

**THE INFLUENCE OF WEBTOON APPLICATION TOWARD THE
TENTH GRADERS' READING ACHIEVEMENT AT SMK NEGERI 1
SEKAYU**

A Thesis By

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English Education Study Program



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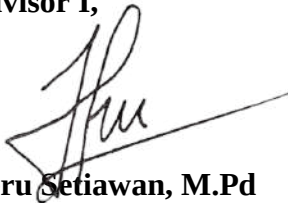
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PERNYATAAN

Saya dengan penuh tanggung jawab menyatakan bahwa skripsi ini merupakan hasil karya ilmiah yang saya susun sendiri. Seluruh data, informasi, analisis, serta pendapat yang terdapat dalam skripsi ini, kecuali yang telah dicantumkan sumber rujukannya secara jelas, diperoleh dari hasil penelitian, pengamatan, dan pemikiran saya sendiri yang dilaksanakan di bawah arahan dan bimbingan dosen pembimbing yang telah ditetapkan.

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not there was any significant improvement in students' reading achievement of narrative texts after being taught by using the Webtoon application and to find out whether or not there was any significant difference in students' reading achievement between those who were taught by using the Webtoon application and those who were taught by using conventional teaching. The population of this study was the tenth-grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu. The sample consisted of 59 students, selected by using purposive sampling, with 29 students in the experimental group and 30 students in the control group. The method of this study was quantitative research with a quasi-experimental design. The data were collected by using a reading achievement test administered as a pre-test and post-test and analyzed by using paired-samples t-test and independent-samples t-test. The results showed that the mean score of the experimental group increased from 51.03 to 83.59, while the control group increased from 58.40 to 80.13. The paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading achievement. Meanwhile, the independent-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with $p = 0.189$. Therefore, the Webtoon application improved students' reading achievement within the experimental group, but the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Keywords: Webtoon Application, Reading Achievement, Narrative Text

TABLE OF CONTENT

	PAGE
COVER	i
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
EXAMINER'S LEGITIMACY	iii
DEDICATION AND MOTTO	iv
LETTER OF STATEMENT	ix
ABSTRACT	x
TABLE OF CONTENT	xi
LIST OF TABLE	xiv
LIST OF FIGURE	xv
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Limitations of the Problem	10
1.3 Research Problems	10
1.4 Objectives of the Study	11
1.5 Significance of the Study	11
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	13
2.1 The Concept of Reading as a Skill	13
2.2 The Concepts of Reading Achievement	14
2.3 Reading Comprehension	15
2.4 Reading Aspect Measurement	16
2.5 Narrative Text	17
2.5.1 Text Function	18
2.5.2 Text Organization	19
2.5.3 Kinds of Narrative Text	19

2.6 Digital Technology in English Language Teaching.....	21
2.7 Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK).....	23
2.8 Webtoon Application as Digital Media	24
2.8.1 Features in Webtoon Application	26
2.8.2 Advantages of Webtoon Application	27
2.8.3 Limitations of Webtoon Application	28
2.9 How to Teach Narrative Reading Text Using Webtoon Application	30
2.10 Previous Related Study.....	32
2.11 Hypotheses.....	35
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	36
3.1 Research Method	36
3.2 Research Variables.....	38
3.3 Operational Definition	38
3.4 Population and Sample.....	39
3.4.1 Population	39
3.4.2 Sample	41
3.5 Techniques for Collecting Data	42
3.6 Validity and Reability	42
3.6.1 Validity of The Test	42
3.6.2 Reability of The Test.....	46
3.7 Teaching Procedure	47
3.8.1 Teaching Procedure for Experimental Group	47
3.8.2 Teaching Procedure for Control Group.....	51
3.9 Technique for Analysing the Data	54
3.9.1 Raw Score	54
3.9.2 Frequency Analysis.....	54
3.9.2 Normality and Homogeneity	55
3.9.3 Paired Sample T-test	56
3.9.4 Independent Sample T-test.....	57
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION.....	58
4.1 Findings.....	58
4.1.1 Descriptive Analysis	58
4.1.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis	62

4.2 Interpretation of The Study	66
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	69
5.1 Conclusion	69
5.2 Suggestion.....	69
5.2.1 Teacher.....	70
5.2.2 Students.....	70
5.2.3 For Researchers.....	70
REFERENCES.....	71
APPENDICES	77

LIST OF TABLE

Table 1	Types of Non-Equivalent Group Design.....	37
Table 2	Population of The Research.....	40
Table 3	Sample of the Study.....	41
Table 4	Test of Specification of Reading Comprehension Test	44
Table 5	The Classification of Reability	47
Table 6	The Teaching Schedules	52
Table 6	The Category Level of Reading Achievement.....	55
Table 7	Descriptive analysis for experimental and control group	59
Table 9	Score Distribution of Experimental Group	60
Table 10	Score Distribution of Control Group	61
Table 11	The Results of Normality Test.....	63
Table 12	The Result of The Homogeneity Test.....	64
Table 13	Paired Sample T-Test for Experimental Group	65
Table 14	Independent Sampe T-Test	66

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 1 visual of webtoon application.....	25
Figure 2 Menu of Webtoon Application	26
Figure 3. The diagram of score distribution in experimental group	60
Figure 4. The Diagram of Score Distribution in Control Group.....	62
Figure 5. The Diagram of The Result of Normality Test.....	63

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) research background, (2) limitation of the problems, (3) research problem formulations, (4) research objectives, and (5) significance of the study.

1.1 Research Background

English is one of the most important international languages used around the world. It plays a vital role in global communication, education, and technology. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and it becomes one of the main subjects at the secondary school level. Learning English helps students access a wider range of knowledge and prepare for higher education or future careers. According to Harmer (2018), English is a key tool for global communication, and mastering it enables learners to participate effectively in international interactions. Among the four English language skills, reading is one of the most essential skills for students, particularly for achieving academic success, as it enables them to understand, interpret, and acquire information from texts. This is supported by Trenkic and Warmington (2019), who found that English reading proficiency plays an important role in students' academic achievement.

Reading enables learners to understand written texts, gain information, and develop critical thinking skills. It is through reading that students can expand their vocabulary and comprehend various language structures used in real contexts. As Grabe and Stoller (2019) explain, reading is not only a receptive skill but also an interactive process that involves the reader's background knowledge, language ability, and text understanding. Therefore, improving reading skills is fundamental for learners to achieve proficiency in English and to succeed in both academic and real-life communication. Through regular reading, learners are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and language structures that can support the development of their overall language ability. According to Grabe and Yamashita (2022), vocabulary knowledge is essential for understanding written texts and plays a central role in reading development. Thus, developing reading skills provides learners with opportunities to strengthen the linguistic knowledge and comprehension abilities needed to understand English and use it effectively in academic and everyday contexts.

Many Indonesian students, however, still find reading English texts difficult. According to Firat et al. (2025), reading achievement is influenced by several factors, such as vocabulary mastery, grammatical knowledge, text structure understanding, and background knowledge. Their study reveals that Indonesian students' low reading achievement is mainly associated with limited vocabulary and insufficient background knowledge, which make it difficult for them to comprehend English texts effectively. This issue is also supported by the findings of Nanda and Azmy (2021), who reported that poor reading

comprehension remains a challenge among Indonesian secondary school students due to low English vocabulary, limited prior knowledge, and lack of motivation. Furthermore, the low level of Indonesian students' reading performance can also be seen in the latest PISA 2025 results. According to the OECD (2026), only 27% of Indonesian 15-year-old students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, meaning that approximately 73% performed below the minimum proficiency level. The average reading score of Indonesian students was 365 points, which was considerably lower than the OECD average of 461 points. These findings indicate that reading difficulties remain a broader educational concern among Indonesian students. Therefore, appropriate learning strategies and media are needed to help students develop their vocabulary, comprehension, and engagement with English texts. Although the use of appropriate learning media may lead to an increase in students' reading achievement, the increase may not necessarily be statistically significant.

Based on the researcher's observation and interview with one of the English teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu, it was found that students still had low motivation, particularly in their reading achievement. They also tended to have limited vocabulary, which made it harder for them to comprehend reading materials effectively. In addition, English teachers of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu said that students often showed low motivation during reading activities, such as lack of interest in reading texts, difficulty in maintaining focus, and low participation in class. According to Filgona et al. (2020), motivation plays a crucial role in learning process, as it significantly influences students' engagement and academic

achievement. Certain factors can impact students' motivation, including their needs, interests, enjoyment, social environment, teachers, instructional methods, and learning environments. This relationship is also evident in reading instruction. Pratolo et al. (2025), in a study conducted in an Indonesian secondary EFL classroom, found that students' low motivation and limited engagement were persistent challenges in reading activities, while improvements in motivation and engagement were accompanied by substantial improvements in reading comprehension. These findings suggest that students' motivation and engagement should be considered important factors in designing reading instruction, particularly when students experience difficulties in understanding English texts.

Moreover, teachers today are increasingly expected to integrate digital technology meaningfully into their teaching practices while also mastering pedagogical and content knowledge. This expectation is reflected in the Indonesian educational context, where teacher professional development programs for senior high school and vocational school teachers emphasize digital literacy, pedagogical competence, and the application of TPACK in learning. These initiatives indicate that teachers need not only technical knowledge of digital tools but also the ability to integrate technology appropriately with instructional strategies and subject content (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2026).

This integration is conceptualized in the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which emphasizes the relationship

among technology, pedagogy, and content in the learning process. According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), TPACK provides teachers with the essential understanding needed to design effective and technology-supported learning experiences. Furthermore, Arifuddin et al. (2025) assert that teachers who apply TPACK principles can develop engaging, interactive, and contextually relevant lessons that foster students' comprehension and motivation. Through this approach, teachers are better able to select appropriate digital tools, such as Webtoon and other online reading media, to facilitate students' understanding by combining visual and textual elements. Therefore, understanding TPACK framework helps teachers create effective reading instruction that harmonizes pedagogy, meaningful content, and technological innovation.

Effective reading instruction should actively engage students in constructing meaning from texts rather than merely asking them to read and answer comprehension questions. It should provide students with opportunities to interact with texts, activate their background knowledge, develop vocabulary, identify important information, and apply appropriate comprehension strategies. In addition, reading materials should be meaningful, engaging, and appropriate to students' language proficiency and learning needs. Grabe and Stoller (2019) emphasize that successful reading involves an active and interactive process in which readers combine their linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and understanding of textual information to construct meaning. Therefore, teachers need to design reading activities and select learning media that can facilitate students' comprehension while maintaining their motivation and engagement. In

this context, Webtoon can serve as a potential medium because it combines written texts with visual elements and presents stories in an accessible and engaging digital format. The visual context provided through characters, settings, and story sequences may help students understand the meaning of the text, while the digital and story-based format can encourage them to participate more actively in reading activities. Thus, the use of Webtoon in reading instruction can provide an alternative learning medium that supports interactive, meaningful, and engaging reading experiences.

Webtoon, derived from the combination of the words “*Web*” and “*Cartoon*,” is defined as a digital comic published online in chapters (Cho, 2025). According to As Sabiq and Rohmatulhaq (2024), Webtoon offers several advantages as an English learning medium, particularly in enhancing students’ learning motivation, reading interest, self-directed learning, and reading skills. Their study, which involved 48 students, found that students had a positive perception of Webtoon as an accessible and engaging medium for learning English independently. The findings also indicated that students perceived Webtoon as having a positive influence on their reading skills, while its visual elements helped some students understand the main ideas of texts and unfamiliar vocabulary. Therefore, Webtoon can serve not only as an enjoyable reading platform but also as a potential digital medium for supporting students’ English reading development.

Several studies have highlighted the effectiveness of Webtoon as a medium for improving students' reading skills, particularly reading comprehension and achievement. Nasrullah et al. (2024) found that the use of English Comic Webtoon and students' reading motivation significantly contributed to reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students. Similarly, Ghulam et al. (2023) demonstrated that students taught through the Webtoon application showed notable improvement in their reading comprehension, as evidenced by higher post-test scores. These findings suggest that Webtoon can support students' reading comprehension through its combination of written text and visual elements.

Besides supporting reading comprehension, Webtoon can also provide opportunities for vocabulary development and contextual understanding. Winarti and Kusuma (2024) found a significant effect of Webtoon on students' vocabulary development in reading instruction among ninth-grade students. Their findings also showed positive student responses toward Webtoon, including increased motivation, self-confidence, interest in learning, and enjoyment. In addition, recent research has found that the visual context provided by Webtoon can help students understand unfamiliar vocabulary and retain newly learned words. The combination of visual information, storylines, and written language allows students to encounter vocabulary within meaningful contexts rather than learning words in isolation. Therefore, Webtoon can be considered a potential digital medium for supporting students' reading comprehension and vocabulary development while making English reading activities more engaging.

Despite its benefits in enhancing students' reading comprehension, the use of Webtoon as a learning medium also presents several disadvantages. Rozaq and Huda (2024) pointed out that some students faced challenges such as inconsistent participation, lack of focus, and dependence on visual aids, which could hinder deeper textual comprehension. The reliance on images might cause students to pay more attention to visual elements rather than the written content, leading to a superficial understanding of the text. Another consideration concerns the quality and appropriateness of the language presented in Webtoon. Unlike textbooks and other instructional materials that are generally selected and structured according to learners' proficiency levels and curriculum objectives, Webtoon episodes may contain informal expressions, slang, abbreviated forms, or other conversational language. Although such language can expose students to authentic and contextualized English, it may also introduce vocabulary and grammatical structures that are unfamiliar or inappropriate for their current proficiency level. Therefore, the credibility of Webtoon as an instructional medium depends not only on its visual and engaging features but also on the teacher's careful selection of Webtoon content according to students' proficiency, learning objectives, and the language presented in the episodes.

Additionally, limited internet access and the need for compatible digital devices may restrict the full implementation of Webtoon-based learning. Wulandari and Widodo (2024) found that Webtoon-based digital comics require internet connectivity for access, which can become a limitation when students have unstable or limited internet connections. Although visual media such as

Webtoon can make learning more engaging and easier for students to understand by presenting information through attractive and meaningful images, its use should be balanced with conventional reading practices. Haryanto et al. (2026) found that some students tended to pay greater attention to the visual elements of Webtoon than to the reading text itself, indicating that excessive reliance on visuals may reduce students' attention to written language. Students should still be encouraged to focus on written language and comprehend texts independently without becoming overly dependent on visual support. Therefore, teachers need to combine Webtoon-based activities with appropriate reading strategies and conventional reading practices so that students can develop not only interest and motivation in reading but also the vocabulary, comprehension, and critical reading skills needed for deeper textual understanding.

Even though many studies have discussed the use of Webtoon in language learning, most of them focused on reading comprehension or motivation rather than reading achievement as measured by test performance. In addition, many of these studies were conducted at junior high school or senior high school. Research on the use of Webtoon for Vocational High School students, especially at SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu, is still limited. This gap creates an opportunity to explore how Webtoon can influence students' reading achievement in this specific context.

To conclude, reading is a key skill in learning English, yet many students still experience difficulties in understanding English texts due to factors such as low motivation and limited vocabulary. Based on the researcher's teaching

experience during the PPL program and supported by previous research findings, Webtoon can be considered a potential digital medium for addressing some of these challenges in reading instruction. By combining visual and textual elements within engaging storylines, Webtoon may provide students with contextual support for understanding texts and encourage greater engagement in reading activities. Therefore, investigating the influence of Webtoon on students' reading achievement is important to determine whether this digital medium can effectively support students' reading development, particularly in understanding narrative texts. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information for English teachers in selecting and integrating engaging digital media into reading instruction.

1.2 Limitations of the Problem

This study focused on the use of the Webtoon application as a learning media to improve students' reading achievement on narrative text. The population of this study was the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu in the academic year 2025/2026.

1.3 Research Problems

Based on the background and the limitation above, the problems of this study were formulated as follows:

1. Was there any significant improvement in students' reading achievement among the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu after using Webtoon application?

2. Was there any significant difference in students' reading achievement between the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu who were taught by using Webtoon application and those who were not?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research problem formulations above, the objectives of this study were follows:

1. To find out whether there was a significant improvement in students' reading achievement among the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu after using Webtoon application.
2. To find out whether there was a significant difference in students' reading achievement between the tenth graders of SMK Negeri 1 Sekayu who were taught by using Webtoon application and those who were not.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this research can hopefully contribute positive significance to the teacher, the student, the school, the researcher herself and other researcher.

a) For the Teachers

This study might give teachers an alternative medium in teaching reading. By using the Webtoon application, teachers could make reading activities more attractive and meaningful for students.

b) For the Students

The use of Webtoon could increase students ' motivation and help them improve their reading achievement through fun and interactive media.

c) For the Researcher

The results of this study were expected the researcher gain experience in conducting educational research and improve her understanding of English teaching, particularly in teaching reading skills.

d) For other Researchers

Hopefully, the result of this study can be a valuable input for other researchers to conduct a further study or research.

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