Chapter I
Introduction

1.1 Research Background

With the advancement of technology, there has been a notable shift in the medium of comics from traditional print format to digital platforms. Digital comics refer to a form of comic book that can be accessed and read through various electronic devices, including smartphones, computers, and other similar devices. Digital comics also have various genre or type and one of it is webtoon. Webtoon also known as online comic, originally created in South Korea. Webtoon words comes from "website" and cartoon, therefore webtoon is a comic that can be read through website. On 2003 Daum created a webtoon services website known as Daum Webtoon and followed by Naver Webtoon on 2004 and now there are many services that provided webtoon in the internet.

Therefore, there is one of the webtoon that makes the writer interested and one of the reasons that writer choose this webtoon is because this webtoon is very popular among the reader. It accumulated over 100 million readers according to Kakao Page. The tittle of the comic is "Solo Leveling" by Chu-Gong and Dubu (Redice Studio). Solo Leveling (나 혼자만 레벨업) or usually translated as Only I leveled up is a South Korean web novel written by Chu-Gong. Solo leveling originally is a web novel that was published in Kakao Page on July 25th, 2016, and fully published by D&C Media on November 4th, 2016. The novel was popular and

Kakao Page began to make a webtoon adaptation. The first serialization is on March 4th, 2018 and it was illustrated by Jang-Sung Rak (or known as Dubu), the CEO of Redice Studio.

Solo Leveling, which was first released in 2016 as a web novel and later adapted into a webtoon, has garnered an immense following worldwide. Its popularity can be attributed to a combination of its captivating storyline and unique elements.

One of the distinguishing factors that sets Solo Leveling apart is its intriguing and engaging plot. The story incorporates elements of fantasy, adventure, action, and drama, creating a rich and immersive narrative experience for readers. At its core, Solo Leveling revolves around the journey of the protagonist, who starts as a weak and powerless hunter and undergoes a transformative process to become the strongest and most feared one.

What makes Solo Leveling stand out even further is the introduction of the innovative "leveling system" concept. Within this system, characters are able to enhance their experience and power by defeating monsters and completing quests. This feature adds an additional layer of depth and excitement to the story, as readers witness the protagonist's growth and progression through the ranks.

The combination of a compelling storyline, diverse genres, and the unique leveling system makes Solo Leveling a standout work in the realm of web novels and webtoons. It has captured the interest and imagination of readers globally, solidifying its position as a highly popular and beloved series.

The webtoon's popularity can also be attributed to its exceptional artwork and visual storytelling. The illustrations by Jang-Sung Rak (Dubu) are stunning and perfectly complement the plot, creating a captivating reading experience for fans. The use of color, shading, and perspective in the webtoon is also noteworthy, as it helps to convey the mood and atmosphere of each scene effectively.

Comic books and graphic novels have often been dismissed as "lowbrow" or "childish" forms of literature. However, over the years, comics have proven to be an art form capable of conveying complex ideas and emotions. In fact, comics have been used to explore a wide range of themes, including politics, history, and social issues. Comics and graphic novels are unique in that they combine visual and textual elements to create a powerful narrative. The combination of images and words makes it easier for readers to understand and empathize with the characters, making comics a compelling and effective medium for storytelling.

In recent years, scholars and literary critics have recognized the artistic and literary merit of comics and graphic novels. Many have argued that comics are a form of literature, capable of exploring complex themes and ideas in ways that traditional literature cannot. The use of visual storytelling in comics makes it possible to convey emotions, action, and movement in ways that words alone cannot. Therefore, the study of comics and graphic novels as a form of literature has gained significant academic attention in recent years. In this light, analyzing Solo Leveling as a work of literature becomes all the more relevant and significant.

Therefore, according to the title of the paper "Exploring the Cognitive Narratology of Plot Structure in "Solo Leveling" Webtoon by Redice Studio and Chu-Gong.", the writer wants to analyze what are plot structure through cognitive narratology and what kind of plot used in "Solo Leveling" by Redice studio and Chu-Gong.

1.2   Identification of the problem

As technology develops along the time, comic is also changing into digital comic, a comic that can be read through technology devices. Digital comic also has different types of its genre and one of it is webtoon. Webtoon can be popular among teenager and people who seeks entertainment through their devices, webtoon has set it ranges of entertainment that can be exciting and amazing story or just a story that can make people laugh. One of the webtoon titled "Solo Leveling" has it both amazing story and also have a sense of humor. People read it for its great entertainment and great story, therefore the writer wants to analyze of what makes this webtoon popular with its plot.

1.3   Limitation of the problem

Even though webcomics have become very popular in recent years, not much study has been done on how their stories are put together. This is particularly true for "Solo Leveling," one of the most popular webtoons to date. While the webtoon has gained a massive following among readers, little attention has been paid to the ways in which its plot structure contributes to its appeal and popularity. The lack of research on the narrative techniques used in webtoons such

4

as "Solo Leveling" is a significant gap in the literature, given the growing popularity of digital comics and the unique storytelling techniques they employ.

Understanding the plot structure of "Solo Leveling" is important for several reasons. First, it can provide insights into the reasons behind the webtoon's popularity and help explain why it has resonated with readers. Second, it can shed light on the unique characteristics of webtoon storytelling and contribute to our understanding of the narrative techniques used in digital comics. Finally, it can inform the development of new narrative techniques for digital storytelling and help shape the future of webtoon storytelling.

1.4   Research Questions

According to the title of the paper, the research questions of this paper are:

1. How does the plot structure of "Solo Leveling" webtoon by Redice Studio contribute to its popularity based on the theory of Cognitive Narratology by David Herman?

2. What types of plots are utilized in "Solo Leveling" webtoon by Redice Studio?

1.5 Objectives of the study

According to the title of the paper, "Exploring the Cognitive Narratology of Plot Structure in "Solo Leveling" Webtoon by Redice Studio and Chu-Gong." the main focus of this research are:

1. To analyze the plot structure of "Solo Leveling" webtoon by Redice Studio and its impact on the popularity of the series.

2. To identify and categorize the types of plots used in "Solo Leveling" webtoon by Redice Studio, and to examine their effectiveness in conveying the story to the readers.

1.6 Significances of the study

1.6.1 Therotical benefit

This research on the plot structure of 'Solo Leveling' and other popular webtoons has the potential to provide important insights into how we engage with and interpret these complex digital narratives. By using cognitive narratology to analyze the cognitive processes involved in understanding these plots, the writer hope to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing digital narratives.

In particular, this study could shed light on how memory, attention, and perception influence our understanding of webtoon plots, and demonstrate the relevance of established theoretical approaches such as cognitive narratology to the analysis of digital narratives. This could help to bridge the

gap between traditional literary theory and the emerging field of digital humanities and establish a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of webtoons and other forms of digital media.

1.6.2   Practical Benefit

A.   Writer

Along with this research, the writer hopes that to find better understanding in the literature work especially in the structuralism. This kind of research will also help the writer to improve critical analysis on plot further.

B.   Government

The Government organizations or cultural institutions that promote the arts and media could benefit from this study by gaining insight into the popularity of webtoons and the potential of this medium to reach and engage audiences. This could inform policies and programs that support the development and distribution of digital media, and help to build a stronger and more diverse cultural sector.

C.   University

Universities and academic institutions could benefit from this study by contributing to the development of a new area of research on digital narratives and cognitive narratology. This could generate new ideas and approaches for teaching and learning in fields such as media studies, literature, and psychology.

D. Public

The general public could benefit from this study by gaining a deeper appreciation for the art and craft of webtoons, and a better understanding of how our cognitive processes shape our experience of these stories. By analyzing the plot structures of popular webtoons.