CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

In many aspects, globalization has been facilitated by technology, such as communication and technology in education. In the current global era, the growth of literacy skills is a result of the expansion of digital communication[1] which potentially had an impact on EFL learning and literacy practices due to technological advancement and participatory culture[2]. Accompanied by smartphones and capable networks, they can do all activities quickly and easily. Everyone can pour their ideas and creations, which can then be enjoyed and read by fans in a community or forum. This ease of access has transformed how we consume content, allowing readers to discover new perspectives and voices from across the globe. According to Dini, there are nowadays many free apps and platforms available online., all you have to do is download them to access, such as Twitter[3]. Additionally, Gen Z tends to use social media more frequently as an alternative, and they can spend up to 9 hours per day staring at their phone displays, so it is occasionally said that cell phones are more engaging than books.[4]

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[1] Bunga and Warni, *"X Users' Perspectives toward the Use of Alternate Universe as an Online Platform to Improve EFL Writing Skill."*, (East Jakarta: JCP (Jurnal Cahaya Pendidikan) Vol. 9 No. 2: 155-163, 2023), *page 156*

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

In today's digital era, there is a rising curiosity in exploring the educational potential of social media platforms such as X (Twitter) due to their widespread presence in students' daily routines. Founded in 2006, X (Twitter) is a prominent social media platform that falls under the category of microblogging, along with other popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube[5]. One popular social media platform, X (Twitter), is utilized by people for the purpose of simplifying communication. Twitter became especially appealing to college students in the digital era. Social media is not only used for personal purposes but also to increase sales, build a reputation, and raise awareness of pressing issues. For example, over the past ten years, celebrities, businesses, and organizations have used X (Twitter) as a vehicle for information transmission that is quick and has an effect similar to word-of-mouth marketing.[6]

Additional research conducted by Anggraini found that people who use X (Twitter) have a positive perception of the use of auto base (an automatic direct message service feature) as a medium for acquiring vocabulary. The respondents stated that learning English vocabulary on Twitter was fun and stress-free, and they could enjoy further learning. They can access it quickly, and it opens to everyone. It can increase learning motivation and enable users to learn independently. Interacting with each

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[5] Anggraini et al., *"Implementing X (Twitter) to Increase Student Vocabulary Mastery (Qualitative Descriptive Study)."*, (Jakarta: Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Volume 5 Nomor 6, Desember 2023), *page 2634*

[6] *Ibid.*

other makes it easier for them to learn and master new vocabulary.[7] It was discovered that individuals utilizing Twitter tend to view the use of auto base (an automated direct messaging service) favorably as a tool for expanding their vocabulary. The participants mentioned that acquiring English vocabulary through Twitter was enjoyable and relaxing, allowing them to continue learning with pleasure. Accessing it is fast and it is available to all. It can boost motivation for learning and empower users to learn on their own. Engaging with one another facilitates their ability to acquire and excel in new vocabulary.

Having an extensive vocabulary helps students express their thoughts more effectively and comprehend written and spoken information more easily. Vocabulary knowledge is essential for enhancing EFL skills. The vocabulary growth of young people is one key area of concern, as a strong vocabulary is necessary for efficient communication, academic performance, and cognitive development.[8] Tosun states that vocabulary serves as the foundation of every language.[9]

The restriction on characters on Twitter compels users to convey messages in a concise manner. In this constrained environment, creativity thrives, leading individuals to frequently coin new words to express intricate concepts efficiently. Different versions of the language gain popularity and are adopted by additional users. Still, X's impact on vocabulary remains

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[7] *Ibid., page 2635*
[8] *Ibid., page 2634*
[9] *Ibid.*

strong, shaping communication and altering the development of language in the modern digital era. Enhancing vocabulary is important as it sets the stage for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) skills. According to Robani & Majid improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) abilities, and vocabulary development is a significant area of focus in language instruction[10]. Having a strong vocabulary is crucial for effective communication, educational achievement, and cognitive growth.

In 2010, during the rise of K-Pop, fan fictions began to gain popularity and became a widespread trend among young adults, particularly college students, have embraced the popularity of social networking websites like X. X enables students to exchange information, participate in online discussions, and communicate with their friends. For instance, promote teamwork in learning by engaging in activities like reading and writing. Austen was English novelist, defines fan fiction as fictional stories that are created based on existing or popular original works, also fiction written by and for fans, which is founded on the characters, settings, concepts, or plots of antecedent texts.[11] Fan fiction is what fans create by mixing characters, storylines, and plots from the original work by the writers.[12]

One of the interesting phenomena in application X is the emergence of the "Alternative Universe". The role of X here is that apart from being an application or platform that is often used, X also has a role as a platform

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[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Van Steenhuyse, *"Jane Austen Fan Fiction and the Situated Fantext*.", (Belgia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011), *page 1*

[12] Bunga and Warni, *Ibid., page 156*

for its users to create fan fiction stories with a thread that many people usually refer to as Alternative Universe or AU. This fan fiction writing includes different genres. Thomas refers to other fan fiction genres as crossovers, stating that fan fiction is classified as such only when characters from different universes interact with each other. In the same publication, Shannon Sauro describes Alternative Universe (AU) as a form of fan fiction where the characters retain their original traits but may have changes to their gender, race, jobs, names, and societal standing.[13]

Fan fiction has taken literary fandom to higher creative levels. Fan fiction is essentially similar to other fiction writing, differing in the author and original source of the plot or characters. Duffet states in Agustine that fan fiction is produced by enthusiasts who draw motivation from various interests, like idols, artists, celebrities, influencers, etc., for a more expansive interpretation.[14] However, Alternative Universe (AU) components are fictitious and are posted as threads on X, typically including summaries, character descriptions, and mock chat app screenshots.[15]

Most of Alternative Universe's audience consists of X users. As stated by Salma Ihsania, fiction tales are the most popular stories, particularly among teenagers due to their simplicity and easy comprehensibility.[16] Researcher can infer that fiction tales are narratives that are invented by the author. Researcher

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[13] Agustine Et Al., *"Analysis on Alternate Universe Popularity's Effect on Digital-Era Society's Reading Habit In Philosophical Perspective."*, (Surabaya: osf.io, 2022), *page 3*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Bunga and Warni, *Ibid., page 156*

[16] Ihsania, Wikanengsih, and Ismayani, *"Pengaruh Cerita Fiksi Terhadap Budaya Literasi Di Kalangan Mahasiswa."*, (Siliwangi: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, 2020), *page. 84*

examined the engagement rates that have been compiled by feature X and researcher found some Alternative Universes that receive a lot of attention are Poetry in Our Heads by @castlekith which has 45,000 likes and 20,000 Retweets; Circle K, Froster & Cigarettes by @kaicigs which has 39,000 likes and 18,000 Retweets; Pinterest Gal by @marksfavloser which has 21,000 likes and 9,279 Retweets. Numerous data show that Alternative Universe has a vast and unquestionably varied audience. This is due to the ease of accessing Alternative Universe, especially in the digital age where everything is easy and accessible online.[17]

The Alternative Universe's popularity among EFL learners has influenced their vocabulary skills, activities such as reading, writing, engaging in online communities, understanding conversation culture, improving reading comprehension and interpersonal skills.[18] While reading, individuals need to consistently incorporate fresh information into their mental picture. To be successful at this task, they need the text to contain information that aligns with different schemata and they must be able to relate these schemata to their own. Alternative Universe authors navigate the structure of the original text, their community of interpretation, and genre features to strike a balance between simplicity and effort.

The utilization of web-based platforms for language learning has become a more widespread occurrence. Fan fiction in the form of Alternative

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[17] Agustine et al., *Ibid., page 3*
[18] Bunga and Warni, *Ibid., page. 157*

Universe (AU) can be found on various platforms like X. In light of a more varied reading culture and the incorporation of technology in education, it's crucial to examine the impact of non-traditional reading materials like Alternative Universe on students' language abilities. This research offers fresh perspectives on creative language acquisition techniques and addresses a missing element in scholarly literature regarding the efficacy of reading authentic materials in academic settings.

According to a previous research, researchers have noticed that reading Alternative Universe (AU) can assist students in enhancing their language abilities, particularly in learning English. Arlina Fauziah, who conducted research about "Students Views Towards Reading Alternative Universe (AU) to Enhance English Vocabulary Skills" found that Alternative Universe (AU) is an excellent tool for improving students' vocabulary. In this study, Narrative Inquiry is employed as a research methodology by the researcher[19]. Another research conducted by Agustine, A. et al., "Analysis on Alternative Universe Popularity's Effect on Digital – Era Society's Reading Habit in Philosophical Perspective", found that Fan- Fiction has been proven to increase students' enthusiasm for reading and encourage them to think critically about what they read in order to discuss ideas with their peers[20].

Many previous studies have used X to augment vocabulary mastery. Previous research only uses chat features, bases, or accounts that

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[19] Fauziah, *"Students Views Towards Reading Alternative Universe (AU) To Enhance English Vocabulary Skills.",* (Banjarmasin: UIN Antasari, 2024), *page 50*
[20] Agustine et al., *page 8*

discuss English. Here, researcher uses the Alternative Universe (AU) found in X for vocabulary mastery tools. Although they both use X as a tool, but here the researcher more directed to reading the Alternative Universe (AU), not the base or chat feature.

Based on the previously stated, it can be deduced that this research aims to investigate how the correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) can affect students' English language abilities, specifically their vocabulary mastery. The mastery of sufficient vocabulary is an important element in language skills, both for communication and for expressing ideas efficiently. For students, this skill is crucial for writing academic papers, engaging in discussions, and understanding course materials.

However, based on the researcher's survey, many students still struggle with vocabulary mastery. Due to the challenges students with vocabulary, they may sometimes become instinctively reluctant to read. This can have an impact the quality of academic and their understanding of the material presented in lectures. This is because reading habits among students are still relatively low. They easily take information without sorting out which information is right.

This research investigates the correlation using a quantitative methodology. Students in the English Department at the 4th semester of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung who have used the X application as a medium to read Alternative Universe (AU) fill out a questionnaire in order to collect data. The questionnaire includes queries

designed to assess students' views on the effectiveness of app X for reading Alternative Universe (AU), the advantages received from reading Alternative Universes for improving vocabulary, and its impact on vocabulary acquisition.

The expectation of this research greatly progresses the education field, specifically in exploring students' frequency of utilizing Alternative Universe (AU) for enhancing vocabulary mastery. The results of this research can provide insight for educators and policymakers on the challenges and benefits of incorporating technology, particularly in X applications, within higher education. Therefore, this research provides practical implications for improving curriculum and teaching methods at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung and other higher education institutions, as well as making a valuable contribution to the education and technology literature.

B. Formulation of Research Problem

Based on the background of the research, the problem formulation of this research are:

1. Is there any significant correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) on X and the Vocabulary Mastery of 4th semester students in the English Education Department of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung?

2. How does Alternative Universe (AU) enhance students' vocabulary mastery?

C. Objective of the Research

Based on the background of the research mentioned above, the objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the significant correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) on X and the Vocabulary Mastery at the 4th semester students in the English Education Department of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung.

2. To assess whether Alternative Universe (AU) enhances students' ability to understand vocabulary.

D. Hypothesis of the Research

A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a variable that must be tested based on the prior statement. To find the answer to the question, the researcher should present an alternative hypothesis (H_0). These are explained as follows:

1. H_a (Alternative Hypothesis)

    There is a significant correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) on X and the vocabulary mastery of 4th semester students in the English Education Department of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, and with Alternative Universe (AU) can enhancing students' vocabulary mastery.

2. H_0 (Null Hypothesis)

    There is no significant correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) on X and the vocabulary mastery of 4th semester

students in the English Education Department of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, and Alternative Universe (AU) does not enhance students' vocabulary mastery.

E. Significance of the Research

This research is expected to be useful for:

1. Theoretically

a. This research can contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of language acquisition by exploring how social media platforms, particularly X, serve as a tool for vocabulary development.

b. The findings of this research are expected to help students in improving vocabulary mastery using Alternative Universe (AU)

c. As a basis and reference for further research related to improving students' vocabulary mastery through reading Alternative Universe (AU).

2. Practically

a. For Teachers

EFL teachers can develop the use of Alternative Universe (AU) reading as an ability to increase students' vocabulary in writing proficiency.

b. For Learners

EFL learners may consider reading Alternative Universe (AU) as an effective way of developing and increasing vocabulary skills.

c. For Researchers

EFL researchers can guide other researchers to conduct further research on the correlation between reading Alternative Universe (AU) in X and vocabulary proficiency.

F. Identification of the Problem

Considering the context of the issue mentioned above, the researcher identified a particular problem, specifically:

1. Numerous students continue to face challenges in mastering vocabulary. This can influence the quality of academic and their comprehension of the material covered in lectures. Which, naturally, in lectures demands a significant amount of vocabulary to grasp the material being presented.

2. Students encounter difficulties with vocabulary, they can occasionally develop an automatic hesitation to read.

3. Numerous college students exhibit infrequent reading habits. This may be due to insufficient time or limited access to engaging reading resources. This results in students not gaining sufficient vocabulary.

4. Insufficient engaging reading materials for college students leading to feelings of discouragement or disinterest in reading.

G. Scope and Limitation of the Research

The scope of this research is limited to examine the correlation between the frequency of reading Alternative Universe (AU) fan fiction and vocabulary mastery among 4th semester students in the English Education Department at UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah. It focuses on this specific student cohort,

excluding other semesters and departments, to maintain a controlled and manageable sample size. The research is limited to self-reported data on reading habits and standardized vocabulary tests to measure vocabulary mastery. This approach may not capture all variables influencing vocabulary acquisition, such as other forms of reading, language exposure, and individual learning differences. Additionally, the findings may not be generalizable beyond the specific context of UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah due to cultural and educational differences.

Moreover, the research is limited to students who engage with Alternative Universe (AU), specifically in the romance genre. This genre specific emphasis could affect the variety and type of vocabulary found, since romance-themed stories frequently depend on repetitive or emotionally charged language, which may limit vocabulary diversity exposure. The reading material consist of only two stories form single account, @amaranthsch, which may further limit the diversity in writing style, linguistic complexity, and vocabulary use. Consequently, the findings might not pertain to Alternative Universe (AU) fans who have an interest in different genres or writers.

H. Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding of the concept used in this research, it is necessary for the writer to provide some definitions of the terms used in this research. Those are:

1. **Correlation**

   Correlation is a statistical measure that expresses the extent to which two variables are linearly related (meaning they change together at a constant rate). It's a common tool for describing simple relationships without making a statement about cause and effect. Pearson defined correlation as a statistical measure that describes the degree of linear relationship between two variables. He introduced the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables[21]. According to McCombes, "a correlational research design measures a relationship between two variables without the researcher controlling either of them"[22].

   Furthermore, correlation is a basic statistical metric that assesses the extent to which two variables are linearly associated, showing how they vary together at a steady rate. Correlation research is characterized by a non-causal type of research, as neither variable is considered to cause the other. It simply shows whether they move together or not.

2. **Reading**

   Reading is a process of constructing or developing meaning from printed text. To this, the *reader* brings prior knowledge or experiences to the text. According to Tarigan, Reading is a process carried out and used

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[21] Sreedevi, *"Study of Test for Significance of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.",*(India: ijmer.s3.amazonaws.com*, 2022), page 86*

[22] Acebo and Acebo, *"Level of Motivation, Learning Strategies, and Academic Performance of School of Education (Sed) Students.",* (Zamboanga: Philippine Journal of Basic Research Volume 6, 2023), *page 82*

by readers to obtain messages to be conveyed by the author through the medium of written words/language.[23] A process that requires that groups of words that constitute a whole are seen at a glance and the meaning of individual words is known. If this is not met, the explicit and implied messages are not be captured or understood, and the reading process is not carried out properly. Moreover, Finochiaro and Bonomo in Hendrayani, explain that Reading is bringing meaning to and getting meaning from printed or written material, picking and understanding the meaning or meaning contained in written material.[24]

From the three definitions presented above, it can be concluded that reading is the process of understanding text to get a message or meaning from writing.

3. **Alternative Universe (AU)**

In fan fiction, an Alternative Universe (AU) refers to a setting or storyline that diverges from the original source material. This can involve changes to the characters, the world, or the events that take place. Alternative universes allow fans to explore "what if" scenarios, creating new and unique stories within familiar fictional worlds. Anjani in Rachmani defines an Alternative Universe (AU) as a story featured on Twitter, usually in the form of a thread based on a number of fan-made

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[23] Sholihah, *"The Effectiveness of Reading, Encoding, Annotating, and Pondering (REAP) Strategy in Improving Students Reading Skill."*, (Malang: JU-ke, Volume 1, Nomer 2, Desember 2017), *page 60*

[24] Hendrayani, *"Peningkatan Minat Baca Dan Kemampuan Membaca Peserta Didik Kelas Rendah Melalui Penggunaan Reading Corner."*, (Bandung: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan, 2018), *page 23*

characters (fan fiction).[25] The story revolves around the idol in the story, and allows fans to participate and engage in the story.

So, Alternative Universe (AU) represents a type of fan creativity that enables fans to depict their favourite idols in diverse imaginative situations, distinct from their actual lives. In a brief thread format, Alternative Universe (AU) encourages fans to participate in the narrative, fostering a distinctive interactive experience.

4. **X (Twitter)**

X (Twitter), previously named Twitter until July 2023, is an online social media and social networking platform run by American company X Corp, the replacement for Twitter, Inc. Users on X can share text, images, and videos after creating an account. Registered users have the ability to post, like, repost, comment, and quote posts, as well as send direct messages (DM) to other users. Individuals engage with X by using their internet browser, mobile frontend applications, or programmatically via application programming interfaces (APIs). Boyd and Ellison in John define Twitter as a form of social media that allows users to "update their status" and interact with others through short messages.[26] They highlighted that X allows for quick and direct communication and sharing

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[25] RNM and Rachmani, *"Pengaruh Fiksi Penggemar: Alternative Universe (AU) Dalam Meningkatkan Minat Baca Remaja Indonesia.",* (Bandung: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, 9(1), 2022, 37-55), *page 43*

[26] Johnston, Chen, and Hauman, *"Use, Perception and Attitude of University Students towards Facebook and Twitter.",* (South Africa: Electronic Journal Information Systems Evaluation Volume 16 Issue 3, 2013) *page 202*

of information in a very concise format (140 characters initially).[27] To sum up, X is a social media service that enables users to refresh their status and engage directly via brief messages.

5. **Vocabulary Mastery**

Having a strong grasp of vocabulary is essential for articulating thoughts and comprehending others' statement. The specificity of any individual's vocabulary knowledge depends on the person and his motivation, desires, and need for the words.[28] Vocabulary mastery refers to the great skill in processing words of a language. It is an individual achievement and possession.[29] As Nunan in Fauzia states that vocabulary is the collection of words that an individual knows. That is a reason why without a sufficient vocabulary, students will have difficulties in learning a language.[30]

As stated above, according to the definition provided, it can be inferred that vocabulary mastery refers to a person's high level of ability in utilizing words in a language, which is developed according to their personal interests, requirements, and drive.

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[27] *Ibid., page 203*

[28] Alqahtani, *"The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to Be Taught.",* (Saudi Arabia: International Journal of Teaching and Education, 2015), *page 26*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Fauzia and Lolita, *"The Use of Drill, Vocabulous (Vocabulary Various) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (Call) in Learning Vocabulary."*, (Surabaya: Journal of English Teaching: VOL. 3 NO. 1, 2018), *page 12*

Vocabulary mastery is crucial in the development of all four language skills, and it should be acknowledged that mastering vocabulary is a crucial element of language proficiency.