CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Over the past decade, there has been a growing body of research on the impact of social media on learning English vocabulary. The exposure to English language and terminologies on social media has provided individuals with opportunities to learn and practice English vocabulary in various contexts (Bown & Pullen, 2020). Furthermore, social media has been found to serve as an effective learning medium, providing easily accessible information sources, increasing student motivation, and improving vocabulary acquisition (AfiahP et al., 2022).

Several studies have highlighted the positive influence of social media platforms on vocabulary development and language learning. According to Sidgi (2021), social media impacts learners' confidence, motivation, and positive attitude towards personal improvement in vocabulary and language use skills. Engagements on social media offer a positive attitude and the motivation to integrate different vocabularies into communication. Another study from Zainal & Rahmat (2020), states that the impact of social media on learning English vocabulary may improve language skills. Exposure to a wide range of English vocabularies on social media has been found to improve learners' language skills, including reading, listening, writing, and vocabulary understanding and usage. Research has aimed to identify the impact of social media on English vocabulary development, revealing that social media enhances language learning and vocabulary, and influences interest in language acquisition skills.

English is widely used on social media platforms including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok as the primary language of communication. The diversity of English language users on social media provides a good learning environment for ESL and EFL learners to understand the meaning and context of words (Sidgi, 2021). For

instance, using X (formerly Twitter) for vocabulary learning. Research on learning vocabulary through Twitter suggests that while the platform has the potential to enhance vocabulary acquisition, the effectiveness of this method may vary among individuals and depends on factors such as interest in social media, motivation to learn, and the quality of the content being shared (Antle, 2018). X, one of the most widely used apps today, has a tremendous impact on its users' development because it may be utilized for educational purposes. This does not rule out the possibility, English learning which happened on X can become a language teaching and learning tool in the digital era. There are various ways where X is used for learning a language, especially English vocabulary, and one of them is through fanfiction as one of the content tweets on X.

Jamison (2013) defines fan fiction as writing that continues, interrupts, re-imagines, or repeats stories or characters that others have written. In the study conducted by Agustine A. et al. (2022), Duffet writes that fans make fan fiction based on their favourite things—for a more general description, think of an idol, influencer, artist, etc as the muse. While fanfiction alone cannot replace formal language learning, it offers a supplementary resource that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration among English language learners. Its popularity and accessibility make it an attractive choice for individuals seeking to expand their linguistic abilities while enjoying a passion for fictional narratives (Nawaz, 2022).

One of the most popular platforms, X also allows users to write fanfiction stories through a thread known as *Alternative Universe*, or AU. Additionally, X threads are collections of related posts by a single person that they may utilize to convey their thoughts. They can also be used to connect posts that share a subject or that discuss an idea that has already been posted. Users may now post up to 4000 characters, up from the limit of 280 characters that could be sent as of March 2021 (Bunga & Warni, 2024). According to Shannon Sauro (2019), she describes an *Alternative Universe* (AU) is a fan fiction narrative that alters the original traits of the characters, including their

gender, colour or ethnicity, occupation, name, and status in society. Stated differently, an AU involves "restructuring the plot to better portray the variety of perspectives (imagination) and experiences" in the novel. (Thomas and Stornaiuolo 2016, p. 314).

The story of "Alster Lake" by @auriesa is one example of the AU's popularity. This work received 74.000 reposts, 15.000 quotes, and over 211.000 likes in 2022 which is adapted to be released as a fiction novel book and has sold 50.000 copies. This shows the public's interest in the *Alternative Universe*. This suggests that AU does have a special attraction that has the power to draw attention. Another piece of work that received a lot of attention was the AU "Hold On, It Hurts" created by user @lalalafindyou with 102.000 reposts, 23.000 quotes, and 249.000 likes on X.

Even so, there is still a lack of recognition of the *Alternative Universe* (AU) existence that can be a medium for learning English among X users. As evidenced by the lack of research on AU as English learning media. To repeat, a previous study of how AU's popularity has affected people's reading interest, accordingly (Agustine et al., 2022), they discovered that, while not totally influencing it, popularity does have a relationship with reading habits. Contributing to the increasing reading interest research, Komariyah et al. (2022) states the research findings indicated that adolescents' interest in reading is increased by the *Alternative Universe*. Subsequently, with the study by Bunga & Warni (2024), finds that people feel deeply affected each time they read AU. Additionally, they can learn new things using the *Alternative Universe*. As a result, individuals are able to acquire new skills, like vocabulary, and get courage to write neatly. By this previous research, the researcher wants to do the study more about the influence of the *Alternative Universe* but focused on how it can help in enriching English vocabulary.

Research on the potential of AU as an English learning media is important for several reasons. Firstly, it is a popular and engaging form of media that can motivate learners to improve their English language skills. Secondly, AU provides learners with an opportunity to expand their vocabulary

in a creative and collaborative environment. Thirdly, AU can help learners develop cultural awareness and understanding by exploring different perspectives and themes in fictional narratives. Therefore, research on the use of AU in English language learning can inform the development of effective teaching strategies and materials that incorporate this media. By understanding the potential benefits and challenges of using AU in English language learning, educators can better support learners in their language acquisition journey.

Hence, this study aims to close a gap between existing research by evaluating the potential benefits of AU usage for learning English vocabulary by examining K-Pop fans' perceptions of these potential benefits. Mainly investigate the perspectives of AU reader K-Pop fans on X to learn and improve English vocabulary acquisition. With a principle, since people often find it difficult to understand the English language. Therefore, a variety of learning techniques must be used to maximize their chances of learning new words (Damanik & Katemba, 2021).

Theoretically, this study is intended to add to English Language Learning research, especially in the field of education by producing learning theories for learning English vocabulary through literary works. Practically it is expected to be a model or reference for other researchers who study the same language field and readers to broaden their insight about media in learning English vocabulary.

Overall, the research suggests that the use of alternative mediums, such as *Alternative Universe*, has been a notable area of focus in the Indonesian context for enhancing English vocabulary learning. These studies provide insights into the unique approaches and challenges associated with vocabulary learning in the Indonesian educational setting.

B. Research Problems

Based on the background of the study, the research question of the study is formulated as follows:

1. To what extent does *Alternative Universe* (AU) engage K-Pop fans in learning English?
2. How does *Alternative Universe* (AU) contribute to expanding K-Pop fans' vocabulary?
3. How can *Alternative Universe* (AU) help K-Pop fans develop cultural awareness and understanding?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of research question, the purpose of the study are::

1. To investigate the extent to which *Alternative Universe* (AU) engages K-Pop fans in learning English,
2. To examine the how *Alternative Universe* (AU) contributes to expanding K-Pop fans' vocabulary,
3. To investigate the role of *Alternative Universe* (AU) in helping K-Pop fans develop cultural awareness and understanding.

D. Significance of the Research

1. Theoretical

Theoretically, this study is intended to add to English Language Learning research, especially in the field of education by producing learning theories for learning English vocabulary through literary works.

2. Practical

Practically, it is contributed to:

a) K-Pop Fans

It is expected to help K-Pop fans to improve their English vocabulary through *Alternative Universe*. Beside from the official contents released by K-Pop Agencies, this is one of many fan works that may give another impact to the K-Pop fans as self-learning itself.

b) English teacher

It is expected to help teachers understand how other media on the internet can be a fun learning medium and interesting topic to be used as a supplementary resource to be taught in class after understanding how the K-Pop fanfiction works in learning English especially for learning vocabulary.

c) Researcher in the future

Expected to be a comparative material and or reference for other researchers who analyze the same thing in the field of English language learning.

d) Readers in general

May it provide information to readers' insight about English language learning, especially English vocabulary.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

To avoid misunderstanding, the researcher limits the informant to a focused and detailed study. This research focuses on The K-Pop fans of any K-pop group's fandom or K-Pop fans in general, who are non-English speakers, who read *Alternative Universe* and active on X as the platform of *Alternative Universe*. Informants are all from Indonesia. The research could be carried out by examining K-Pop fans only that will be done via online.

F. Definition of Key Terms

In this part, there is some explanation from the title mentioned in the previous items. The title is "K-Pop Fans' Perceptions of *Alternative Universe* (AU) for Learning English Vocabulary". In order to avoid misunderstanding of the readers, it is important to define the key terms as follow:

a) *Alternative Universe*

According to Shannon Sauro (2019), an alternate universe is a fan fiction narrative in which the original characteristics of the characters are altered, such as their gender, race or ethnicity, profession, name, and social standing. In simple terms, AU gives the writer the ability to transform their beloved character into a "normal" person. The characteristics of the characters in AU are made up. Synopses, character biographies, and screenshots from fictitious chat applications are typically included in AUs, which are created and shared in the form of Twitter threads (Caro, 2021).

b) Learning Media

Learning media are those that deliver messages or information with the intention of imparting knowledge. According to Suhana, learning media is one of the tools and stimulants the instructor provides to motivate pupils to learn rapidly, accurately, effectively, and correctly—there is no verbalism—during the learning process (Suhana, 2014: 61).

c) English Vocabulary

According to Kasim (2011), Allen (1997) claimed that a language's vocabulary was very important. And Siregar (2013) asserted that communication required vocabulary. By studying a language's vocabulary, we might learn and comprehend it. Students needed to increase their vocabulary as they moved through the grades. Students who have trouble learning foreign vocabulary may be impacted by hearing the words, pronouncing them, reading them, practicing from meaning to expression, and ringing the words.

d) K-Pop Fans

A person who commits to a one-sided connection with K-pop stars/idol and has an emotional commitment to them is referred to as a K-pop fan. As members of diverse K-pop fandoms communities created around a common love of and interest in K-pop groups or idols they also participate in fan activities.

e) Perception

Perception is the process of human thinking about certain phenomena, stated by Walgito (2003:87). Perception refers to the process of interpreting sensory information, which is the raw data that our senses gather from the environment. Perception is more immediate and sensory-based, and it is influenced by our beliefs, experiences, and cultural background. Perception is the way we sense the world and interpret it, and it can vary from person to person.