

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of this study, research questions, research purposes, the significance of this paper, the scope, the conceptual framework, research hypothesis, and some previous study of the research in similar fields.

A. Background

As technology has developed significantly, students' learning methods have changed considerably. Social media, such as X (formerly Twitter), has transformed into a learning tool. It reflects how English learners engage with language beyond the classroom. Platforms such as X present learners with short-form, authentic English texts that could potentially support reading fluency. One of the most prominent online phenomena is the rise of Alternative Universe (AU) stories on X, in which fan-created narratives reimagine familiar characters or real personalities in different contexts. These stories are rich in authentic English input, featuring conversational language, emotional expression, and cultural nuances. This informal reading activity can potentially enhance learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation, aligning closely with the principles of Extensive Reading (ER).

Extensive Reading is known to promote reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and learner autonomy (Day and Bamford, 2002; Januarty, 2018; Nation, 2013; Renandya and Jacobs, 2016). Five elements of Extensive Reading are, volume of reading (Day and Bamford, 2002; Renandya and Jacob, 2016); reading comprehension skills (Nation, 2013; Renandya and Jacob, 2016; Suk, 2017); vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2013; Suk, 2017); reading fluency (Day and Bamford, 2002; Nation, 2013; Renandya and Jacob, 2016); and attitudes toward reading (Day and Bamford, 2002; Yamashita, 2013). Some research about the Extensive Reading activity using social media, especially X has shown significant results. Digital ER contributes to increasing students' reading ability and motivation (Akpan, Nna-Etuk, and Ezeibe, 2024; Janah, Retnaningdyah, and Mustofa, 2022; Maisha, 2023; Prasetyanto, Maharddhika, and Trimus, 2023).

One of the most popular types of content on X among students is Alternative Universe (AU) stories. According to Rahmawati (2022), an AU story is a fanfiction genre that places a famous person in a different life background that is not related to the person's real life. In other words, authors can create stories in which famous individuals are portrayed as "ordinary" people. For example, an author may write a story in which a Korean idol becomes a barista in a coffee shop. AU stories on X usually appear in the form of threads and not only include narrative storytelling but also simulated social media chat interactions between characters (Yuniasih, Waluyo, and Arochman, 2025). This format makes AU stories more interesting and engaging for readers.

Previous studies of English fanfiction stories, including Alternative Universe (AU) stories, on social media have shown a positive perception. Engagement with AU stories can improve students' reading skills, particularly vocabulary acquisition. Previous studies also stated that AU stories can be considered teaching material for English classes (Antika and Arsanti, 2025; Austin and Santoso, 2023; Stanko and Kolegaeva, 2024; Yuniasih et al., 2025). Besides reading, AU English stories can also enhance students' narrative writing skills (Hadi and Karyadi, 2023).

To systematically capture students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X, the present study adopted the multidimensional engagement framework proposed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), which conceptualized engagement as comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. In reading English AU Stories on X, the perceived behavioral engagement was reflected through reading frequency and consistency (Zandi et al., 2025) and time and intensity spent (Anghel et al., 2024; Schoonens and Dezuanni, 2026). For the emotional dimension, it was measured through enjoyment and positive affect as well as emotional involvement with character or plot (Fredricks et al., 2004). Lastly, the strategic comprehension and the deep processing availed to connect the cognitive dimension (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Despite the growing popularity of AU stories among students, the existing literature lacks empirical investigations of the direct relationship between self-perceived engagement with AU stories and students' self-perceived extensive

reading ability, particularly in Indonesian tertiary EFL settings. Since extensive reading emphasizes sustained, voluntary reading, blending it with constant self-perceived engagement with English AU stories on X may either support or hinder students' perception of their own reading competence. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X, measured through the six indicators described above, and their perceived extensive reading ability.

B. Research Questions

To provide a clear direction for this study, several research questions were formulated according to the background and conceptual framework. These questions guide the exploration into students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X within three dimensions and its relationship with students perceived extensive reading ability in five aspects. There are three points of the research questions for this study:

1. What is the score of students' perceived engagement with English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on social media X as measured by behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions?
2. What is the score of students' perceived extensive reading ability across the five dimensions of reading volume, reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and reading attitudes?
3. Is there a significant correlation between students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X and their perceived Extensive Reading ability?

C. Research Purposes

In line with the research questions, this study establishes several research purposes to achieve these intended objectives. These purposes serve as the foundation for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data throughout the study. Accordingly, the research seeks to describe students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X, identify their perceived extensive reading ability, and explore the relationship between those two. The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the score of students' perceived engagement with English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on social media X as measured by behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions in the English Education Department Class of 2022 at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
2. To identify the score of students' perceived extensive reading ability across the five dimensions of reading volume, reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and reading attitude in the English Education Department Class of 2022 at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.
3. To explore students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X and their perceived extensive reading ability.

D. Research Significance

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretical contributions include the study's contribution to the growing body of literature on digital literacy, reading engagement, and the use of social media content in educational contexts, particularly in Indonesian higher education settings. It also adds local empirical evidence to discussions about extensive reading pedagogy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environments.

While practical, the findings may help educators and curriculum designers determine whether integrating informal content on social media, such as English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on X, can enhance students' reading performance. If a positive correlation is found, the lecturers might consider encouraging purposeful English Alternative Universe (AU) stories engagement as a complementary activity to formal reading instruction. Moreover, the study may also guide students in reflecting on how their digital habits relate to academic outcomes.

E. Research Scope

This study specifically investigates the correlation between perceived engagement with English AU stories on X and student' perceived extensive reading ability. The research focuses on students from the English Education Department, Class of 2022, at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, who had ever engaged with English AU stories on X.

The scope of this study is limited to two main variables, the perceived engagement with English AU stories on X, measured across three dimensions (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) with two indicators per dimension, and students' perceived extensive reading ability, assessed through a structured questionnaire. Data on perceived engagement with English AU stories on X and their perceived extensive reading ability will both be collected through the structured questionnaire. This research is designed as a correlational study and does not attempt to establish a causal relationship between the variables.

Furthermore, the study does not explore other influencing factors such as reading motivation, general English proficiency, or the use of other social media platforms. It also excludes students from different academic years, departments, or institutions. The findings will therefore be specific to the selected cohort and may not be generalizable to broader populations.

F. Conceptual Framework

This research assumes that students' informal reading habits are associated with their academic reading performance, specifically in the Extensive Reading skills. The independent variable of this research is the students' perceived engagement with English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on X. It refers to the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects whenever the students engage with the English AU stories. It was measured from the frequency of time they access the AU stories on X, the emotional attachment with the AU stories they read on X, and the reading strategy they use as EFL learners.

The dependent variable of this study is students perceived extensive reading ability. Unlike objective measures of reading performance, perceived reading ability refers to how learners evaluate their capacity to read fluently, comprehend texts, acquire vocabulary, and maintain positive attitudes toward reading in English. Extensive reading encourages students to read self-selected materials for enjoyment and general understanding, making their subjective sense of progress and competence particularly relevant. Within this framework, perceived engagement with English AU stories on X, across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, is hypothesized to correlate with how favorably students perceive their

extensive reading ability. A positive correlation would suggest that students who more actively engage with AU stories tend to hold stronger confidence in their reading skills, while a weak or negative correlation would indicate otherwise.

Based on this conceptual relationship, this research proposed that students' perceived engagement with English AU stories on X may be correlated with their perceived extensive reading ability. The framework positions this type of informal reading exposure as a potential contributor to academic reading outcomes. The conceptual framework of this study is drawn in the Figure 1.1 below.

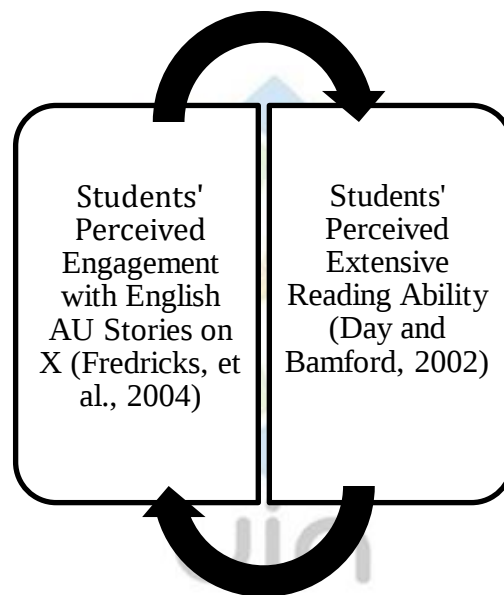


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

G. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis (H_0) of this study is that there is no significant correlation between students' perceived engagement with English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on X and their perceived extensive reading ability. This hypothesis assumes that informal reading activities, such as reading English AU stories, do not have a possible measurable relationship with their academic ability, as extensive reading skills.

While the alternative hypothesis (H_1) posits a significant correlation between students' perceived engagement with English Alternative Universe (AU) stories on X and their perceived extensive reading ability, this hypothesis suggests that the

more frequent engagement with English AU stories on X may affect their extensive reading ability to be higher or lower. It indicates an association between informal reading engagement and extensive reading skills.

H. Previous Study

Many previous studies have shown that X can serve as a learning tool, particularly in English language learning, as it provides users with continuous exposure to authentic English content in informal settings. As a text-based social media platform, X enables learners to engage with various forms of content beyond the classroom. One increasingly popular form of English content on X is Alternative Universe (AU) stories, which are fictional threads widely read by users, especially students. Although AU stories are primarily consumed for entertainment, they involve sustained engagement with English texts and extended reading practices. Therefore, AU stories on X have attracted attention as an informal reading activity that may contribute to students' English language learning experiences.

Janah et al. (2022) examined the implementation of extensive digital reading and found that digital platforms such as blogs, social media, and reading apps significantly helped students improve vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation in reading. Their study, conducted among Indonesian university students, found that extensive digital reading can effectively complement traditional classroom instruction. Similarly, a study by Prasetianto et al. (2023) found that when students engaged in extensive digital reading, they experienced significant gains in comprehension and reported positive attitudes toward reading, highlighting the cross-disciplinary benefits of extensive reading technology. These research studies suggest that digital reading environments provide learners with greater flexibility and access to diverse reading materials, encouraging more meaningful reading practices. These results also highlight the potential of digital-based reading activities, as valuable resources for fostering students' extensive reading development beyond formal education settings.

More advanced, social media can also contribute to the development of reading ability. A study by Sadha, Novitri, and Syarfi (2022) found a strong, positive relationship between social media use and reading ability, suggesting that increased

social media use tends to be associated with better reading performance. It also stated that the students' reading ability was influenced by social media usage. A large-scale study by Pianzola, Reborá, and Lauer (2020) investigated digital social reading on Wattpad and found that platforms like Wattpad foster high levels of reader interaction and emotional engagement, with readers of Teen Fiction showing stronger affective responses while readers of Classics demonstrated more cognitive and collaborative reading behaviors. A quasi-experimental study by Sudiran, Taufiq, and Adi (2025) found that Instagram-based reading activities significantly improved EFL students' reading comprehension, with students reporting higher motivation and engagement when learning through Instagram.

This study is focused on one social media, which is X. X is one of the text-based social media that provides a lot of digital reading contents. Akpan et al. (2024) stated that the use of Twitter (now known as X) has a significant impact on undergraduate students' reading habits. In their research, they found that the higher usage of X, the greater its influence on students' reading habits. Next, a qualitative study by Maisha (2023) found that X can enhance reading skills, according to the perspectives of higher education students. It revealed that X improved their reading skills and influenced their knowledge of English contexts. Another study explained that Social Networking Sites (SNS), one of them being X, can help students to improve their English skills and academic performance (Estrella, 2023). It highlights the potential of SNSs, including X, as effective tools for enhancing peer interaction and cooperative learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. These studies stated that X can function as a platform that supports reading development and English language learning.

One of the familiar reading contents in online reading is fanfiction. A quantitative study by Shofa, Rahmawati, and Puspita (2026) found a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between reading fanfiction and reading interest among senior high school students, indicating that fanfiction can serve as an effective interest-based digital reading resource to promote voluntary reading behaviors. A descriptive study by Hanifa, Khatimah, and Hamid (2025) explored EFL students' engagement with fanfiction on the Archive of Our Own (AO3)

platform and found that students perceived notable benefits in vocabulary development and increased interest in reading English, suggesting that AO3 fanfiction serves as an engaging supplementary tool for EFL learners.

Furthermore, one genre of fanfiction is Alternative Universe (AU). English Alternative Universe (AU) stories can be one of a tool to increase students' vocabulary in EFL classrooms (Yuniasih et al., 2025). The result of this study exposed that English AU stories help students discover new words, recall their previous known words, and develop their reading ability. Another study about English AU stories was conducted by Austin and Santoso (2023). It unveiled that English AU can be an authentic material used by teachers in the English class. Students were given five consecutive meetings using fanfiction as the reading materials. At the end, the students' reading skills are improved. The authors even recommend teachers to try using fanfiction as a tool to increase English proficiency. Lastly, Aprilia and Krismayani (2025) found that AU stories can be used in the classroom to boost up students' interest in reading. This experimental study exposed that the experiment class gained a higher post-test score than the control class. It also showed that the final average score of reading interest in the experimental class was in the high-level category.