CHAPTER 1
Introduction

1.1   Background

English is a global language that must be mastered by everyone. In Indonesia, English is acknowledged as the first foreign language. Thus, English becomes one of the subjects which is formally taught since elementary school to secondary school. English has four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing and four components such as vocabulary, grammar,and pronunciation.

One of the skills which receives more attention is a reading. The ability to read well is the basis of success in school and later in life. According to Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004), reading is one important way to improve the students' general language skills in English and helps them think in English, enlarge their vocabulary, increase the reading speed, gain more knowledge, and it is also a good way to find out about new ideas, facts and experiences. In addition, reading is not only being able to decode written symbols to sound. It requires more than being able to read the words out loud. Reading will be in vain if the readers do not know or comprehend completely what they have read. Without comprehension, reading is a frustating task for the readers. Therefore, not all learners like reading activity. Lack of vocabulary and interest in the material of reading are probably the reasons they do not motivate to read.

However, there are many various ways to improve reading comprehension skills in English. Not only through formal education like

school, but also through informal education. For instance, the learners who spend their time to play video games, or to listen to music, will be required to read its dialogue on the game or the lyric of the the song. The learners have to understand what the dialogues are saying on the game that they can choose appropriate response or they have to read the lyric of the song so that they understand the meaning of it. Without realizing it, they have increased their vocabulary knowledge which help them improve their reading comprehension skill.

Another activity to encourage interest in reading and quite popular in Indonesia is reading comic. Comics are, in Will Eisner's (1985) words, "sequential art," by which he means to emphasize a distinctive form of art, or method of expression. Furthermore, Greg Hayman and Henry John Pratt (2005) defines comic as "sequence of discrete, juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text." In brief, comic is a narrative story with pictures placed side by side.

There are four different terms of comic namely, cartoon, comic strips, comic books, and graphic novel. In this study, the term which is related is comic books and graphic novels. Both of them are using combination of illustrations and text to tell the story. The difference is not so much in content, but the way they are presented and the form of them. Comic books are usually thin paper booklets, bound with staples while graphic novel are much thicker than comic books. Comic books are periodicals. They are produced monthly and have to be read in order so

that the reader can understand the content of the story. Yet, graphic novel is read like a novel. One title of graphic novel will take around 3 or 4 books. Sometimes the serialization of comic books which are succesful will be packaged in graphic novel format.

Comic book is easy to read. It does not have so many words as novel that the readers will not get bored with the story. Comic book is one of the familiar and popular entertaining books among young readers (Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002). In Indonesia, Japanese comic book or what people know as *manga*, has its own fans. Over the past twenty years since the first official introduction in Indonesia, *manga* has produced significant impact on young Indonesian. With the introduction of Akira and Candy Candy in the year of 1990, *manga* soon reached its booming popularity by the end of 1990s (Ramadin & Ahmad, 2000) and is still continuing in the 2000s (Ahmad & Zpalanzani, 2009; Bae, 2007; Ramadin, Ahmad, Zpalanzani, & Wiratmo, 2003; Widowati, 2005a, 2005b). Unlike English comic in which the stories focus more on super-heroes, *manga* has more genre variations. *Manga* readers are officially introduced to the genre variations of *manga* such as *shounen* which is intended for boys like Dragon Ball, Naruto, etc and *shoujo* which is intended for girls like Pansy and Chimni.With several modification such as cencorships to make *manga* more acceptable to Indonesian market, the sales of *manga* began to climb and reach booming phenomenon in the year 2000 (Ramadin & Ahmad, 2000) . While *manga* was mostly addressed

to children, in the beginning of September 2005 the readers was introduced to *manga* for adult which called *seinen and josei* through the publication of Level Comics (Ahmad et al., 2006, p.33). It shows that *manga* genre has widened not only for children, but also intended for the readers who still want to continue reading *manga* when they grow up. Furthermore, compared to English comic style which is more realistic; *manga* style is more simple yet acceptable to all ages. *Manga* style is cuter with big eyes and small mouth and sometimes it has cuter style like having big head and big eyes. Due this reason, *manga* has attracted young Indonesian readers to read more.

Not only, do they read *manga* in Bahasa Indonesia, some *manga* readers, especially in Indonesia, also enjoy reading *manga* online which is mostly in English. Being easier and cheaper are the motives for them to choose reading *manga* online. Moreover, the story in *manga* online is updated faster than the printed ones at the book store. However, they do not read *manga* in English for learning its language. In fact, they read it for pleasure only. As it is stated by National Literacy Trust, reading for pleasure is reading that the readers do from their own free will in order to get satisfaction from the act of it. It also refers to reading that begin at someone else's request then they continue because they are interested in it. (Clark and Rumbold , National Literacy Trust, 2006).

Numerous studies related to comic have been conducted, such as by Choi Mei Ju, Hsu Yung-Hung, and Chen Ching-Chi studies in 2015;

Apriani in 2014 and Jun Liu in 2004. However, their studies are all about the effect of comic used in the classroom, and the comic under study is English comic. The other study related to comic and its influence to the student's achievement was conducted by Roslidah in 2013.

There has been no study on the *manga* readers' perceptions about its contribution to their reading comprehension skill improvement. Therefore, in order to find out how much *manga* in English contributes its readers in their reading comprehension skill improvement, a study entitled "*Manga* Readers' Perceptions on *Manga's* contribution to Their Reading Comprehension Skill Improvement" was worth conducting.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

In line with the title and the background of the study, two research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What perceptions do *manga* readers have on *manga's* contribution to their reading comprehension skill improvement?

2. To what extent does reading *manga* contribute to its readers' reading comprehension skill improvement?

1.3   Objective of the Study

In connection with the research questions, the objective of this study is intended to:

1. find out the *manga* readers' perceptions on *manga's* contribution in their reading comprehension skill improvement;

2. find out the extent to which reading *manga* contributes its readers' reading comprehension skill improvement.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this research, the writer uses the following underlying theories :

1. The theory of reading to describe the nature of reading, the purposes of reading and the reading comprehension skills.

2. The theory of comic and comic book to describe the nature of comic, the advantages of reading comic, the theory of *manga* including the etymology of the term *manga*, *manga* history, and the unique characteristic of *manga*.

3. The theory of perception to understand better the nature of perception. It covers bottom-up and top-down processes.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give insight for educator, parents, or English learners, that comic specifically *manga* which is translated in English can give contribution to the young *manga* readers reading comprehension skill improvement.

1.6 Assumption

This study is based on the following assumptions:

Manga readers have perceptions on the contribution of *manga* in their reading comprehension skill improvement. The perceptions can be elicited from respondents through questionnaire and interview.

1.7   Scope and Limitation of the Study:

Finding out the perception of manga readers' on manga's contribution to their reading comprehension skill improvement and the extent to which reading *manga* contributes   its readers'   reading comprehension skill improvement, this study focuses on following limitation:

The subject of this study were 25 readers who like reading *manga* in English. They were 16 to 25 years old. The subjects were given the questionnaires to find out their background knowledge about *manga* and their perceptions on it. Five of the subjects were interviewed to find out further information related to their interest in *manga* and how *manga* could be helpful for their reading comprehension skill improvement.

1.8   Definition of the Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, the key terms used in study are defined as follows:

- Comic : Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence,intended to convey information and/or to produce aesthetic response in the viewer.
- Comic Book : Thin paper booklets, bound with staples.

The story is often serialized.

- Graphic Novel : A book containing one long story told mostly with the combination of pictures and writing / a literature published in a comic book format.

- *Manga* : The term of comic book in Japan.

- Reading Comprehension Skill : The understanding of a text or paragraph as proved by the ability to find the topic, main ideas, supporting details, the author's purpose and conclusion.

- Perception : A belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seems.

- Contribution : The part played things in bringing about a result or helping something to advance.

- Improvement : An occasion when something gets better.