressions usually provide a clear picture of the situation in the story. From there, I can guess the approximate meaning of the

words that appear, as they usually relate to the character's condition or emotions in that specific scene." (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This process became more comprehensive when participants integrated multiple contextual cues simultaneously. Luna described how she combined context, expression, and situation to understand unfamiliar vocabulary:

"Kadang ada kosakata atau slang yang aku nggak langsung ngerti, tapi aku coba pahami dulu dari konteks cerita, ekspresi karakter, dan situasi yang terjadi. Beberapa kali aku bisa menebak arti kata tersebut tanpa harus langsung buka kamus. Jadi aku lebih mengandalkan konteks untuk memahami arti." (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

"Sometimes there's vocabulary or slang that I don't catch right away, but I try to understand it first through the context, the character's expressions, and the situation. Often, I can guess the meaning without having to open a dictionary. I prefer relying on the context to understand what things mean." (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Then, Ginny highlighted a more strategic and conscious approach, where context was prioritized before using translation tools:

“Biasanya kalau saya menemukan kata atau kalimat baru, saya tidak langsung translate. Saya coba dulu memahami dari konteks cerita, seperti situasi, percakapan, dan ekspresi karakter. Kalau masih penasaran atau benar-benar tidak paham, baru saya buka translate.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"Usually, when I come across a new word or sentence, I don't translate it right away. I first try to understand it through the context, such as the situation, the dialogue, and the characters' expressions. If I'm still curious or truly don't understand, only then do I use a translator." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition to relying on contextual and visual cues, several participants also demonstrated elaboration through connecting previously learned vocabulary with new contexts encountered in Webtoon reading. This finding indicates that students did not merely recognize familiar words, but also processed them more deeply by relating them to the storyline, situations, and language use within the Webtoon episodes. Luna, for instance, explained:

“Iya, pernah. Kadang ada beberapa kosakata yang sebenarnya sudah pernah saya temui sebelumnya, baik dari film, lagu, TikTok, maupun pelajaran bahasa Inggris. Lalu, saat membaca Lookism, saya menemukan kembali kata tersebut. Biasanya, ketika

saya merasa familiar dengan katanya, saya jadi lebih mudah memahami maknanya melalui konteks cerita. Karena itu, saya tidak langsung membuka terjemahan, tetapi mencoba menebaknya terlebih dahulu dari situasi dan dialog yang ada. Menurut saya, cara seperti itu justru membuat saya lebih mudah mengingat makna kata dibandingkan jika langsung menghafalnya.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, I have. Sometimes there are vocabulary words that I have encountered before from movies, songs, TikTok, or English lessons. Then, while reading *Lookism*, I found those words again. Usually, when I feel familiar with the word, it becomes easier for me to understand the meaning through the story context. Because of that, I do not immediately open a translation tool, but instead try to guess the meaning first from the situation and dialogues. In my opinion, this method actually helps me remember the meaning better than memorizing it directly.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This response reflects the process of elaboration because Luna actively connected prior knowledge with contextual information presented in the Webtoon. Instead of relying immediately on translation, she attempted to infer meaning through dialogues and situations,

indicating deeper semantic processing during reading activities.

A similar pattern also appeared in participants' experiences with idiomatic expressions. Harry stated:

“Pernah, lebih sering saya ada nemu idiom yang pernah saya dengar lalu cara saya menyikapinya seperti ‘owh jadi ini maksudnya/owhh jadi ini contoh penggunaannya’ jadi pemahaman atas kosakata atau idiomnya itu jadi lebih jelas.” (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, I have. More often, I find idioms that I have heard before, and my reaction is like, ‘Oh, so this is what it means’ or ‘Oh, so this is an example of how it is used.’ Because of that, my understanding of the vocabulary or idiom becomes clearer.” (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This finding further demonstrates elaboration because Harry gained a clearer understanding of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions through contextualized usage in Webtoon stories. He not only recognized the idiom but also understood its meaning and practical use in authentic situations. This supports Hulstijn's (2001) view that incidental learning occurs through meaningful contextual exposure and deeper cognitive processing of language input.

Harry also demonstrated elaboration through the connection between vocabulary and

memorable scenes in the story. Harry explained that certain expressions became easier to remember because they were strongly associated with specific situations and character interactions in the Webtoon:

“Ada beberapa kata atau ekspresi yang lebih mudah saya ingat, contohnya penggunaan ‘out of the blue’. Ini dapat mudah diingat oleh saya karena di sini character perempuan (Joy) tiba-tiba menanyakan pertanyaan yang random ke laki-laki di sebelahnya (Max), yang membuat suasana yang tadinya biasa saja jadi canggung seperti yang digambarkan pada foto tersebut. Jadi pertanyaannya terkesan out of the blue atau di luar konteks.” (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“There are some words or expressions that are easier for me to remember, for example the expression ‘out of the blue.’ It became memorable because the female character (Joy) suddenly asked a random question to the male character beside her (Max), which made the atmosphere awkward as shown in the scene. So, the question felt *out of the blue* or completely out of context.” (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This finding shows that Harry understood and remembered the expression by associating it with a specific scene, character interaction, and emotional situation in the story. The contextualized and visualized presentation

of the expression helped Harry build a clearer understanding of its meaning and usage during the reading process.

Overall, the findings show that participants frequently used contextual elaboration while reading Webtoon by combining storylines, situations, character expressions, visual cues, and prior vocabulary knowledge to understand unfamiliar words and idiomatic expressions. Most participants relied on contextual clues before using translation tools, while memorable scenes and repeated encounters with vocabulary helped them understand and remember meanings more easily. These findings indicate that Webtoon provided meaningful contextual support that assisted participants in comprehending English texts during their reading activities.

4.1.1.2. Rehearsal

The rehearsal stage refers to participants' process of strengthening their understanding of vocabulary through repeated exposure. In this stage, familiarity with words or expressions develops as they reappear across different parts of the text, allowing participants to recognize and understand them more easily over time.

Based on both journal reflections and interview data, it was found that repeated encounters with the same vocabulary helped participants reinforce their understanding and reduce uncertainty. Initially, participants noticed recurring words, which gradually became more familiar and easier to comprehend.

Ron, for example, described how repeated exposure to certain expressions made them easier to understand:

“Menariknya, beberapa gaya bicara Kayden mulai terasa familiar karena muncul lagi di beberapa bagian. Jadi pas ketemu lagi, aku nggak terlalu kaget dan bisa langsung ngerti maksudnya lebih cepat dibanding sebelumnya.” (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

"Interestingly, some of Kayden's speech patterns started feeling familiar because they kept popping up. So when I heard them again, I wasn't as surprised and could grasp what he meant much faster than before." (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 7th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Harry explained that repeated encounters with vocabulary in clear contexts helped him become more familiar with their meanings:

“Beberapa istilah juga terasa lebih mudah dipahami karena muncul dalam konteks yang jelas, misalnya berkaitan dengan status sosial atau hubungan antar tokoh. Dari situ aku bisa menebak maknanya, dan pas ketemu lagi di bagian lain, rasanya jadi lebih familiar. Jadi tanpa sadar, aku mulai terbiasa dengan istilah-istilah yang dipakai di cerita seperti ini.” (Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026)

"Certain terms also felt easier to understand because they appeared within a clear context, such as those

related to social status or character relationships. I could infer their meanings from there, and seeing them again later made them feel more familiar. It seems I've unconsciously grown accustomed to the terminology used in stories like this." (Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 8th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Furthermore, repeated exposure across multiple chapters enabled participants to retain and differentiate meanings more effectively. Hermione explained:

"Namun karena saya membaca ulang dan istilah gelar seperti duke, marquis, atau count sering muncul di berbagai chapter, saya jadi lebih terbiasa dan bisa mengenali perbedaannya tanpa harus mencari arti lagi." (Hermione, Journal reflection, Feb 13th, 2026)

"However, because I've been re-reading and titles like *Duke*, *Marquis*, or *Count* appear so often across different chapters, I've become more used to them. Now, I can recognize the differences without having to look up their meanings again." (Hermione, Journal reflection, Feb 13th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This growing familiarity was also reflected in participants' awareness during the interview. Ginny explained how repeated exposure helped her develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary usage in different contexts:

“Kalau melihat kata yang sama muncul kembali, biasanya saya menjadi semakin familiar dengan kata tersebut. Awalnya mungkin saya hanya mengetahui arti umumnya saja, tetapi setelah kata itu sering muncul dalam berbagai situasi, saya jadi lebih memahami cara penggunaan serta maknanya dalam konteks yang berbeda.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“When I see the same word appear again, I usually become more familiar with it. At first, I might only know its general meaning, but after the word appears frequently in different situations, I begin to understand how it is used and what it means in various contexts.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Luna emphasized that repeated encounters with vocabulary increased both familiarity and confidence in understanding meaning:

“Kalau melihat kata yang sama muncul kembali, biasanya saya menjadi lebih familiar dan lebih percaya diri terhadap makna kata tersebut. Awalnya mungkin saya masih ragu dengan artinya, tetapi setelah kata itu muncul berkali-kali dalam konteks yang berbeda, saya jadi semakin memahami cara penggunaannya. Jadi, prosesnya terasa seperti belajar secara alami.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“When I see the same word appear again, I usually become more familiar and more confident about its meaning. At first, I may still feel unsure about the meaning, but after the word appears repeatedly in different contexts, I gradually understand how it is used. So, the process feels like learning naturally.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Hermione also described how repeated exposure created a sense of familiarity that made vocabulary easier to understand and remember:

“Tentu saja iya. Karena kata-kata yang sering muncul akan menimbulkan sense of familiarity atau rasa akrab. Misalnya, kata seperti ‘magnificent’ dan ‘fabulous’ yang cukup sering saya temui, sehingga lama-kelamaan terdengar familiar di telinga dan lebih mudah dipahami maknanya. Saya jadi langsung teringat bahwa arti katanya dalam bahasa Indonesia kurang lebih mirip dengan ‘amazing’ dan ungkapan pujian lainnya.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Of course, yes. Words that appear frequently create a sense of familiarity. For example, words like ‘magnificent’ and ‘fabulous’ appeared quite often, so over time they became familiar to my ears and easier to understand. I immediately remember that their meanings in Indonesian are similar to ‘amazing’ and other expressions of praise.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

These findings show that repeated exposure to vocabulary, expressions, and language patterns in Webtoon reading helped participants develop familiarity, confidence, and clearer understanding of word meanings and usage through natural and continuous encounters with the language.

4.1.1.3. Automaticity

The development of automaticity refers to participants' increasing ability to process language more quickly and effortlessly as a result of repeated exposure and growing familiarity with vocabulary and language patterns. In this stage, comprehension becomes more immediate, requiring less conscious effort and reducing the need for deliberate processing.

Based on both journal reflections and interview data, it was found that participants gradually experienced a shift from effortful understanding to more automatic comprehension. This development was marked by reduced guessing, faster recognition of familiar words, and smoother reading processes.

Luna, for example, described how she no longer needed to spend as much time guessing meanings as she became more familiar with the vocabulary:

“Menariknya, di beberapa bagian berikutnya, aku merasa tidak perlu menebak lagi terlalu lama karena sudah mulai terbiasa dengan kata-kata tersebut.” (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 9th, 2026)

"Interestingly, in the following sections, I found that I didn't need to guess for very

long anymore because I was already starting to get used to those words." (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 9th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This reduced effort was also reflected in Ron's experience, where he began to understand the overall meaning of scenes more quickly:

"Aku juga mulai lebih kebiasa sama cara penyampaian ceritanya, jadi bisa langsung nangkep inti dari tiap adegan tanpa harus mikir terlalu lama." (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

"I'm also starting to get more used to the storytelling style, so I can catch the gist of each scene immediately without having to think about it for too long." (Ron, Journal reflection, Feb 7th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Hermione emphasized in the interview that familiarity with recurring patterns allowed for faster comprehension:

"Pemahaman saya menjadi lebih cepat terutama pada kata atau pola yang sudah familiar." (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"My understanding has become much faster, especially with words or patterns that are already familiar to me." (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Ginny further explained how repeated exposure enabled her to recognize words more quickly without needing extended processing:

“Iya, sekarang saya merasa bisa mengenali beberapa kata dengan lebih cepat tanpa harus berpikir terlalu lama. Mungkin karena saya sudah sering melihat kata-kata itu saat membaca Webtoon, jadi ketika kata itu muncul lagi saya langsung merasa familiar dan lebih cepat memahami artinya.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"Yeah, I feel like I can recognize several words much faster now without having to think too hard. I think it's because I've seen them so often while reading Webtoons; when they pop up again, they feel instantly familiar and I can grasp the meaning much more quickly." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition, Harry highlighted how this growing familiarity contributed to increased reading speed while maintaining comprehension:

“Meskipun begitu, karena sudah mulai familiar dari chapter sebelumnya, kecepatan membaca saya sedikit meningkat. Visual yang ditampilkan juga membantu memperkuat pemahaman, jadi makna tetap bisa ditangkap dengan baik walaupun tidak semua kata diproses secara detail.” (Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 11th, 2026)

"Even so, since I've started becoming familiar with things from the previous chapters, my reading speed has increased slightly. The visuals also help reinforce my understanding, so I can still grasp the meaning well even if I don't process every single word in detail." (Harry, Journal reflection, Feb 11th, 2026)

Overall, the findings indicate that the development of automaticity occurs as participants become increasingly familiar with vocabulary and language patterns. This results in faster recognition, reduced cognitive effort, and more fluent reading, allowing participants to comprehend texts more efficiently without relying on deliberate word-by-word processing.

4.1.2. Challenges in Incidental Learning through Webtoon

This section presents the challenges encountered by the participants during incidental learning through reading English-language Webtoons.

4.1.2.1. Linguistic Challenges

This stage presents the linguistic challenges encountered by students while reading English Webtoon, particularly in dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary, expressions, and variations in language use. The findings reveal that these challenges mainly involve difficulty in understanding individual words, figurative expressions, slang, and shifts in language style depending on the context of the story.

At the initial level, students experienced difficulty with unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions. Ron, for example, reported encountering several words and phrases that were not immediately understandable:

"Waktu baca, aku nemu beberapa kata dan ungkapan kayak 'reckless,' 'on your guard,' dan 'you'll get yourself killed.' Awalnya aku nggak langsung ngerti semua, terutama 'reckless'... Untuk 'on your guard', awalnya agak bingung juga." (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 10th, 2026)

"While reading, I came across some words and expressions like 'reckless,' 'on your guard,' and 'you'll get yourself killed.' At first, I didn't understand everything right away, especially 'reckless'... and 'on your guard' was a bit confusing for me at first, too." (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 10th, 2026, Researcher Translation)

Beyond individual vocabulary, students also faced challenges in interpreting figurative and emotionally loaded expressions. Ginny explained that certain phrases were difficult to understand when translated literally, especially those used in emotional contexts:

"Sejujurnya saya tidak terlalu sering menemukan slang, tapi lebih ke ungkapan yang puitis atau emosional yang kadang sulit dipahami. Misalnya seperti 'a cruel certainty' atau 'loathsome' yang muncul di situasi yang emosional, jadi agak sulit dipahami kalau hanya diterjemahkan langsung." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"To be honest, I don't come across slang very often; instead, I find more poetic or emotional expressions that can be hard to understand. For instance, phrases like 'a cruel certainty' or the word 'loathsome' appear in such emotional situations that it's

difficult to grasp their meaning through literal translation alone." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition, variation in language style also contributed to comprehension difficulty. Harry highlighted that the use of semi-formal and formal language, particularly in historical or royal settings, made the text harder to process:

"Lumayan kesulitan karena setting ceritanya di abad pertengahan dan di lingkungan kerajaan, gaya bahasanya cenderung semi formal dan agak baku." (Harry, Journal Reflection, Feb 8th, 2026)

"It's quite challenging because the story is set in the Middle Ages and within a royal circle, so the language tends to be semi-formal and a bit stiff." (Harry, Journal Reflection, Feb 8th, 2026)

Students also encountered challenges in understanding slang, idioms, and context-dependent expressions. Hermione noted that initial misunderstandings often occurred due to limited familiarity with how such expressions function in different contexts:

"Waktu pertama kali membaca Webtoon dalam bahasa Inggris, banyak sekali kata slang, frasa tertentu, bahkan idiom yang sulit saya pahami... Awalnya saya mengira kata itu hanya digunakan sebagai umpatan atau kata kasar. Tapi setelah membaca lebih banyak dan melihat konteks penggunaannya di berbagai situasi, saya baru menyadari kalau kadang kata itu juga

digunakan untuk menekankan sesuatu.”
(Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"When I first started reading Webtoons in English, there were so many slang words, specific phrases, and even idioms that were hard for me to understand. At first, I thought those words were only used as swear words or profanity. But after reading more and seeing how they are used in different contexts, I realized that sometimes they are also used to emphasize something." (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Luna described how unfamiliar vocabulary and slang remained challenging despite attempts to infer meaning from context:

“Kadang ada kosakata atau slang yang aku nggak langsung ngerti... aku coba pahami dulu dari konteks cerita... tapi tetap ada beberapa kata yang belum aku pahami.” (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

"Sometimes I come across vocabulary or slang that I don't understand right away. I try to figure it out from the context of the story first, but there are still some words that I haven't quite grasped yet." (Luna, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Those findings indicate that linguistic challenges stem from multiple sources, including unfamiliar vocabulary, figurative language, stylistic variation, and context-dependent expressions. These challenges require students to go beyond

literal translation and rely on contextual understanding, although some meanings remain difficult to fully grasp.

4.1.2.2. Cognitive and Affective Challenges

This stage presents the cognitive and affective challenges experienced by students during the reading process. The findings indicate that students encountered difficulties in managing information, maintaining focus, and processing meaning while reading. In addition, emotional factors such as mood and level of engagement also influenced how effectively they could concentrate and understand the text. These two aspects were closely interconnected, as emotional involvement often shaped how students processed the story.

At the cognitive level, students reported difficulties in handling multiple elements simultaneously, such as dialogue, action, and rapid changes in the storyline. Ron described how this increased processing demand made reading more challenging:

“Tapi ada beberapa bagian yang lumayan bikin mikir, apalagi pas harus ngikutin antara dialog, aksi, sama perubahan situasi yang cepet.” (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 6th, 2026)

"Some parts definitely make my brain work harder, though especially when I'm trying to juggle the dialogue and the action while things are changing so fast." (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This cognitive demand also required students to adjust their reading strategies. Harry

explained that he needed to slow down and pay closer attention to avoid misunderstanding:

"Aku sempat harus baca dengan lebih pelan dan memperhatikan tiap kalimat supaya nggak salah nangkep arti."
(Harry, Journal Reflection, Feb 10th, 2026)

"I actually had to slow down and pay close attention to every sentence to make sure I didn't misunderstand anything."
(Harry, Journal Reflection, Feb 10th, 2026, Researcher translation)

However, students' focus during reading often shifted toward understanding the storyline rather than processing the language in detail. Ginny noted that when the story was engaging, she tended to prioritize meaning over language form:

"Iya, kadang saya jadi kurang memperhatikan struktur grammar karena terlalu fokus dengan ceritanya. Ketika ceritanya menarik, saya lebih fokus memahami apa yang sedang terjadi pada karakter daripada memperhatikan secara detail struktur bahasa yang digunakan."
(Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"Definitely. I sometimes stop noticing the grammar because I'm just too into the story. If it's a good chapter, I care way more about what's going on with the characters than how the sentences are actually built." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This tendency was also reflected in other participants' experiences. Hermione emphasized

that her main focus was on following the plot and emotional flow:

“Daripada langsung fokus mencari arti kata baru, saya biasanya lebih fokus memahami alur ceritanya terlebih dahulu. Dengan memahami dialog-dialog sebelumnya, dialog setelahnya, serta ilustrasi gambar yang ada, saya bisa memperkirakan makna dari kata yang belum saya pahami. Jadi, konteks cerita membantu saya menebak arti katanya. Biasanya, setelah selesai membaca satu chapter, barulah saya mencari tahu arti kata tersebut secara lebih spesifik. Misalnya, saya pernah menemukan kata ‘vast.’ Kata itu memang tidak terlalu umum digunakan dalam percakapan sehari-hari, sehingga terasa kurang familiar. Karena itu, saya memilih untuk tetap melanjutkan membaca agar alur ceritanya selesai terlebih dahulu, baru kemudian mencari arti katanya. Dalam proses ini, ilustrasi atau gambar sangat membantu saya memahami konteks dari kata yang belum saya mengerti. Jadi, kombinasi antara teks dan ilustrasi membantu saya memperkirakan makna kata-kata baru yang saya temui saat membaca.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Instead of immediately focusing on finding the meaning of new words, I usually focus on understanding the storyline first. By understanding the previous and following dialogues, as well as the illustrations, I can estimate the meaning of unfamiliar words. So, the story context helps me guess the meaning. Usually, after finishing one chapter, I

search for the meaning more specifically. For example, I once encountered the word ‘vast.’ It is not commonly used in daily conversations, so it felt unfamiliar. Because of that, I chose to continue reading until I finished the storyline before looking up the meaning. In this process, the illustrations or pictures really helped me understand the context of the unfamiliar word. So, the combination of text and illustrations helped me estimate the meaning of new words I encountered while reading.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Luna stated that she tended to prioritize story comprehension because the visual elements helped her follow the narrative despite not understanding every word:

“Iya, sejujurnya saya lebih sering fokus memahami alur cerita terlebih dahulu dibanding memahami semua kosakata satu per satu. Karena di Webtoon terdapat bantuan visual berupa gambar dan ekspresi karakter, meskipun ada beberapa kata yang belum saya pahami, saya masih bisa menangkap situasi dan emosi dalam ceritanya. Menurut saya, hal tersebut membuat pengalaman membaca menjadi lebih nyaman dan tidak terasa terlalu berat. Biasanya, saya baru mencari arti kata jika kata tersebut benar-benar penting atau sering muncul dalam cerita.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, honestly, I tend to focus more on understanding the storyline first rather than understanding every single

vocabulary word one by one. Because Webtoon provides visual support through pictures and character expressions, even if there are words I do not understand, I can still grasp the situation and emotions in the story. In my opinion, this makes the reading experience feel more comfortable and less overwhelming. Usually, I only look up the meaning if the word is really important or appears frequently in the story.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition to these cognitive challenges, affective factors also played a significant role in participants’ reading experiences. Several participants reported that their emotional condition and motivation influenced their ability to focus and comprehend English Webtoons. Ginny explained that her mood affected her concentration during reading activities:

“Iya, mood saya cukup mempengaruhi pemahaman saat membaca. Kalau saya sedang dalam mood yang baik, biasanya saya bisa lebih fokus dan lebih mudah memahami ceritanya. Tapi kalau sedang bad mood, biasanya saya jadi kurang fokus.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"Yeah, my mood definitely affects my comprehension when I'm reading. When I'm in a good mood, I can usually focus better and understand the story more easily. But if I'm in a bad mood, I tend to lose focus." (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This was further supported by Ron, who similarly noted the impact of mood on his concentration:

“Kalau mood sedang kurang bagus, biasanya jadi kurang fokus juga buat memahami ceritanya atau bahasanya.”
(Ron, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"When my mood isn't great, I usually struggle to stay focused on both the story and the language." (Ron, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Besides emotional condition, participants also experienced reduced motivation when the language used in the Webtoon became too difficult. Ginny stated:

“Iya, pernah. Kalau bahasa yang digunakan dalam cerita terasa terlalu sulit dan ada terlalu banyak kata yang tidak saya pahami, kadang saya jadi merasa bosan atau kurang semangat untuk melanjutkan membaca. Hal itu membuat saya jadi tidak terlalu menikmati proses membacanya.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, I have. When the language used in the story feels too difficult and there are too many unfamiliar words, sometimes I become bored or lose motivation to continue reading. It also makes the reading process less enjoyable for me.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Luna also admitted that difficult language sometimes reduced her motivation to continue reading:

“Pernah, kalau bahasanya terlalu sulit, kadang jadi sedikit bosan dan kurang semangat untuk lanjut.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, when the language is too difficult, sometimes I become a little bored and less motivated to continue reading.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Overall, the findings show that participants experienced both cognitive and affective challenges while reading English Webtoons. Participants often prioritized understanding the storyline over processing every unfamiliar word, while factors such as mood, motivation, and language difficulty influenced their focus and reading experience. These challenges affected how participants comprehended and engaged with the text during reading activities.

4.1.2.3. Pedagogical and Technological Challenges

This stage presents the pedagogical and technological challenges experienced by students while reading English Webtoon. The findings indicate that students faced difficulties not only due to the absence of instructional support (pedagogical), but also because of limitations related to the digital platform and devices used during reading (technological). These external factors influenced the overall reading experience and, in some cases, affected students' focus and continuity while reading.

From a pedagogical perspective, one of the main challenges was the lack of guidance and

feedback during the learning process. Ron reported that he often had to rely on his own interpretation without confirmation:

“Kadang aku ngerasa harus nebak sendiri arti kata, soalnya nggak ada penjelasan langsung atau konfirmasi apakah tebakanku itu benar atau nggak.” (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

"Sometimes I feel like I have to guess the meaning of certain words myself, since there's no direct explanation or confirmation of whether my guess is right or not." (Ron, Journal Reflection, Feb 7th, 2026)

Similarly, Ginny expressed uncertainty about whether her understanding was accurate due to the absence of immediate feedback:

“Dari sisi belajar tanpa sadar, aku juga kadang kepikiran, ‘ini tebakanku udah bener belum ya?’ soalnya nggak langsung ada konfirmasi.” (Ginny, Journal Reflection, Feb 9th, 2026)

"From an implicit learning perspective, I sometimes find myself wondering, 'Is my guess actually right?' because there's no immediate confirmation." (Ginny, Journal Reflection, Feb 9th, 2026, Researcher translation)

This issue was further reinforced by Harry, who noted that there had been no formal instructional direction regarding the use of Webtoon as a learning medium:

“Sejauh ini belum pernah ada arahan khusus dari dosen atau guru mengenai penggunaan Webtoon sebagai media belajar.” (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

"So far, there haven't been any specific instructions from my lecturers or teachers regarding the use of Webtoons as a learning tool." (Harry, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition to pedagogical concerns, Participants also experienced several technological challenges while reading English Webtoons. The most common challenge was the interruption caused by advertisements during the reading process. Ginny explained that advertisements sometimes disrupted her concentration while following the story:

“Iya, kadang iklan bisa cukup mengganggu konsentrasi saya saat membaca. Ketika sedang fokus membaca cerita, tiba-tiba muncul iklan, jadi perhatian saya bisa sedikit teralihkan dari cerita yang sedang saya baca.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, sometimes advertisements can be quite distracting while I am reading. When I am focused on the story, sudden ads appear and divert my attention from the story I am reading.” (Ginny, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Similarly, Luna stated that advertisements not only interrupted her reading experience but also

affected her motivation to continue reading Webtoon:

“Iya, iklan kadang cukup mengganggu. Bahkan itu juga yang membuat saya jadi malas membaca di Webtoon akhir-akhir ini.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“Yes, advertisements can sometimes be quite disturbing. In fact, they have also made me less motivated to read Webtoon recently.” (Luna, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

In addition, Hermione explained that although advertisements did not completely distract her, they still interrupted her reading comfort:

“Tidak sampai membuat saya terdistraksi, tapi biasanya cukup membuat kesal karena mengganggu waktu membaca.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026)

“It does not completely distract me, but it is still annoying because it interrupts my reading time.” (Hermione, Interview, Feb 6th, 2026, Researcher translation)

Overall, the findings show that both pedagogical and technological challenges play a significant role in shaping students’ reading experiences. The lack of instructional support led to uncertainty in understanding, while technological limitations such as advertisements interrupted reading flow. These factors highlight the importance of both effective guidance and supportive digital environments in facilitating optimal learning experiences.

4.2. Discussions

In this section, the researcher examined and discussed the answers to two problem formulations. First, the researcher discussed how do EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills. Second, the researcher explored the challenges faced by the EFL students in using Webtoon for Incidental learning in reading.

4.2.1. Incidental Learning through Webtoon in Assisting Reading Skills

This section discusses how incidental learning through reading English-language Webtoons contributed to the participants' English reading skills. The discussion is presented based on the stages of incidental learning identified in the findings.

4.2.1.1. Elaboration

Based on the findings, elaboration occurred when participants understood unfamiliar vocabulary through storyline, situations, and character interactions while reading Webtoon. Harry explained that he followed the plot to understand unfamiliar words, while Ron relied on actions and situations to understand dialogues without translating every word. These findings indicate that participants used contextual understanding to maintain reading comprehension during reading activities. This finding supports Hulstijn's (2001) theory of meaningful cognitive processing and aligns with Craik and Lockhart's depth of processing theory (1972, as cited in McLeod, 2023), which states that deeply processed information is more likely to remain in long-term memory.

It is showed that visual elements in Webtoon helped participants understand English

texts more effectively. In Hermione's interview, she explained that character expressions and illustrations helped her estimate unfamiliar vocabulary meanings, while Luna stated that she combined situations, expressions, and storyline to understand slang and unfamiliar words before using a dictionary. These findings indicate that Webtoon's multimodal features supported participants' reading comprehension and meaning inference during reading activities. This finding is consistent with Rizky's (2014) argument that visual elements in Webtoon help readers interpret vocabulary through contextualized situations, while Farias and D'Ely (2020) explain that elaboration develops through rich meaning-processing activities during language exposure.

Another pattern of elaboration appeared when participants prioritized contextual understanding before using translation tools during reading activities. In Ginny's interview, she explained that she tried to understand unfamiliar vocabulary through dialogues, situations, and character expressions before using translation applications, while Luna stated that she preferred guessing meanings from context rather than translating words immediately. These findings suggest that participants maintained reading fluency by focusing on overall text meaning instead of translating word by word. This finding supports Elgort et al. (2018), who argue that elaboration occurs when learners relate vocabulary to context and meaning, while Hulstijn (2001)

explains that incidental learning depends on cognitive processing during language exposure.

It is revealed that participants connected previously learned vocabulary with new contexts found in Webtoon stories. In Luna's interview, she explained that vocabulary from movies, songs, TikTok, and English lessons became easier to understand when encountered again in Webtoon contexts, while Harry stated that he better understood idioms he had heard before after seeing their natural usage in the story. These findings indicate that language exposure they have ever encountered before helped participants process vocabulary more deeply during reading activities. This finding supports Elgort et al. (2018), who argue that elaboration occurs when learners connect vocabulary with meaning, context, and personal experiences, while Biseko (2025) explains that elaboration involves linking new information with existing knowledge through cognitive engagement.

Participants also demonstrated elaboration through memorable scenes that helped them understand and remember idiomatic expressions more effectively. In Harry's interview, he explained that the expression "out of the blue" became easier to remember because it was associated with a sudden and awkward interaction between characters in a specific scene, making the meaning clearer and easier to understand during reading. The emotional situations and contextualized scenes in Webtoon strengthened participants' comprehension because vocabulary and expressions became closely connected to concrete visual and

narrative experiences. This finding aligns with Hulstijn's (2001) explanation that incidental learning occurs through meaningful contextual exposure and deeper cognitive engagement with language input. Moreover, Rizky (2014) states that the combination of text and visuals in Webtoon helps readers interpret and remember vocabulary more naturally without conscious memorization.

4.2.1.2. Rehearsal

In this section, the researcher discusses how participants developed vocabulary understanding through rehearsal while reading English Webtoons. This discussion focuses on how repeated exposure to vocabulary, expressions, and language patterns helped participants reinforce meaning, increase familiarity, and support reading comprehension during reading activities.

Based on the findings, rehearsal appeared when participants strengthened their understanding of vocabulary through repeated exposure while reading Webtoon. In Ron's journal reflection, he explained that repeated encounters with Kayden's speech patterns made the expressions feel more familiar and easier to understand, while Harry stated that vocabulary related to social status and character relationships became easier to recognize after appearing repeatedly in different parts of the story. These findings indicate that repeated exposure helped participants recognize vocabulary more quickly and maintain reading comprehension more naturally during reading activities. This finding supports Hulstijn's

(2001) theory that rehearsal strengthens language storage through repeated exposure to language input. It also aligns with Aubrey and Philpott (2025), who explain that repeated encounters with vocabulary in different contexts increase the possibility of long-term retention.

Another pattern of rehearsal appeared when participants encountered repeated vocabulary across multiple chapters and rereading activities. In Hermione's journal reflection, she explained that titles such as "duke," "marquis," and "count" became easier to differentiate because they frequently appeared throughout different chapters, allowing her to recognize their meanings without searching again. These findings suggest that repeated exposure across reading activities strengthened participants' vocabulary retention and helped them understand English texts more efficiently over time. This finding is consistent with Mubarrok's (2023) argument that recurring words and expressions in Webtoon function as natural rehearsal during reading activities. Furthermore, Nation (2017) explains that repeated vocabulary exposure supports incidental learning because learners gradually strengthen understanding without explicit memorization.

It is also showed that repeated exposure helped participants understand vocabulary usage in different contexts more deeply. In Ginny's interview, she explained that repeated encounters with the same words helped her understand not only the general meaning but also how the vocabulary was used in various

situations, while Luna stated that repeated exposure increased her familiarity and confidence in understanding vocabulary meanings naturally. Similarly, Hermione explained that frequently appearing words such as “magnificent” and “fabulous” gradually became easier to associate with expressions of praise because of repeated encounters during reading activities. These findings indicate that rehearsal not only increased familiarity with vocabulary but also helped participants interpret contextual meanings more accurately while reading English texts. This finding supports Ward’s (2020) concept of elaborative rehearsal, which explains that repetition becomes more meaningful when learners connect vocabulary with contextual understanding. Additionally, Hulstijn (2001) states that rehearsal strengthens language acquisition through continuous exposure during learning activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that rehearsal through repeated exposure supported participants’ incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension during Webtoon reading activities. Repeated encounters with vocabulary and expressions helped participants improve familiarity, contextual understanding, and word recognition while reading English texts. This supports Nation’s (2017) argument that meaningful repeated exposure contributes to vocabulary development and long-term retention.

4.2.1.3. Automaticity

In this section, the researcher discusses how participants developed automaticity while

reading English Webtoons. This discussion focuses on how repeated exposure and familiarity with vocabulary and language patterns helped participants process English texts more quickly, smoothly, and with less conscious effort during reading activities.

Based on the findings, automaticity appeared when participants gradually understood vocabulary and text meaning more effortlessly during Webtoon reading activities. In Luna's journal reflection, she explained that she no longer needed to spend much time guessing vocabulary meanings because she had become more familiar with the words, while Ron stated that he could understand the main point of each scene more quickly without thinking too long about the meaning. These findings indicate that repeated exposure helped participants process English texts more fluently and maintain reading comprehension with reduced cognitive effort. This finding supports Hulstijn's (2001) theory that automaticity develops when language knowledge becomes more automatic after repeated learning and reinforcement. It also aligns with Suzuki (2023), who explains that automaticity enables language learners to understand vocabulary and language structures fluently without requiring intense conscious focus.

Another pattern of automaticity appeared when participants became more familiar with recurring vocabulary and language patterns. In Hermione's interview, she explained that her understanding became faster when encountering familiar words and patterns, while Ginny stated

that she could recognize several words more quickly because she had repeatedly encountered them while reading Webtoon. These findings suggest that familiarity with recurring language input supported participants in recognizing vocabulary more efficiently and understanding English texts more smoothly during reading activities. This finding is consistent with Shahini's (2025) explanation that automaticity refers to the ability to access language information quickly and efficiently after repeated exposure. Furthermore, Novanti and Suprayogi (2021) explain that repeated reading activities help learners internalize language naturally through continuous exposure.

It is also revealed that automaticity contributed to participants' reading fluency and comprehension. In Harry's journal reflection, he explained that his reading speed gradually increased because he had become more familiar with vocabulary from previous chapters, while visual elements in the Webtoon also helped him maintain comprehension even when not processing every word in detail. These findings indicate that automaticity helped participants read English texts more efficiently because they could focus on overall meaning without relying heavily on word-by-word processing. This finding supports Fauziah and Nasrullah's (2023) argument that repeated exposure to language in multimodal contexts helps learners develop more automatic language processing. Additionally, Angelica and Katemba (2023) explain that Webtoons can support the improvement of

English reading skills by facilitating more efficient and automatic language comprehension.

Overall, the findings suggest that automaticity developed as participants became increasingly familiar with vocabulary and language patterns through repeated Webtoon reading activities. This development helped participants process English texts more fluently, improve reading speed, and maintain comprehension with less conscious effort during reading activities. These findings support Hulstijn's (2001) view that automatic language processing develops through continuous exposure and reinforcement during incidental learning activities.

4.2.2. Challenges of incidental learning using webtoon

This section discusses the challenges experienced by the participants while using English-language Webtoons for incidental learning. The discussion is organized according to the themes identified in the findings.

4.2.2.1. Linguistic Challenges

In this section, the researcher discusses the linguistic challenges experienced by participants while reading English Webtoons. This discussion focuses on difficulties related to unfamiliar vocabulary, figurative expressions, slang, and language variations that affected participants' reading comprehension during reading activities.

Based on the findings, linguistic challenges appeared when participants encountered unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions while reading Webtoon. In Ron's journal reflection, he explained that words and

expressions such as “reckless,” “on your guard,” and “you’ll get yourself killed” were initially difficult to understand because he was unfamiliar with their meanings and usage. These findings indicate that unfamiliar vocabulary created obstacles in participants’ reading comprehension because they could not immediately process the meaning of certain expressions while reading English texts. This finding supports Chapelle’s (2001) framework, which explains that linguistic challenges emerge when learners experience difficulty processing language input obtained through digital media. It also aligns with Hernandez’s (2023) argument that Webtoons often contain contextual and informal language forms that are uncommon in conventional EFL learning materials.

Another linguistic challenge appeared when participants encountered figurative and emotionally loaded expressions. In Ginny’s interview, she explained that expressions such as “a cruel certainty” and “loathsome” were difficult to understand through literal translation because the meanings depended heavily on emotional situations within the story. Similarly, Hermione stated that slang, phrases, and idioms in English Webtoons initially caused misunderstanding because she was unfamiliar with how such expressions functioned in different contexts. These findings suggest that figurative and context-dependent language limited participants’ ability to understand English texts comprehensively during reading activities. This finding is consistent with Hernandez’s (2023) explanation that Webtoons frequently contain idiomatic expressions and

slang that increase linguistic complexity for EFL learners. Furthermore, Dar et al. (2023) explain that challenges in processing complex language input may limit deeper language comprehension and acquisition.

It is also showed that variations in language style contributed to reading difficulty. In Harry's journal reflection, he explained that the semi-formal and formal language used in historical and royal settings made the text harder to process, while Luna stated that some slang and unfamiliar vocabulary remained difficult to understand even after attempting to infer meaning from the story context. These findings indicate that differences in language style and contextual language use created comprehension barriers during reading activities because participants needed additional effort to interpret unfamiliar forms of language. This finding supports Ounissi et al. (2025), who argue that the linguistic complexity of Webtoons can hinder comprehension, particularly for EFL learners with limited proficiency. Additionally, Chapelle (2001) explains that the effectiveness of digital language input depends on learners' ability to process and understand linguistic information meaningfully.

Overall, the findings suggest that linguistic challenges in Webtoon reading activities mainly involved unfamiliar vocabulary, figurative expressions, slang, and stylistic language variations that affected participants' reading comprehension. Although participants often relied on contextual understanding and visual support to interpret meaning, some language forms remained difficult to process fully during reading activities.

These findings support Hernandez's (2023) argument that the contextual and informal nature of Webtoon language can create linguistic complexity for EFL learners during incidental learning activities.

4.2.2.2. Cognitive and Affective Challenges

In this section, the researcher discusses the cognitive and affective challenges experienced by participants while reading English Webtoons. This discussion focuses on how difficulties in processing language input, maintaining focus, and managing emotional conditions influenced participants' reading comprehension and engagement during reading activities.

Based on the findings, cognitive challenges appeared when participants had difficulty processing multiple elements simultaneously while reading Webtoon. In Ron's journal reflection, he explained that following dialogues, actions, and rapid storyline changes at the same time made the reading process mentally demanding, while Harry stated that he needed to slow down and pay closer attention to each sentence to avoid misunderstanding the meaning. These findings indicate that participants experienced cognitive overload because they had to divide their attention between understanding the storyline and processing the language input during reading activities. This finding supports Chapelle's (2001) explanation that cognitive challenges emerge when learners struggle to process complex language input. It also aligns with Dar et al. (2023), who argue that multimodal media such as Webtoons may increase cognitive

demands because learners must process text and visual information simultaneously.

Another cognitive challenge appeared when participants focused more on understanding the storyline than processing language forms in detail. In Ginny's interview, she explained that she often paid more attention to the story and character events than to grammatical structures when the storyline was engaging, while Hermione stated that she usually prioritized understanding the plot first before searching for unfamiliar vocabulary meanings. Similarly, Luna explained that visual elements and character expressions helped her follow the story even without understanding every word individually. These findings suggest that participants relied heavily on contextual and visual understanding to maintain reading comprehension, which sometimes reduced their focus on detailed language processing. This finding supports De-Vos et al. (2019), who explain that excessive focus on story comprehension may limit learners' noticing and elaboration of language forms during incidental learning activities. Furthermore, Jajdelska et al. (2019) argue that visual support can lead learners to depend more on images than on deeper textual processing.

It is also revealed that cognitive challenges were closely connected to affective challenges during reading activities. In Ginny's interview, she explained that her mood strongly affected her concentration and comprehension while reading, while Ron similarly stated that a bad mood reduced his ability to focus on both the story and the language. In addition, Ginny and Luna

explained that difficult language and excessive unfamiliar vocabulary sometimes caused boredom and reduced their motivation to continue reading Webtoon. These findings indicate that cognitive difficulty in processing complex language input could influence participants' emotional engagement, concentration, and motivation during reading activities. This relationship occurs because excessive cognitive demands may lead learners to feel mentally overwhelmed, which eventually affects their emotional responses and reading engagement. This finding supports Chapelle's (2001) explanation that affective challenges relate closely to learners' attention and motivation during language learning. Moreover, Leep and Tark (2022) explain that when cognitive demands are not balanced properly, learners may experience distraction, reduced focus, and mental fatigue during learning activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that cognitive and affective challenges influenced how participants processed and comprehended English Webtoons during reading activities. Difficulties in managing complex language input, combined with mood and motivational factors, affected participants' concentration, reading engagement, and ability to process language forms deeply while reading English texts. These findings support Dar et al.'s (2023) argument that effective incidental learning through Webtoons depends on the balance between learners' cognitive capacity and emotional engagement during reading activities.

4.2.2.3. Pedagogical and Technological Challenges

In this section, the researcher discusses the pedagogical and technological challenges

experienced by participants while reading English Webtoons. This discussion focuses on how the lack of instructional support and technological limitations influenced participants' reading comprehension, concentration, and engagement during reading activities.

Based on the findings, pedagogical challenges appeared when participants read Webtoons without sufficient guidance or feedback during the learning process. In Ron's journal reflection, he explained that he often had to guess vocabulary meanings independently because there was no direct explanation or confirmation of whether his interpretation was correct, while Ginny stated that she sometimes felt uncertain about her understanding due to the absence of immediate feedback. These findings indicate that the lack of instructional support made participants unsure about their comprehension while reading English texts, which could limit deeper language processing during incidental learning activities. This finding supports Chapelle's (2001) explanation that the pedagogical aspect of digital learning relates to how technology supports meaningful language learning processes. It also aligns with Dar et al. (2023), who argue that incidental learning becomes less effective when learners do not receive sufficient support or strategies to notice language forms and meanings.

Another pedagogical challenge appeared when participants used Webtoon independently without specific learning guidance. In Harry's interview, he explained that he had never received particular instructions from teachers or lecturers regarding the use of Webtoon as a learning

medium. These findings indicate that although Webtoon naturally supported enjoyable reading experiences, the absence of pedagogical guidance sometimes limited participants' awareness of language forms and learning strategies during reading activities. This finding supports Arndt's (2019) argument that learners may miss opportunities for deeper incidental language learning when there is no instructional support encouraging linguistic awareness. Furthermore, Chapelle (2001) explains that effective technology-based language learning requires appropriate pedagogical support to help learners process language input meaningfully.

It is also revealed that technological challenges affected participants' concentration and reading continuity during Webtoon reading activities. In Ginny's interview, she explained that advertisements frequently interrupted her focus while reading the storyline, while Luna stated that advertisements sometimes reduced her motivation to continue reading Webtoon. Similarly, Hermione explained that advertisements interrupted her reading comfort even though they did not completely distract her from the story. These findings indicate that technological interruptions influenced participants' reading engagement because distractions during reading activities could break concentration and reduce reading continuity. This finding supports Handayani's (2024) explanation that technological limitations and digital platform features may reduce learners' engagement with language input during online reading activities.

It is further suggest that pedagogical and technological challenges were closely interconnected during participants' reading experiences. The lack of instructional guidance caused participants to rely heavily on independent interpretation while technological interruptions such as advertisements further distracted their attention and reduced reading focus. As a result, participants sometimes concentrated more on maintaining story comprehension than on processing language input deeply during reading activities. This relationship occurs because limited pedagogical support may reduce learners' ability to manage distractions and utilize digital reading platforms effectively for language learning purposes. This finding supports Chapelle's (2001) argument that meaningful technology-based learning depends on both appropriate pedagogical support and effective use of digital media. Additionally, Harrison (2025) explains that when technological and pedagogical aspects are not properly facilitated, learners may focus more on entertainment than on language acquisition processes.

Overall, the findings suggest that pedagogical and technological challenges influenced participants' reading experiences and incidental learning processes during Webtoon reading activities. The absence of instructional guidance, combined with technological distractions such as advertisements, affected participants' concentration, comprehension, and engagement while reading English texts. These findings highlight the importance of supportive learning guidance and effective digital

environments in helping Webtoon function more optimally as a medium for assisting English reading skills.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study based on the findings and discussion discussed in the previous chapter. The conclusion summarizes the answers to the research questions regarding how EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills and the challenges they experience during the process. This section also highlights the role of Webtoon in supporting incidental language learning through meaningful and contextual reading experiences.

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how EFL students use Webtoon as an incidental learning tool for assisting English reading skills. Based on the findings, participants experienced incidental learning through elaboration, rehearsal, and automaticity while reading English Webtoons. In the elaboration stage, participants used storyline, context, character interactions, and visual elements to understand unfamiliar vocabulary and maintain reading comprehension. These findings support Hulstijn's (2001) theory that incidental learning occurs through meaningful cognitive processing during language exposure.

The findings also showed that rehearsal occurred through repeated exposure to vocabulary and expressions across different chapters. Participants gradually became more familiar with recurring words and understood their meanings more easily while reading. This repeated exposure helped participants strengthen vocabulary recognition and improve reading fluency naturally. These findings support Nation's (2017) argument that frequent exposure to meaningful language input supports vocabulary retention and reading development.

Furthermore, participants demonstrated automaticity as they became faster and more efficient in recognizing familiar vocabulary and understanding the storyline. Participants reported that they no longer needed to spend too much time guessing

meanings and could comprehend texts more fluently without relying on word-by-word translation. This finding supports Hulstijn's (2001) explanation that repeated exposure can develop more automatic language processing and support reading fluency.

However, participants also experienced several challenges during Webtoon reading activities. Linguistic challenges included unfamiliar vocabulary, slang, idioms, and figurative expressions, while cognitive and affective challenges involved difficulties in maintaining focus, processing information, and managing motivation during reading. In addition, pedagogical and technological challenges emerged due to limited instructional guidance and distractions from advertisements or platform limitations. These findings support Chapelle's (2001) view that both cognitive and technological factors influence learners' ability to process digital language input effectively.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Webtoon can support incidental learning and assist EFL students' English reading skills through contextual, multimodal, and engaging reading experiences. Through repeated exposure and contextual understanding, participants gradually developed vocabulary comprehension, reading fluency, and confidence while reading English texts.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. First, EFL students are encouraged to use English Webtoons consistently as an alternative reading medium to increase language exposure and support incidental vocabulary learning. Students are also advised to balance enjoyment and language awareness by paying attention to unfamiliar vocabulary, repeated expressions, and contextual meanings during reading activities.

Second, English teachers and lecturers are recommended to integrate Webtoon into reading activities or extensive reading

programs as a supportive and engaging learning medium. Teachers may also provide simple guidance, vocabulary reflection activities, or contextual discussion tasks to help students maximize incidental learning and improve reading comprehension without reducing the enjoyable aspect of Webtoon reading.

Third, educational practitioners should consider the importance of supportive digital learning environments when using Webtoon or similar digital media. Reducing distractions and helping students develop effective reading strategies may support better focus and more meaningful language processing during reading activities.

Finally, future researchers are recommended to explore incidental learning through Webtoon in broader contexts, such as different proficiency levels, larger participant groups, or other language skills such as listening, writing, or speaking. Further studies may also investigate the long-term impact of Webtoon reading on vocabulary retention, reading fluency, and overall English proficiency.



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READING SKILLS WITH WEBTOON**

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