

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Webtoon is also known as online comics. According to Lexico (2020), the definition of webtoon in English is an animated cartoon or series of comic strips published online. As stated by the definition, webtoon is comics published and is accessible through digital platforms. There are some digital platforms that offer free service to access the webtoon. LINE Webtoon is one of the digital free comics platforms. “We started a whole new way to create stories and opened it up to anyone with a story to tell” (Webtoon, 2020a). This platform was produced by Naver Cooperation in 2005. LINE Webtoon was launched as NAVER Webtoon. It is very popular in South Korea. “Naver Webtoon is one of the most popular webtoon platforms with about 40 million monthly users” (Ahn, 2018). However, Naver Cooperation cooperated with LINE because LINE brand is well- known and the service is available abroad. LINE is one of well- known free instant messaging applications. “Through LINE, people get closer to one another, and get closer to a wide variety of information and services” (LINE, 2020). Since 2014, this platform is known as LINE Webtoon.

LINE Webtoon is available in English, Indonesian, Chinese, Thai, Spanish, and French. More than a hundred creators all over the world produce their comics on this platform. In each language setting it has different comics to offer to the readers. Sometimes, a comic can be read only in one language setting. It also has different ranks of the popular comics in each genre. Each comic also has its rating.

The Secret of Angel is the top one in Drama Genre in the Indonesian setting. The creator of this comic is Yaongyi from South Korea. There is no detailed information about her personal identity so that people know her as Yaongyi as what she writes on Webtoon. She was a model before she becomes a webtoonist. *The Secret of Angel* was released on May 19, 2018 and the subscribers reached 4.8 Million until today (Webtoon, 2018a). Now, there are 123 episodes (Webtoon, 2018a) and still ongoing every Tuesday. The rating of *The Secret of Angel* webcomic is 9.83 out of 10 (Webtoon, 2018a). This comic was also translated into English, which is called *True Beauty*. It will be different from *The Secret of Angel*, because the Indonesian version uploaded earlier. The rating of *True Beauty* is 9.72 (Webtoon, 2018b). There are 111 episodes (Webtoon, 2018b). According to the rank of *The Secret of Angel* and *True Beauty* on the categories created by the LINE Webtoon, *The Secret of Angel* (Webtoon, 2020b) becomes the number one webtoon in the Drama Genre category and the top webtoon read by female readers who were around 20 years old. *True Beauty* (Webtoon, 2020c) becomes number two in both categories. This paper will focus on *The Secret of Angel*, the Indonesian version, which is called *True Beauty* in English.

The Secret of Angel webcomic is chosen because of the researcher's curiosity about what makes people like it very much. *The Secret of Angel* webcomic also becomes the top webtoon within two years since the date it was released especially in Indonesia. The story of *The Secret of Angel* webtoon also teaches the readers that love has power in seeing someone's personality. This comic gives a different perspective of seeing what love is. The main character, Jugyeong Lim, presents a value that personality is more important than physical appearance. She

shows that the beauty of a woman is from the inside and not only from the outside. Not only from the story itself, the characters inside this comic also represent the style of Korea that supports the popularity of *The Secret of Angel*, starting from the physical appearance, the fashion, the culture, and also the places that are presented as the setting of the story that might become a reason why people enjoy reading this comic. Those aspects create curiosity about what makes it very popular so that people love to read it.

1.2 Statement of Problems

As discussed earlier in the background of the research, this research aims to address the question of analyzing what prominent elements of romance found in *The Secret of Angel* webcomic. The researcher will conduct an analysis to identify the prominent elements of romance on *The Secret of Angel* series.

Furthermore, this research also aims to address the question of how elements of romance on *The Secret of Angel* webcomic found by the readers. By addressing this question, the researcher will be able to explain how the elements of romance on *The Secret of Angel* found by the readers.

1.3 Significance of the Study

There are no previous studies using this particular webcomic, *The Secret of Angel*, with a similar topic. Other previous studies using *The Secret of Angel* with different titles and topics. There are research proposals that use a similar title or topic with a different object. There are also research proposals that use the different webcomics from LINE Webtoon. This research will be the first research proposal

of *The Secret of Angel* webcomic series as the object of the research using Reader-response Criticism as the theory. This research aims to look closer at how the elements of romance of *The Secret of Angel* found by the readers. The elements of romance that cause *The Secret of Angel* becomes the top webcomic in Drama Genre. The readers would understand the elements of romance which attract them most.

This study is written to increase insights about elements of romance to the webtoon creators. They can take into consideration about including elements of romance on their works. This study is written to students who desiderate study literature. They can undertake further studies in literature.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

This research is going to talk about elements of the romance of *The Secret of Angel*. This research will discover more about the elements of romance from readers' perspectives which attract them most to read it. This study will also discover on how the elements of romance found by the readers. The focus will be only on the readers' responses through some interviews. The elements that attract the readers the most without any prior information.

1.5 Operational Definition of the Key Terms

1. Literary Pragmatics

Sell (1995) defines literary pragmatics as the field which deals with the pragmatics of literary writing and reading in which context–realization is of great importance.

2. LINE Webtoon

Webtoon is an animated cartoon or series of comic strips published online using LINE platform (Lexico, 2020).

3. Reader-response theory

This approach to criticism derives from Hermeneutics that defines it as a discipline that places at its center the practice of interpretation rather than particular results (Stringer, 2005).

4. Elements of romance

4F (Formula, Fantasy, Fulfillment, Feminism & Femininity) (McCracken, 1998).

5. *The Secret of Angel*

The Secret of Angel is one of Line Webtoon Series created by Yaongyi that was translated into Indonesian.