CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains about background of the study, question of the research, research goals, limitations of the research, and key term definition.

A. Background of The Study

Reading is a very important skill that helps us learn and improve our language skills. According to Grabe & Stellar (2002), reading is the process of understanding and interpreting information from written words or pictures. Snow (2002) says that reading comprehension is the ability to understand and make sense of written text. This means that reading is not merely decoding written words but also understanding, interpreting, and integrating the information.

In recent years, the advent of digital technology has transformed the landscape of reading. Digital media have become a prevalent tool for reading as they offer accessibility, interactivity, and multimodal features that traditional print media may lack. According to Leu et al. (2004), the use of digital media in reading has opened new opportunities for learners to engage with texts in dynamic and meaningful ways. Digital media for reading ecompasses the use of digital resources such as e-books, online courses, educational apps, and multimedia tools that support various learning styles. Furthermore, digital media enables the implementation of online assessments and real-time feedback, making the learning process more personalized and adaptable to individual needs. This development has expanded the

possibilities for reading comprehension through digital means, providing learners with opportunities to engage with content in diverse and innovative ways.

Reading comprehension as a complex process that requires multiple cognitive and metacognitive skills, it has identified by RAND Reading Study Group.[1] It involves not only decoding words and sentences but also integrating background knowledge, making references, and interpreting meanings. To support the development of this skill, a variety of media has been utilized, including traditional media, print-based tools, and more recently, digital platforms. The advancement of technology has expended the opportunities for learners to enhance their reading comprehension through interactive, engaging, and easily accessible digital media.

Media can be categorized into several types, including printed materials, audio, visual, and digital media (Heinrich et al. 2002; Yunus et al. 2012). Digital media, in particular, has grown in prominence due to diverse learning styles. As stated by Mayer (2009), digital platforms offer multimodal experiences that integrate text, audio, and visuals, making them highly effective for educational purposes. According to various types of digital media, applications and platforms specifically designed for reading have gained significant popularity, such as books, website, online courses, and mobile applications. One notable examples platform

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[1] RAND Reading Study Group, *Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension* (Office of Education Research and Improvement, 2002).

for reading comprehension is Kakao Page, a digital platform that serialized content for reading (Liu, 2017).

Kakao Page is an online platforms that offers a wide range of digital content, including comics, novels, and Manhwa. According to (Lee at el. 2019), Kakao Page has become a significant platform for engaging readers in diverse forms of reading, including web novels and graphic storytelling. This platforms utilizes digital technology to provide users with instant access to content, enabling them to read at their convenience. Kakao Page's user-friendly interface and subscription-based model make it accessible to a wide audience, promoting the habit of reading through the convenience of mobile devices.

Kakao Page is particularly popular for its wide range of Manhwa, a Korean style of comic book or graphic novel, which is often serialized in episodes. Manhwa is characterized by its unique drawing style and narrative presentation, reflecting Korean Culture and values. As a leading platform for manhwa distribution, Kakao Page offers readers an extensive library of titles across various genres, from romance and fantasy to action and science fiction. The accessibility and ease of use offered by Kakao Page have made it a go-to platform for many readers seeking to enjoy Manhwa. This platform has significantly contributed to the popularization of Manhwa both domestically and internationally.

The integration of manhwa into Kakao Page provides an immersive reading experience that blends visual art with narrative, making it easier for readers to follow complex stories. Manhwa typically combines engaging artwork with a

compelling storyline, which not only attracts readers but also aids in developing reading comprehension skills. The visual nature of Manhwa helps readers to contextualize dialogue and plot, facilitating better understanding, especially for those who may struggle with purely text-based content. Manhwa serves multiple purposes, both as entertainment and as a cultural tool. At its core, Manhwa provides entertainment through compelling storytelling and visually engaging art. It allows readers to escape into fantastical worlds, follow intricate plots, and develop connections with characters. The narrative structure of Manhwa often includes deep character development and dramatic story arcs, which keep readers engaged across multiple episodes. Manhwa also plays a significant role in reflecting and critiquing societal values and issues. Many Manhwa series touch on real-life topics such as family dynamics, youth struggles, societal pressure, and social inequality. Another crucial purpose of Manhwa, particularly Kakao Page is their function as a platform for young and emerging artists. The digitalization of Manhwa through platform has democratized access to the medium, allowing independent creators to publish their work and gain instant feedback from readers. These platforms have made Manhwa more accessible to a global audience, further promoting the growth of the medium worldwide.

One of the most famous manhwa available on Kakao Page is "Solo Leveling", a Manhwa adaptation of a web novel written by (Chugong, 2016). The series follows the journey of a weak hunter who gradually becomes the strongest through a mysterious leveling-up system. "Solo Leveling" has garnered widespread popularity not only in South Korea but also globally, due to its exciting narrative

and captivating artwork. The series' success on Kakao Page highlights the platform's role in shaping modern reading trends and its ability to engage readers with stories that combine elements of fantasy, action, and personal growth.

The global appeal of 'Solo Leveling", noting its rise as a cultural phenomenon in the realm of digital comics, it emphasized by Kim & Park (2021). The platform's features, such as easy access to episodes and the ability to engage with other fans, have helped foster a loyal fanbase for the series. The combination of dynamic storytelling and visually stunning artwork has made "Solo Leveling" one of the most popular manhwa titles on Kakao Page, which in turn has contributed to the growing interest in Korean Manhwas worldwide. This success illustrates the potential of Kakao Page to influence reading habits and comprehension, particularly through the accessibility and engagement offered by its digital format.

One of the most popular manhwa on Kakao Page is "Solo Leveling". Besides being filled with adventure and action, "Solo Leveling" is also known for its ability to effectively combine visual elements and narrative. The combination of images depicting intense scenes with accompanying text provides an immersive reading experience for readers. This is not only attractive for those seeking entertainment but also has the potential to support learning reading comprehension, whether the Kakao Page users understanding the plot of Manhwa or not. But, through strong visualization and deep narrative, readers are expected to understand the story context more deeply, develop the ability to analyze information, and improve their overall literacy skills.

The combination of the text and images that occurs in manhwa "Solo Leveling" allows readers utilize both information processing channels simultaneously. This can accelerate the comprehension process because readers don't need to struggle to imagine situations or character feelings, as the the images already provide clear cues (Park & Lee, 2019). For example, when a character in "Solo Leveling" feels fear or joy, the facial expressions and body posture depicted in the images provide deep emotional context, while the text explains in more detail what the character feels or thinks. In this way, the combinations of text and images not only enriches the reading experience but also facilities better understanding of the conveyed material.

There are some previous studies related to this research. Research by Park & Chen; Robbani & Khoirotunnisa[2]; Kim & Lee[3]; Anderson & Yamamoto[4]; Wanti et al[5]. collectively underline the significant role of digital comics and platforms in for learning reading comprehension, language acquisition, and reader engagement. They advocate for the integration of such tools in educational contexts to foster literacy and critical thinking. In addition, the combination of the text and images that occurs in digital comics or manhwa allows readers utilize both information processing channels simultaneously. This can accelerate the comprehension process

[2] Muhammad Rofi Robbani dan Annisa Khoirotunnisa, "Utilizing Online Comics as Reading Materials for EFL Learners," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 6, no. 1 (2021): 75–88.

[3] Hyojin Kim dan Jihye Lee, "Improving L2 Reading Skills Through Webtoon: A Case Study on Visual and Contextual Support," *ELT Journal* 76, no. 3 (2022): 245–257.

[4] Thomas Anderson dan Mika Yamamoto, "The Effects of Visual Storytelling on Vocabulary Acquisition in Digital Comics," *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* 18, no. 1 (2022): 34–50.

[5] Siti Wanti, Indah Lestari Damayanti, dan Siti Rahmawati, "The Effectiveness of Webtoon in Teaching Reading Comprehension," *English Education Journal* 12, no. 2 (2022): 174–182.

because readers don't need to struggle to imagine situations or character feelings, as the the images already provide clear cues. Overall, the gap identified in this study with previous studies is revolved around the specific exploration of Kakao Page users perspective regarding learning reading comprehension in a digital context, particularly within the context of manhwa "Solo Leveling". While many studies had investigated the effectiveness of digital comics or webtoons in improving students comprehension, there is a lack of research that focuses on the specific platform used, the students' experience of reading the digital comics, their understanding of the story, and their perspectives on learning this specific reading comprehension. This gap highlights the need for targeted research that can inform readers' perspectives, particularly Kakao Page users, in learning reading comprehension through manhwa "Solo Leveling" and improve the integration of technology in language learning.

B. The Research Question

Based on the background of the research, the researcher takes research question:

1. How do Kakao page users perceive while learning and understanding vocabulary when reading "Solo Leveling"?

2. How do Kakao page users perceive when summarizing a story or main ideas?

3. How do Kakao page users patterns and habits in reading "Solo Leveling"?

C. Objective Research

From the research question above, the researcher gets the purpose of the study as:

To explore and analyze how Kakao Page users perception about reading "Solo Leveling" in enhancing their reading comprehension skills.

D. Objective of The Research

This research aims to explore how Kakao Page users perceive their experience in learning reading comprehension through manhwa Solo Leveling. It focuses on three main aspects: to describe the positive perspective of Kakao Page users on learning and understanding vocabulary through reading *"Solo Leveling,"* to explain how Kakao Page users positively perceive their ability to summarize the story or identify the main ideas in *"Solo Leveling,"* and to explore the reading patterns and habits developed by Kakao Page users while engaging with *"Solo Leveling."* By describing their perspectives, this study hopes to show that reading digital stories can support language development in a more engaging and natural way.

E. Significance of The Study

1. English Learners

For English learners hopefully after reading this research, it can empower they to recognize the value of various forms of literature in their educational journey, encouraging them to explore different genres

and mediums that enhance their language acquisition and comprehension skills.

2. The User of Kakao Page

For Kakao Page users hopefully after reading this research, it can empower them to recognize the educational potential of engaging with digital content like the manhwa "Solo Leveling". It seeks to highlight how reading such works can enhance their reading comprehension skills, broaden their understanding of narrative structures, and encourage critical thinking through the integration of visual and textual storytelling.

3. The Future Researcher

For future researcher hopefully after reading this research, it can help them by giving information to solve similar problems. They can use this research as a reference to answer questions that were not answered here.

F. Scope and Limitation of the Research

To make easier the understanding, the researcher limits the scope of the research. So, the research can be more detail and focus. This research will focus on Kakao Page users who engage with Kakao Page and have read Manhwa version of "Solo Leveling" not the web novel version. This includes a diverse demographic, capturing a range of ages, backgrounds, and reading habits.

G. **Definition of Key Terms**

1. **Reading Comprehension**

   RAND Reading Study Group reading comprehension is the process of extracting of constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It involves three dimensions: the reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a part.[6]

2. **Kakao Page**

   Kakao Page is a digital platforms from South Korea to read digital comics or manhwa with global user.

3. **Manhwa**

   Manhwa is a korean digital comics with unique illustrations and explores a wide range of genres, from romance to action.

4. **Solo Leveling**

   Solo Leveling

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[6] Group, *Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension.*