The Influence of 'WEBTOON' as a Digital Reading Aid for High School EFL Students

La influencia de "WEBTOON" como asistente digital de lectura para estudiantes de secundaria EFL

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ABSTRACT

After the pandemic, classrooms experienced a noticeable decline in learning outcomes, coinciding with the emergence of a more tech-savvy cohort of learners and educators. This shift prompted a quest for digital solutions to enhance student engagement, with Webtoon emerging as a prominent option. Particularly popular among Generation Z, Webtoon's straightforward yet entertaining interface, diverse themes, and captivating artwork entice users to delve into its panels during leisure time. In the following qualitative study, the perspectives of high school students from UEPSMA (Unidad Educativa Particular Salesianas María Auxiliadora) in Cuenca were examined. Through three cycles of action research employing qualitative methods, participants underwent three spontaneous quizzes and concluded with a final survey via Google Forms. Findings indicated that students found Webtoon's visuals and language usage gratifying, attributing their continued engagement to compelling storylines and vivid illustrations. Additionally, their responses underscored a sense of satisfaction with integrating a digital reading tool into the classroom, which notably bolstered their motivation for English reading.

Keywords: Webtoon; pandemic technology; digital education.

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RESUMEN

Después de la pandemia, las aulas experimentaron una notable disminución en los resultados del aprendizaje, coincidiendo con el surgimiento de un grupo de estudiantes y educadores más conocedores de la tecnología. Este cambio impulsó la búsqueda de soluciones digitales para mejorar la participación de los estudiantes, y Webtoon surgió como una opción destacada. Particularmente popular entre la Generación Z, la interfaz sencilla pero entretenida de Webtoon, sus diversos temas y sus cautivadoras obras de arte atraen a los usuarios a profundizar en sus paneles durante su tiempo libre. En el siguiente estudio cualitativo, se examinaron las perspectivas de los estudiantes de secundaria de la UEPSMA (Unidad Educativa Particular Salesianas María Auxiliadora) en Cuenca. A lo largo de tres ciclos de investigación-acción que emplearon métodos cualitativos, los participantes se sometieron a tres cuestionarios espontáneos y concluyeron con una encuesta final a través de Google Forms. Los hallazgos indicaron que los estudiantes encontraron gratificantes las imágenes y el uso del lenguaje de Webtoon, atribuyendo su participación continua a historias convincentes e ilustraciones vívidas. Además, sus respuestas subrayaron una sensación de satisfacción con la integración de una herramienta de lectura digital en el aula, lo que reforzó notablemente su motivación para la lectura en inglés.

Palabras clave: Webtoon; tecnología pandemia; educación digital.

Introduction

At the onset of the 2022-2023 academic year at UEPSMA, a noticeable decline in English language interest among students was observed, attributed partly to challenges during the pandemic. Many students cited difficulties with internet connectivity and distractions at home, leading to a lack of focus on academic pursuits. The hybrid learning model implemented in the previous school year, with a mix of online and in-person classes, further exacerbated this disinterest and resulted in learning setbacks. Even in countries like the Netherlands, where lockdowns were relatively brief, students exhibited lower performance in national exams (Engzell et al., 2021).

Within our school context, an assessment of students' proficiency in the four main English skills—speaking, writing, reading, and listening—revealed significant deterioration, particularly in reading motivation and speaking confidence. Recognizing the urgency to address these issues, communication with students, as emphasized by UNESCO (2020), was prioritized. Through discussions with students, two primary concerns emerged: the need for more opportunities to converse in English to boost speaking confidence, and a lack of motivation for traditional reading methods perceived as dull.

During this period, students were familiarizing themselves with the format of the Use of English section of the B2 First Cambridge examination. Despite prior lessons on affixes and parts of speech, many students scored below 4 out of 8 points. In a survey seeking to understand the reasons behind this, students overwhelmingly cited insufficient reading in English, resulting in a lack of vocabulary. This prompted the researcher to ponder whether Webtoon, a leisure reading application already in use, could potentially address these challenges by offering engaging stories with short chapters and captivating illustrations, each requiring only 10 to 15 minutes tocomplete.

Another pertinent issue concerns the types of intelligence exhibited by students. At the commencement of the 2022-2023 academic year, the instructor evaluated students' intelligences, determining that the majority leaned towards auditory and visual intelligence. Subsequently, during speaking assessments, students cited a lack of visual aids as a reason for their disdain towards English reading. Thus, they expressed a willingness to integrate aspects of their pandemic learning into current face-to-face education, despite their aversion to virtual classes. The undeniable truth is that the pandemic heightened technological dependence, necessitating a digital shift (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Education in the Post-Pandemic Era

Teaching English in an EFL context post-pandemic has posed significant challenges for educators, who had just begun adapting to online teaching before returning to physical classrooms (Radina & Balakina, 2021). This transition has not only affected teachers but also students, with noticeable learning setbacks that require mitigation efforts (Kaffenberger, 2021). At UEPSMA, this negative impact is evident across all English proficiency areas, particularly in the use of English and reading comprehension.

The integration of digital tools in classrooms has become indispensable, given society's increased reliance on technology during the pandemic. This shift has even influenced students' perceptions of traditional reading and physical books. Consequently, e-readers like Kindle have gained popularity among those seeking online reading materials, with positive outcomes observed regarding reading engagement (Connell, Bayliss, & Farmer, 2012). However, the effectiveness of such e-readers may be limited to students who already enjoy reading, raising questions about engaging those who have developed a dislike for it or shifted preferences during the pandemic.

Examination

As UESPMA mandates the Cambridge B2 First Examination in the senior year curriculum, students must familiarize themselves with the exam format, practice it, and understand what to expect on exam day. Notably, mastery of vocabulary is crucial as it forms the foundation for mastering other English skills (Syafrizal & Haerudin, 2018). According to Wallace (2007), vocabulary acquisition is integral to extensive reading, but how can students develop this skill if they've lost interest in learning English and reading in English?

Fortunately, high school students at UESPMA recognize the need to enhance their English vocabulary and reading skills and to shift their reading motivation, albeit in a non-traditional manner. While they have attempted B2 readings and online resources, many have found themselves lacking full engagement, particularly in utilizing their visual intelligence. Hence, the proposal of Webtoon as a digital reading tool in the classroom aims to address this challenge.

Webtoon in EFL Education

Students in our educational setting have expressed the significant impact of the pandemic on their learning experiences, particularly their aversion to the requirement of reading a single book annually. This is where Webtoon becomes relevant in our current investigation. Webtoon allows users to select stories based on their preferred genres and themes. With episodes designed for short, approximately 10-minute reading sessions, they can be easily incorporated into classroom activities. The comic format, featuring vertical panels enriched with drawings and onomatopoeias, aids readers in understanding the plot (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021).

Moreover, Webtoon offers language translations from Korean to over 30 languages, including Chinese, English, and Spanish, contributing to its global popularity and adaptation into television dramas (Jang & Song, 2017).

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of Webtoon usage in educational settings, particularly in enhancing vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fostering teachers' creativity. Regarding vocabulary acquisition, students showed an ability to generate new words through visual cues and dialogues provided by Webtoon (Novanty & Suprayogy, 2021). Data collected from 48 English students, who had used Webtoon over a six-month period, revealed the advantageous features of the platform, such as its free access, user- friendly layout, and clear illustrations. Additionally, interviews with six teachers who incorporated Webtoon into their curriculum underscored its effectiveness (Novanty & Suprayogy, 2021).

In terms of improving vocabulary, Webtoon's role proves significant once again. With contemporary reading habits shifting towards digital platforms, a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 35 university students indicated a strong preference for Webtoon as a reading activity (Ali & Emirati, 2021). The positive responses were attributed to the presence of online comics, digital-based learning, and the application's simplicity. Similarly, a survey conducted among 50 students at Teknocrat Indonesia University demonstrated Webtoon's positive impact on reading comprehension and motivation (Erya & Pustika, 2021).

However, it is crucial to assess the practicality of integrating Webtoon into classroom settings. A mixed- methods study involving three teachers and 37 students revealed favorable perceptions of Webtoon's usefulness, particularly in refreshing classroom activities, aiding writing tasks through cooperative learning, and story retelling (Setialis et al., 2018). Students expressed positive attitudes towards Webtoon's role in enhancing reading motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and fostering interest through captivating stories.

Nevertheless, it's noteworthy that none of the aforementioned studies were conducted in Latin America, suggesting potential variations in results within our context. Hence, our investigation aims not only to explore its impact on reading motivation but also to assess its effectiveness in improving various English language skills based on student feedback. The insights gained from

this research could inform authorities at UEPSMA about the potential of electronic reading applications, like Webtoon, to enhance English language learning outcomes. Ultimately, the goal is to promote the integration of digital tools for reading, moving beyond reliance solely on physical books. In a digital era where learners have spent considerable time engaged with digital devices, physical books alone may no longer suffice for effective learning experiences.

Affixation

Taking into account the ongoing affixation lessons for learners during this study, coupled with the three action research (AR) cycles incorporating pop quizzes at their conclusion, it is plausible that affixation emerged as a component in students' responses in the Google Forms survey, with potential indications of improvement through their quiz results. While investigations specifically addressing word formation practice with Webtoon were scarce at this juncture, a researcher delved into beauty-related terms within the Webtoon 'True Beauty' (Sa'adah, 2023). The objective was to ascertain the efficacy of webtoons in facilitating word formation across varied contexts. The analysis categorized beauty-related terms into six groups, with compounding being the most prevalent, including some not traditionally found in dictionaries like Cambridge or Oxford, suggesting the utilization of innovative vocabulary aligning with the storyline. Notably, a significant portion of affixation was observed in technological terms.

Within our educational milieu, students utilized Webtoon as a resource for reading and identifying unfamiliar, novel, or intriguing words. They were tasked with compiling a glossary of 40 words by the end of the academic year, each accompanied by its corresponding prefixes and suffixes sourced online. Prior to this assignment, students had a month of affix practice and engaged with various examples. An intriguing aspect of this research lies in assessing whether students' understanding of affixes improved following their use of Webtoon.

In essence, this paper aims to address two primary inquiries:

- What are EFL high school students' perceptions towards using WEBTOON as a tool in the classroom?

- To what extent does WEBTOON influence reading motivation among EFL students?

The objectives of the following study answer to the two questions listed previously:

General Objective

- To determine the effect of Webtoon as an online reading tool on EFL high school students.

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Specific Objectives

- To interpret EFL students' perceptions towards using Webtoon as a digital tool in the classroom.

- To identify how Webtoon influences reading motivation among EFL students.

Instruments and Methods

Instruments

The instruments this study used were; class observations, Use of English pop-quizzes, Webtoon glossaries, check-out surveys, and a final survey.

Class observations

The teacher utilized her mobile device to document noteworthy reactions, attitudes, or inquiries exhibited by students throughout each weekly session. Various responses were observed, including engagement as students accessed online resources in the laboratory, perplexity upon encountering discrepancies between the computer and phone versions of Webtoon, and a range of positive and negative emotions elicited by the stories they engaged with. These emotions ranged from jubilant cheers during pivotal character moments to collective disappointment when class time concluded, often accompanied by nervous laughter in response to romantic scenes or unfamiliar vocabulary.

Use of English pop-quizzes

To supplement lessons on affixes during the research period, it was deemed essential for students to undergo weekly Use of English pop-quizzes. Following four informal quizzes, the fifth was graded to provide formal evaluation within the academic year. Each graded quiz marked the culmination of an Action Research (AR) cycle, with a total of three cycles implemented.

Webtoon Glossaries Compilation

Following the assessment of pop-quiz scores during the initial AR cycle, it was determined that students could enhance their performance by actively tracking newly acquired vocabulary from Webtoon readings. Students were instructed to record unfamiliar words encountered during chosen Webtoon stories in their notebooks.

Additionally, they were tasked with identifying affixes for these words during the final 20 minutes of class. This practice was exclusively implemented during the second and third AR cycles.

Check-out surveys

After each Webtoon reading session, students participated in a brief, five-minute check-out survey. The survey aimed to gauge students' comprehension of the plot and their engagement with the material, ensuring focused reading during designated periods.

Final Survey

At the conclusion of the academic year, students were invited to participate in a Google Forms survey to provide feedback on their experiences with Webtoon in the classroom. The survey incorporated Likert scale items and open-ended questions, allowing students to express their perspectives on various aspects of Webtoon as a digital tool, including satisfaction with its interface. The open-ended questions provided an opportunity for students to share their initial impressions and any additional comments they wished to convey.

Survey Pilot Stage

It is noteworthy to highlight that the qualitative survey underwent thorough piloting across three distinct stages: feedback from classmates in the Masters' program, input from colleagues, and responses from a university student. In the initial stage of feedback, an open-ended question was modified to a yes/no format to streamline responses regarding students' willingness to utilize the tool again. Subsequently, in the second stage, four coworkers tested the survey after familiarizing themselves with the WEBTOON platform for ten minutes. Following feedback from one participant, relevant words were emphasized to enhance clarity in certain questions, a modification unanimously agreed upon by the remaining participants.

The third and final stage involved an English-B1 university student who participated in the survey. Having prior exposure to WEBTOON as a leisure pursuit, he was able to provide valuable insights into the survey content. Upon completion, he noted that the questions were straightforward and easy to comprehend. Notably, all three parties highlighted the survey's brevity, affirming that it could be completed in under ten minutes, catering to the preferences of junior high school students who typically prefer concise surveys.

The final pilot version of the survey remained with the same number of questions, which is 7, based on the feedback of the three stages. They focused on; first impression (1 item), students' definition (1 item), interface (7 sub-items), reading tool (6 sub-items), consecutive use (1 item) and additional comments from students (one item).

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Method

Recognizing the imperative of employing a qualitative Action Research design, the third AR cycle incorporated a conclusive Google Forms survey. Within this online questionnaire, students were prompted to articulate their initial and concluding perceptions following their utilization of WEBTOON in the classroom. The survey comprised both open-ended queries to glean personal insights and Likert-scale items to gauge agreement levels with specific parameters. Additionally, class observations, Webtoon vocabulary glossaries, check-out surveys, and Use of English part 3 pop- quizzes were integral components across each cycle.

Given our aim to investigate students' deficiencies in English proficiency and reading motivation, the procedural framework of this study adhered to three action research cycles: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection (Burns, 2010). Tailored to our high school context for the academic year 2022-2023, the AR cycle was adjusted to accommodate the contextual nuances and practitioner dynamics (McNiff, 2013). The initial cycle's planning phase identified students' challenges with reading comprehension and inadequate English skills. Subsequent action phases integrated class observations during Webtoon usage, check-out surveys, and pop-quizzes, followed by the observation phase for analysis. The reflection phase prompted modifications in planning, transitioning to collaborative work for the second cycle.

During the second AR cycle, planning addressed students' subpar pop quiz scores. Action phases extended Webtoon sessions, supplemented by teacher annotations, student-initiated glossaries, check- out surveys, and paired pop-quizzes. Observational analysis occurred during the observation phase, while the reflection phase prompted further adjustments to assess individual performance.

In the final AR cycle, action phases targeted students' vocabulary deficits, despite exhibiting advanced speaking skills. This phase encompassed the last Webtoon session, compilation of a collective glossary, teacher observations, check-out surveys, and individual pop-quizzes. Given the culmination of the study, the reflection phase ensued, culminating in a Google Forms survey to assess students' experiences with the digital reading tool.

Given the constraints of time, three cycles were deemed adequate for fulfilling the research objectives.

Participants

The study initially aimed to involve 92 female junior high school students, aged 16, from 'UEPSMA' (Unidad Educativa Particular Maria Auxiliadora). However, a criteria for exclusion was implemented due to their status as minors; if parental permissions were not obtained for any reason, the students would be ineligible to participate in the investigation. Ultimately, data from 89 responses were considered for the Google Forms survey, while 92 responses were analyzed for the pop quizzes component.

Results

Data Analysis

A personal finding that I wanted to notice was whether Webtoon could be related to the students' current affixes knowledge. For this, students took three pop quizzes that represented the end of each AR cycle, whose results are listed below.

Pop quizzes

Table 1. Students' AR Cycles Pop Quizzes Results.

AR Cycle Pop Quiz	Class		
	A	B	C
First	6.89	6.81	4.52
Second	7.4	8.84	7.91
Third	6.45	6.67	5.36
Total	6.91333333	7.44	5.93

Note: Each pop quiz garnered 92 responses as parental consent was secured for participants, resulting in 148 tests being examined for the tabulation. The grading scale is based on 10 points.

Table 1 illustrates that despite adjustments made to accommodate individual performance levels, students' performance in affixes pop quizzes did not exhibit significant improvement following the introduction of Webtoon. Despite the incorporation of word gap exercises during the second and third pop quizzes, aligned with class materials and common terms encountered on Webtoon, the overall scores did not exceed 8 out of 10. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that students had the autonomy to select any Webtoon for their reading, resulting in potential mismatches with the vocabulary tested in the pop quizzes. Notably, during the second pop quiz, a modification was introduced wherein students collaborated in pairs due to the notably low scores in the initial quiz. However, even with this adjustment, the highest-performing group achieved a score of 8.84 out of 10.

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Survey

The responses from the Google Forms survey were categorized into two distinct sections to facilitate organization. The first section, labeled 'Perceptions,' addresses the initial inquiry of the study: "What are EFL high school students' perceptions towards using Webtoon as a tool in the classroom?" Table 2 provides insights into the students' initial impressions following their exposure to Webtoon. Subsequent tables (Tables 3, 4, and 5) delve into the final perceptions expressed by the users.

The second section, termed 'Motivation,' pertains to the investigation's second research question: "To what extent does Webtoon influence reading motivation among EFL students?" Table 6 outlines the number of stories read by students, while Table 7 outlines the levels of agreement among students regarding various characteristics of Webtoon. Finally, Table 8 indicates the proportion of students expressing a desire to utilize Webtoon in future classes.

Perceptions

Table 2. Students' First Webtoon Perspectives.

Question	Positive	Neutral	Comparison			Negative			
			Physical Books	Wattpad	Reading Apps	Boring	Difficult	Dislike	Others
What was your first impression of the app WEBTOON when you first used it in class?	43	13	1	3	1	12	5	5	6

Note: From junior high school students, a total of 89 responses were gathered. To accommodate the length, certain terms have been hyphenated.

Table 2 presents the categorization of 89 open-ended responses into four distinct categories. A predominant positive sentiment is reflected in 43 responses, wherein students express a favorable initial impression upon using Webtoon in the classroom. Comments highlight its intriguing nature, eye- catching visuals, user-friendly layout, and enjoyable reading experience. Conversely, a neutral stance is observed in 13 responses, with students expressing confusion due to prior external usage, lack of expectations, or disinterest in anime-related content, despite the prevalent association of Webtoon illustrations with Japanese animation. This discrepancy may introduce bias for users accustomed to alternative animation styles.

An additional category, labeled "Comparison," comprises 5 responses that refrain from taking a definitive stance but rather mention alternative digital applications such as Wattpad or express a preference for physical books. Notably, the final category delineates a negative first impression, with 28 students expressing dissatisfaction. Key terms cited include boredom, difficulty in navigation, and general dislike for the platform.

Table 3. Students' Final Webtoon Perspectives.

Question	Key Words			
	Usefulness for improving English	Extra Reading Features Support	English Reading Motivator	Others
After reading on WEBTOON in class, how would you describe this application to others?	16	16	43	14

Note: 89 responses were collected in total.

Table 3 reveals insights from 89 open-ended responses, where a tie is evident between the categories 'useful for improving English' and 'provides extra reading features,' each garnering 16 votes. Comments under the former category highlight the app's efficacy in enhancing English skills, with phrases such as "incredible for learning new English words in a humorous manner" and "an interesting and enjoyable way to learn new words." Under the latter category, individual remarks emphasize the presence of anime-like drawings and the app's ability to stimulate imagination, catering to those who prefer visual aids for comprehension.

In the category 'motivation for reading,' opinions from 43 students are documented. Some describe the app as a conducive environment for relaxation and learning in an enjoyable manner, citing reasons such as "a place to de-stress while learning in an engaging manner" and "a fun way to read without boredom, enabling us to choose our own reading materials and further our English learning journey." Lastly, the 'others' category encompasses diverse perspectives, including views on Webtoon as a digital library, recommendations for app download, and general sentiments regarding its entertainment value.

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Table 4. Students' Satisfaction regarding Webtoon Features.

Features	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Interface	38	31	14	2	4
Story genres	54	26	3	2	4
Themes	48	26	8	3	4
Plots	51	25	7	3	3
Vocabulary	60	19	5	2	3
Illustrations	67	15	3	0	4

Note: 89 responses were analyzed.

Table 4 presented the perceptions of 89 students regarding Webtoon's interface using a Likert -scale format. The scale included options ranging from 'very satisfied' to 'very unsatisfied'. Remarkably, the categories of 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied' garnered the highest number of votes, particularly in relation to the vocabulary and illustrations offered by Webtoon, accounting for over 60 votes out of 89. An intriguing observation emerged from the 'neutral' category within the interface option, which received more than 10 votes compared to the others. This suggests that some students may have found the layout somewhat confusing or complex, as indicated by their open-ended responses in Table 3.

Table 5. Students' Additional Webtoon Opinions.

Prompt	Key Words				
	Friendly to Improve English Skills	Positive Application Aspects	Motivation to read in English	Neutral Perspectives	No response
Leave any additional comments about your experience with WEBTOON in your reading sessions	27	24	24	13	1

Note: These categories were based on 88 responses. However, one student did not provide a response, resulting in the creation of the category 'no response.

The final table, reflecting responses to the initial inquiry of this paper regarding students' perceptions of Webtoon, identified 5 distinct categories derived from learners' responses. The primary category, labeled 'Beneficial for enhancing English skills,' emerged as 27 students noted that Webtoon aided in improving various English skills or subskills, such as grammar or vocabulary, following their reading sessions. One learner remarked: "I found it highly beneficial as it helped me acquire new words, enhance my vocabulary, and importantly, pronounce words correctly."

Of particular interest is the parity between the categories 'Positive application aspects' and 'Motivation to read in English,' each garnering 24 votes. Many comments reiterated that the illustrations, background music featured in some chapters, and the accessibility of the application on the play store were positive factors motivating them to engage in English reading. The category 'Neutral perspectives,' arising from 13 responses, encompassed brief or nonsensical responses that lacked sufficient information for categorization or offered a definition of Webtoon. Lastly, only one participant opted not to respond to the open-ended question regarding their experiences with Webtoon.

Motivation

Table 6. Number of Read Stories by Learners.

Question	Options		
	Only the one I chose for class	2-3 stories	4 or more stories
How many stories have you read since we started using WEBTOON in class?	41	32	16

Note: 89 responses collected in total. More than 50% of students read an extra story outside class.

Table 6 provides the initial insight required to address the second inquiry of this research paper: to what degree does Webtoon impact the reading motivation of EFL students? It is evident that despite being required to utilize Webtoon solely in class, 48 students opted to read beyond the assigned story for their English laboratory sessions, with 16 learners exploring more than four stories outside the classroom. Conversely, a smaller cohort of 41 students limited their reading to just one story. This outcome suggests that students were indeed motivated to engage in further reading of digital comics via Webtoon for various purposes. Consequently, this table offers a clear indication of a positive response to the second inquiry posed in this study.

Table 7. Students' Agreement according to the features Webtoon offers.

Statements	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
The story genres made me want to read more	45	32	7	3	2
The themes shown made me want to read more	38	39	8	3	1
The plot of the story/ies made me want to read more	51	28	6	2	2
The vocabulary of the stories was useful for me	49	29	7	2	2
The illustrations of the stories were good visual aids for me	62	22	1	1	3
The app increased my reading comprehension skill	45	30	9	3	2
The app increased my knowledge of affixes	30	31	22	5	1

Note: all 89 responses were quantified for this question.

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Table 7 presents 89 responses to the 5th question, employing a Likert scale ranging from 'totally agree' to 'totally disagree'. Notably, noteworthy findings pertain to the statement "the plot of the story/ies made me want to read more," which garnered 51 votes, and "the illustrations of the stories were good visual aids for me," which received 62 votes. While table 4 identified illustrations and vocabulary as the satisfying features of Webtoon for students, this table underscores that what primarily kept them engaged was solely the former and the plot. As mentioned in the introduction, Webtoon is designed as a comic reading application targeting teenagers and adults. Consequently, many of the themes featured therein are likely to resonate with individuals across these age groups.

Table 8. Willingness to Continue using Webtoon in class.

Question	Criteria	
	YES	NO
Would you prefer to continue using WEBTOON as a reading application in class?	87	2

Note: 89 responses were recorded for the final question of the survey.

The final table illustrates the count of students interested in continuing the use of Webtoon in the future. Out of 89 responses, merely 2 expressed a reluctance to utilize Webtoon in forthcoming sessions or during their senior year. This reluctance may be attributed to some responses highlighting the perceived unattractive drawing style or a preference for physical books. Hence, it can be inferred that 87 students were motivated to persist with Webtoon in future classes as part of their reading skill activities.

Discussion

From the data analysis showcased before, the following five points are relevant; Webtoon's usefulness to teach affixes, the initial and last students' perceptions, their reading motivation increase, the satisfying Webtoon features, and the type of reading format students prefer. For starters, the way in which Webtoon was used in this paper's AR cycles does not really improve the knowledge of affixes in students even if it was highlighted that their vocabulary and reading motivation increased in the final survey.

Regarding affixes, an alternative approach may be necessary for effective integration with Webtoon. As mentioned in the introduction, the Webtoon "True Beauty" illustrated various word formations from a single base word, such as "beauty" (Sa'adah, 2023). This finding suggests that students could read the same Webtoon in class to acquire vocabulary and practice affixation. However, this approach may detract from the enjoyment of discovering new stories, genres, and themes. Alternatively, a qualitative Likert-scale survey focusing solely on affixes could be employed to analyze responses.

The second finding pertains to students' perceptions of using Webtoon as a classroom tool. Students' views on the tool are influenced by their exposure to it. Initial encounters with the application may evoke feelings of overwhelm or boredom, particularly among students unaccustomed to Japanese animation, comics, or digital reading. However, with time and exploration, most students' perceptions shift positively, indicating an increased acceptance of the application in the classroom. Moreover, the integration of technology in the learning environment has been associated with enhanced motivation, likely influenced by the lasting impact of the pandemic (Illa-Sihuincha et al., 2022).

The third and fourth findings address the extent to which Webtoon influences students' reading motivation and satisfaction. Students perceive Webtoon's illustrations as both motivating and satisfying, suggesting that visual cues enhance the learning experience, particularly for visual learners (Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021). Additionally, the engaging plotlines of Webtoon stories contribute to sustained reading engagement, potentially fostering narrative comprehension and enjoyment (Widiyarti et al., 2021).

Lastly, the fifth finding explores students' preferences for reading tools. Over 50% of respondents reported reading additional stories beyond those assigned for class, citing motivation to learn vocabulary and complete intriguing narratives. This suggests a shift in students' leisure activities toward reading, indicating increased reading motivation in the target language. Furthermore, the popularity of Webtoons among Generation Z learners has led to adaptations into Netflix series, catering to the adolescent audience (Jin, 2015). This trend underscores the evolving landscape of reading preferences and habits among contemporary learners.

Conclusions

The post-pandemic utilization of technological devices can significantly impact students' learning experiences, as demonstrated in this study. Both positive and negative effects were observed. On the downside, the application of Webtoon, or perhaps the methodology employed by the author, failed to yield substantial improvements in students' understanding of affixes and word formation. To enhance their comprehension, it was suggested that students engage in reading the same Webtoon and undergo assessments focused on the formation of specific vocabulary.

Despite the lack of positive correlation between affixes and Webtoon in this study, students identified several favorable aspects of Webtoon in their final Google Forms survey responses. These insights address the primary question of the study and highlight the increased motivation for reading, a key outcome of the research. Students expressed satisfaction with the illustrations and vocabulary provided by Webtoon, which encouraged continued engagement with the platform. Moreover, the captivating plotlines of Webtoon stories suggest opportunities for further investigation into narrative reading comprehension.

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Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in their final comments on the application, many students emphasized the enjoyment of using a different learning tool compared to traditional physical books. This underscores the importance of educators incorporating diverse technological methodologies and tools in the classroom to capture the attention of Generation Z students. Such approaches have the potential to foster more positive perceptions of learning and English language improvement among high school students at UEPSMA.

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Statement