

The Investigation EFL Students Reading Interest in Webtoon Application for Studying or Entertainment?

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ABSTRACT

Interest in reading is an activity carried out without coercion from others but comes from yourself. Interest in reading can grow if students have a high interest in reading. This study investigates the EFL students' reading interest in the Webtoon Application. Its purpose is to know the students' interest in reading Webtoon for studying or entertainment. Webtoon is a type of digital comic that originated in South Korea. Webtoon contains a collection of storytelling images published online with several genres such as drama, fantasy, comedy, horror, and a slice of life and has five languages available, they are Korean, Japanese, Thai, English, and Indonesian. The research used qualitative design as a method for collecting the data. Therefore, the instruments used to collect the data were observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were collected and analyzed by doing observations with the students outside the class. It was conducted at the English Department in the 5th semester of IAIN Madura which consisted of students who were interested in reading Webtoons. The finding showed that EFL students reading interests in Webtoon Applications were: 1) hobby, 2) story, 3) picture/visual, 4) information and 5) genre. Based on the research results, the researchers concluded that EFL students' reading interest in Webtoon Applications is just for Entertainment not for studying to increase their English skills as Students of the English Department.

Keywords: EFL Students, Reading, Reading Interest, Webtoon Application, Vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

As EFL students, we are expected to have good capability of reading skills. As cited by (Wita Rela Ningsih et al., 2021) Reading serves as a bridge to betterment. It follows that reading is essential for people to succeed in life because knowledge is a need for success. Knowledge and information are connected. People have information; it was implied that they also have greater in-depth knowledge. On the other hand, when people lack information, it signifies that they are ignorant. People can compete and survive in their life even when they lack sufficient information. As a result, reading is important and serves as a key to unlocking all informational doors. Reading skills can achieve when the students have a high interest in reading.

Meanwhile, Ainley et al. (2020) interest play an essential and necessary role in learning. It means students could be difficult to follow the learning activities when they do not have an interest. According to Sharon (2020) reading interest is defined as readings done when students are outside the school compound. In this study, the researcher found from the phenomenal that EFL students have an interest in reading Webtoon Applications outside the school or college.

Nowadays, because of its trend, many students are now reading and interested in it. In the beginning, it serves as an entertainment piece only. But as we can see nowadays, readers almost spend their time reading different series of stories in it, neglecting their homework and just keeping on reading. But some students also use it as a part of their reading habit for them to improve their skills.

In this instance, Webtoon is a free application that can be viewed on a mobile phone by anyone on the globe. Another form of visual entertainment that is becoming more and more well-liked among young people is the LINE Webtoon. LINE Webtoon is an acronym for "the cartoon website," also known as "the world wide web + cartoon," which refers to an image with a plot, often known as a "comic," that is released over an online network. According to Zur (2016) Webtoons, which were invented by a Korean artist, soon became popular among the younger generation because of their accessibility, diversity of genres, rapid publication, optimization for hand-held devices, and ingenious strategy for maintaining readers' interest. Webtoons are a collection of narrative visuals that have been published online in a variety of genres, including drama, fantasy, humor, horror, and slice-of-life, which encourages students or readers to read more.

In this era, many students are interested in technology, because they don't need to bother buying books, they just need their cell phones. Today's millennial children can get any information and learn through gadgets. According to J.McCoog (2008) A millennial is a member of the generation who connects to the internet at home, at school, and wherever else they go. Millennial learners are harder to teach than older generations. Teachers in the millennium should blend the materials with various situations.

One way for teachers to make their classes more engaging is by using webcomics. Webtoon is the free program that should be used in this instance. It's quite simple to use. In addition, there are numerous images to pique the kids' curiosity. Then, it engages in a brief dialogue. When reading, it is more humorous and engaging due to the usage of graphics. It's crucial to comprehend a straightforward dialogue to increase language competency. Additionally, Webtoon is beneficial for intermediate and advanced students, especially for illegal students who desire to grasp vocabulary. As the study of (Nisa Aulia Istiqlal et al., 2021) It is clear from the research's findings that this activity aids students in expressing their opinions about the texts they have read as well as in discovering and comprehending new vocabulary.

Particularly for Indonesian students, a smartphone is an indispensable part of life today. The use of digital media will be enhanced in this situation. The pupils are looking for something new, online, and digital. The use of media in the classroom has a significant impact on student learning. In the current era of exponential knowledge expansion and accelerated technological advancement, the necessity to engage in lifelong learning is becoming increasingly critical (Lyddon, 2016). Instructions in the classroom today should use methods that digital learners are accustomed to. Digital learners who have grown up in the mobile era and have witnessed the relentless and quick growth of technology need a familiar yet promising learning tool (Mutiaraningrum & Nugroho, 2021)

EFL learners require good electronic media in improving their English skills in speaking, writing, and reading. Reading comprehension and other language abilities are crucial to EFL instruction. Reading comprehension and other language proficiency are two of the four requirements for studying EFL. Numerous studies have suggested that Webtoons can help people with their English language skills (Tifani et al., 2020), (Putri Pratiwi, 2021), (Megananda Cynthia et al., 2022), (Jofitasari, 2022), (Anggraeni Dwi Hartati et al., 2023).

Apart from improving English Skills, Webtoon also has several benefits for other learning. (Rizqi Ayu Wulandari et al., 2019) This research is discussed using Webtoons as media to develop millennial learners, (Kevin Aditia et al., 2022) Webtoons improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills, Khudlori & Bahtiar Efendi (2022) the respondents' English skills and reading interest increased with the use of the webtoon application, Ariel (2020) this study was appropriate to be applied for the students of English Department as a supporting media in Learning English Grammar.

The student's reactions to the usage of LINE Webtoon in the classroom are generally favorable, and they grow more motivated and engaged in studying English as they have fun using it. However, teachers are encouraged to choose comics more carefully in terms of substance and wording, as well as to handle low-achieving kids in the classroom in novel ways (Ai Setialis et al., 2017).

Even with the development of technology, many teachers use applications as a medium for learning both online and offline classes. So that the application can create a good impact on the teaching-learning process and attract students' interest in learning, especially learning English. In the study of Yuliani & Purnama Sari M (2021) When using Webtoon short stories in online English classes, the study's quantitative findings revealed that students' perceptions and interest in them were favorable and significantly demonstrated a high level, while qualitative approaches revealed that the webtoon short stories were engaging, inspiring, and enjoyable.

In another study using Webtoons as teaching-learning offline (Bana, 2020) It was found that slightly more than half of the respondents believed the internet had favorably influenced their reading habits. In particular, when reading narrative content, webtoons can help students improve their reading comprehension (Widiyarti et al., 2021). Media LINE Webtoon has a substantial positive impact on students (Wita Rela Ningsih et al., 2021), Moreover webtoon application is interesting media used in reading activity because containing and cover electronic comics, online comics, digital comics, etc. Ali & Emirati (2021) then, Line Webtoon media also has a significant effect on students 'vocabulary (Nova Sitanjak et al., 2022).

Therefore, to fill in the gaps of previous studies, this study focuses on the reading interest of EFL students in Webtoon Application to know their reading interest for studying or entertainment. All previous studies above focus on the advantage of Webtoons in the teaching-learning process, an academic aspect. But, this research wants to know the EFL Student's interest in reading Webtoons outside the class or teaching-learning process, if they used Webtoons for study or just entertainment themselves. As English as Foreign Language (EFL) is important to have an interest in reading to improve their English such as using Webtoon which has many languages, including English. From the phenomena above there two research problems must be answered (1) How is the reading interest of EFL students in Webtoon? (2) What is the purpose of EFL Student's interest in reading Webtoons? For study or entertainment?

METHODS

The writers used a descriptive qualitative method in this research. Sugiyono (2016) argued that It was made that because qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting, it is frequently referred to as naturalistic research. To comprehend and explain social phenomena, the qualitative approach makes use of qualitative data from sources including interviews, documentation, and observation.

The research instrument used an interview accompanied by audio recordings and pictures or photographs. The researchers used purposive sampling in selecting the participants. The participants were EFL students reading interest in webtoons. This research was conducted at IAIN Madura. It is because the researcher found this research issue there. The researcher will take 10 students of the English Department in 5th Semester who has an interest in reading

Webtoon outside the class. Thus, the researcher conducted the observation as a participant who read a webtoon and gathered with the students to do some interviews.

The interviews did do on one and used unstructured interviews so that the researcher can get furthermore data needed. According to Creswell (2012) One-on-One Interviews are a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time. For the documentation, the researcher Record information from the documents. In this case, the researcher used private documentation. The researcher asked permission for the students to ask for their screen shoot of genres, titles, and what kind of languages they used to read in Webtoon. The steps of data analysis are organizing and familiarizing data, coding and reducing, interpreting, representing report qualitative finding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the interviews that have been done with the respondents, the researcher got the data. The data was made for answering the two research problems. Then the results and the discussion are as follows.

1. How is the reading interest of EFL students in Webtoon?

The students who read Webtoon applications have many reasons for interest in reading. They read Webtoons to be their favorite activity in reading in daily life. Their reading interest, such as genre, story, visual, entertainment, and hobby. The researcher could find them through interviews. The researcher only took the student's reading interest to be reported in this research.

a. Hobby

EFL students read webtoons because they have a hobby of reading as a daily activity that they do in their spare time, to pass the time.

Student 6: "Because when I have spare time I usually read webtoons to kill time to relax because I'm in school always busy so with webtoons I feel can relax at the time. And also the purpose of reading giving a new knowledge for me and sometimes I feel enjoy"

Student 10: "The purpose is with reading the Webtoon we can know the story, can enjoy the story, and also do our hobby. To my hobby just hobby."

It can be said that the EFL students' interest in reading Webtoon because of their hobby leads them easily read without force. Based on the big Indonesian dictionary (David Moeljadi et al., 2016) "*Hobby*" in the Indonesian dictionary is that hobbies are a hobby; special pleasure in leisure, not the main job.

More significantly, engaging in recreational activities fosters happy feelings, strengthens social bonds and offers chances to pick up new information and abilities (J.Jimenez, 2017). Every person has a different style of reading critically, and these variations are a reflection of how the brain retains and processes information. Because of this, reading is a popular activity among students. The 'Hobby' variable denotes the leisure activities that students like the most. This relates to the research Quan Hoang Vuong et al (2019) Notably, while the results indicate that many students enjoy reading, just 331 of the 1676 respondents (or 20% of the sample) said that reading is their favorite pastime. Similar to the students' Hoang Vuong et al. webtoon, study choice As many as 41% of the kids selected a novel to read. Both novels and webcomics have

b. Story

In the comics, the narration and the picture complement each other. Thus, a comic artist "only" turns the narration into a picture. However, the diversion is a good story. From the interview with the students, the second interest found in this research is the story.

This was testified by:

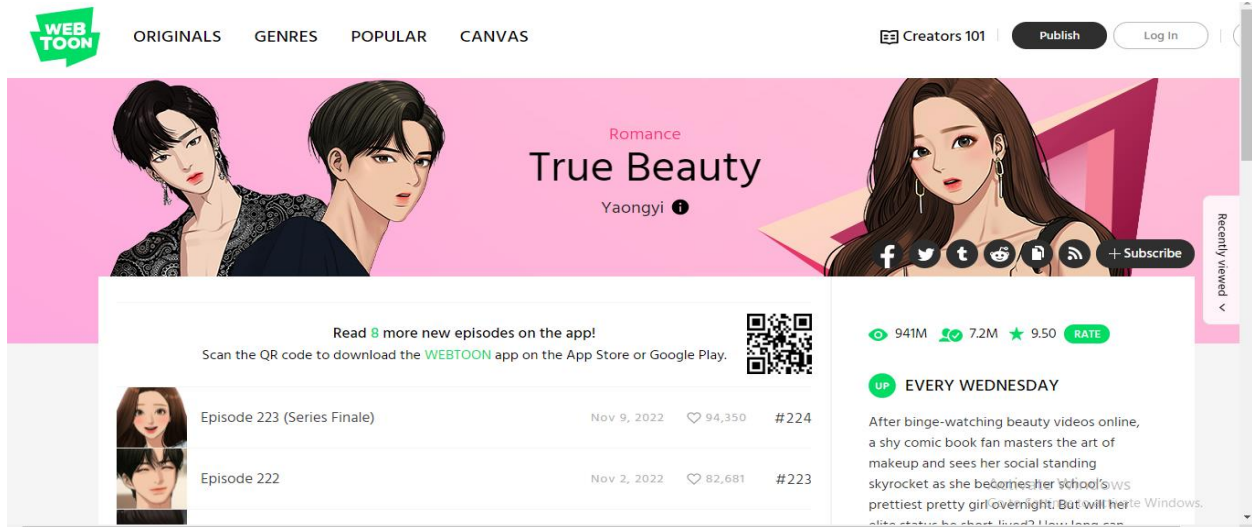
Student 1: "Yes, because apart from liking webtoons. then it's just a hobby. There's a lot of stories in Webtoon, that's the genre to know that."

Student 2: "Look at the story before, depending on the story, because generally, I like reading comics because there is a picture and there is text. So, I'm not bored."

Good stories are the main thing that makes students have a hobby or habit of reading. Reading fires the imagination of the person. captivating narratives that draw readers in. Reading is the skill of recognizing, analyzing, and comprehending words or phrases. Interpreting a written linguistic message and examining and understanding the meaning of written or printed letters, words, or phrases are cognitive processes. (Ahmad Lone, 2012).

A webtoon or comic is a collection of illustrations used to convey a story; the majority of comics also have subtitles and speech. Due to the brief and easy language that supports and accompanies the visual messages in comics and webcomics, they are also readily available as reading materials Tiemensma (2009) and is written mostly in the natural, informal vocabulary of common speech.

Picture 1. Short Story



Like the picture above which has 200 episodes in one story. The students like to read it because Webtoon has many interesting short stories. Therefore, short stories are often used as learning media to improve students' motivation in reading (Jeni, 2020), (Dwi Indah Pratiwi et al., 2020), (Eka Pransiska, 2018) and also to expand vocabulary (Rosana Eklesia & Angelina, 2019), (Myrrha Rahmawati, 2020) and (Wijayanti, 2020) Thus students are not easily bored in reading.

c. Genre

Inside the Webtoon apart from a good story and pictures. There are many genres that readers can choose according to their interests and preferences. From the interviews with the students, the third reason that made them interested in Webtoon is Genres.

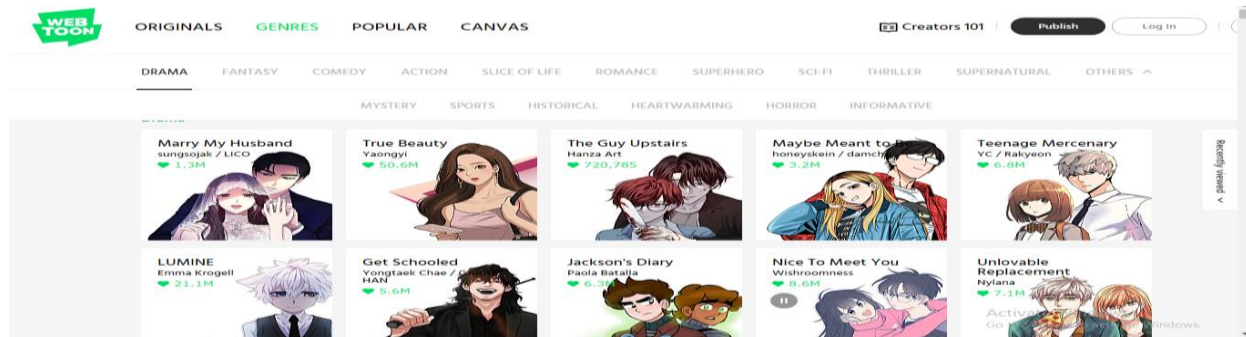
Student 8: "I think webtoon is an application that has many genres and we can choose the genre according to our interests or mood and what we want to read, and that's very interesting."

Student 9: Because of the genre like drama, fantasy, romance. Today, the genre has evolved into an experimental literary platform where authors may realize their aesthetic innovations and shift their ideologies and ethical principles. (Saodat Ergashevna et al., 2020).

The same thing was also said by Jang & Eun Song (2017) Professional comic book creators joined as webtoons grew in popularity and added to their variety. At first, societal

concerns from everyday life, such as poverty, cyberbullying, suicide, young unemployment, and domestic abuse, were the major topics of webtoons. Amateurs produced real-world incidents that elicited sympathy from the audience. These creations gave rise to the new webtoon genre known as *il-sang-toon*, which deals with stories from ordinary life.

Picture 2. Webtoon Genres



Currently, the Webtoon genre has 16 genres that can be selected and read according to readers' interests. The 16 genres include drama, fantasy, comedy, action, a slice of life romance, superhero, sci-fi, thriller, supernatural, mystery, sports, historical, heart-warming, horror, and informative. The fantasy and romance genres are the two that EFL students favor out of all the others.

d. Information

In reading, there must be something called information that the reader can get from the results of the reading. Thus many things that were not known before by the reader become aware of new things from the text he reads. Therefore, EFL students make their reason for reading Webtoons to get information, as explained by the following three informants.

Student 3: "To know the information from the text."

Student 5: "For me, to understand something, anything. The purpose of reading is to know the information from a text."

Student 9: "To obtain information from the contents of the text."

All the interest from students 3,5, and 9 reading Webtoon are for understanding and knowing the information from the story. This reason is provided by Sareb Putra (2017) that reading has several advantages, there are five benefits of reading 1) finding some information and knowledge that is very useful in the practice of daily life. 2) Communicate with thoughts, messages, and impressions of famous thinkers from all corners of the world. 3) Following the development of the world's latest science and technology. 4) Knowing the major events in the history, civilization, and culture of a nation. 5) Solve various life problems and deliver someone to be smart. The first advantage will have the best interest of those students who read Webtoons for getting Information.

Daily activities and reading are inextricably linked. Students read a variety of written materials, including newspapers, magazines, fiction books, textbooks, and more. Students can get a lot of information, knowledge, enjoyment, and even problem-solving skills through reading (Wahyu Juniarto, 2019).

e. Picture/ Visual

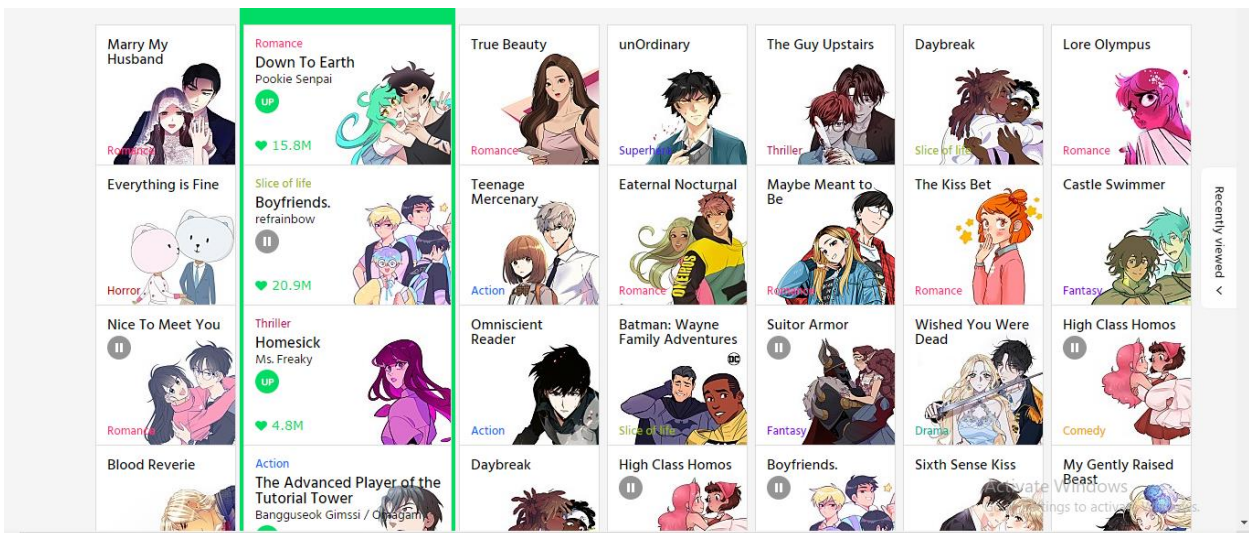
Reading with pictures gives freshness to the eyes. So that makes reading more interesting. This is also felt by EFL students when reading Webtoons.

Student 4: "Yes, I like Webtoon because of the visuals. Visual characters in webtoon are handsome, beautiful, and yeah it's good."

Student 7: "Because there are a lot of pictures, make me interested."

Supitri (2019) said that an innovative tool for teaching reading comprehension is the online comic platform Webtoon. Furthermore, Webtoon readers will find the application to be free and simple to use. The term "webtoon" refers to a combination of the word "web" and "cartoon." Because webtoons employ simple words, vibrant colors, and background sounds to assist readers to follow the story, they can engage students' interest in reading while facilitating easy text comprehension.

Picture 3. Webtoon Picture/Visual



2. What is the purpose of EFL Student's interest in reading Webtoons? For study or entertainment?

This study focuses on students' reading interest in Webtoon outside of class hours. Are they using their interest in reading Webtoons outside of class time to learn and broaden their English knowledge through Webtoons or are they only interested in reading Webtoons just for entertainment?

a. For Study

From the results of interviews with EFL students, one by one, the data obtained was that only two EFLs used the Webtoon as their studying material to deepen their English while enjoying their reading.

Student 5: " Yes I do. I think webtoon is one of the webcomic application that I can enjoy without force. I like reading Webtoon. Webtoons still make me enjoy even though I choose English, and can make me study and enjoyment. Both of them."

Student 7: "Yes, mainly for fun, sis, but apart from that you also have to make the Webtoon so that it is useful for learning. Learn it by adding vocab, which is vocab."

Popular Korean webcomics are now available in many countries native languages on the Internet and mobile platforms. 18 million readers worldwide have access to Korean webtoons thanks to Naver since July 2014. Initially just offering webtoons in English, Naver has more recently expanded its language offerings to include Chinese, Taiwanese, Thai, and Indonesian (Lynn, 2016).

Due to Webtoon's extensive language features, which include English and Indonesian. It can be used freely by EFL students as their teaching resource. So, students may learn while having fun. According to student 5 who enjoys reading English-language webcomics. The fact that English is a library language and the gateway to the universe of information attests to this. S this language contains the most recent technologies, discoveries, and research findings across a variety of sectors. It takes strong reading abilities to access this massive corpus (Lustyantie & Aprilia, 2020)

The student uses Webtoon for vocabulary learning in the second step. Therefore, student number seven makes use of Webtoon, which offers comics in numerous languages, including English. Students learning English as a second language have the chance to sharpen their language skills, including their vocabulary, by accessing English-language Webtoons. (Aqilla Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021) This reason is supported by several studies that use Webtoons to increase students' vocabulary among them (Sanjaya, 2017), (Sahrini, 2021) and (Maharani, 2021).

b. For Entertainment

The results of the second reading interest are inversely proportional to the Study. 8 out of 10 college students choose Webtoons only for entertainment, not for studying. Here's why they read Webtoons as entertainment, not learning.

This was testified by:

Student 1: "Just for fun, hobby too. Consider reading as a hobby."

Student 2: "For enjoy, to spend my time."

Student 3: "For enjoying my free time, to entertain ourselves. Just for fun."

Student 4: "Entertainment. Because after university, I'm bored."

Student 6: "Just for my entertainment, I like entertainment in my life."

Student 8: "usually to fill empty time or not a hobby. My hobby is reading."

Student 9: "I get to entertain, feel enjoy, and sometimes in one story in webtoon I can learn the experience in my life."

Student 10: "Just for fun, hobby too. Just called it reading as a hobby."

The vast majority of students like to read writings that pique their attention, such as literature that includes visuals, brief passages, or trendy or fascinating materials (Ziska, 2021). Even from the webtoon, they can learn life experiences as they life experience F. Lee (2017) Stated that the power of the webtoon I am referring to is in its presentation of reality or rather its ability to disrupt the reader's, in this case, my, concept of reality, in their casual plodding through the mundane and endless progression of everyday life under capitalism.

All students who are interested in reading webtoon just for entertainment because they have a busy time in university then they use webtoons to enjoy their free time. The same case with R. Ramos & R. Prestoza (2022) Nowadays, because of this trend, many students are now reading and interested in it. In the beginning, it serves as an entertainment piece only. But as we can see nowadays, readers almost spend their time reading different series of stories in it, neglecting their homework and just keeping on reading.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that EFL students at IAIN Madura 5th Semester are interested in Reading Webtoons for several reasons including hobbies, stories, genres, information, and pictures or visuals. Some of them are interested because they have a hobby of reading, and there are also because the stories on webtoons are good and have many genres and interesting pictures. Besides that, they also want to get information from the text they read on the webtoon.

Of their interest in reading Webtoons, only a few of them use them for learning, especially learning English to improve their English knowledge. Out of 10 students, only 2 use it to learn English, one of them is to increase their vocabulary, and the other is to get used to English so he chooses to read Webtoons in English. The rest of the EFL students only use Webtoons for entertainment as a way to relieve stress from busy campus life, and only read webtoons for enjoyment, and fill their free time, because they also have a hobby of reading.

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