# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1.Background to the Study

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* has been known widely around the world, especially by the readers. Although the readers like the books very much, some of them still find themselves unsatisfied due to many possibilities that could have happened in the books. In fact, even though Rowling's *Harry Potter* books have been adapted into eight remarkable movie adaptations, the readers still feel unsatisfied as the movies itself also leave many details in the book. Readers who find themselves unsatisfied create their own versions of the stories for themselves, either it is related to or even as opposed to the *Harry Potter* stories. One of other stories created by the readers are fanfictions in which readers of any fandom pour their ideas of their fandom into words, creating an alternate universe happening outside of the canon[1]. Even so, fanfiction only requires stories which include mostly canon characters in a fandom, thus somewhat limiting readers to make their own creation to experience the universe. This limitation then triggers some readers to create their own alternate universe by borrowing some aspects of the canon yet distancing themselves from the characters in the books for more inventive play. One

[1] Canon refers to the original works of JK Rowling, including the books, interviews, and so on.

of the alternate universes is Pottersworld text-based, play-by-post role playing game (RPG).

A text-based role playing game is an online game which depends solely on text-based interface. In Pottersworld, the text-based type used is play-by-post, which means that the characters interact by taking turns in fabricating plot and posting it with a narrative description in which their character speaks, thinks, and gives any reactions (both internal or external) to the situation (Pottersworld, 2011). In Pottersworld, the narrative is told from one's character's point of view, while the other players and their characters contribute to it as well, deciding together where the narrative story will go next. In order to play, firstly, the players need to make and register their character as a student attending their first year at Hogwarts, then follow the learning process for 7 years (35 weeks in real life), with the maximum of 9 years (45 weeks in real life) before continuing as an adult witch or wizard.

In Pottersworld, the characters carry attributes consisting of the username, avatar, member title, group, blood status, badges, signatures, and the descriptions in the signature itself. These attributes are a form of cyberliterature, which is non-professional literary texts that can be found at the Internet, such as text-based role-playing game mentioned earlier. As Viires suggests that other elements of the internet, those attributes in this case, are essential to be put into consideration for the analysis.

On the other hand, since the forum is created by none other than Rowling's avid readers, the shift of readership to authorship occurs. Thus, the precursory authorship issue emerges. When readers apply their interpretation on Harry Potter's

stories into texts in RPG text-based, the *Harry Potter* stories have become their precursor, and Rowling their precursory author. In the process of distancing themselves from their precursory author, the readers create their own plot, characters, setting, and/or theme based on their own version while using Rowling's *Harry Potter* stories as their main source or influence. Moreover, since Pottersworld is a role playing game forum established on the internet, when the readers decide to create their own version in the alternate universe, the authorship required to be analysed therefore is the authorship in computer game, especially those containing narrative representation, in which Pottersworld is operating.

There have hardly been previous researches regarding precursory authorship issues, especially in role playing game. However, there are several previous researches that might come close to it. One of the previous researches of role playing game is that of Ryan Blackstock (2016) in his work *Origin Stories: The Phenomenological Relationship between Players and Their Characters*. Blackstock explores how the players' personas embody and experience through a live-action role play. In result, some players describe that the boundaries between game and life are blurred. However, this research does not analyse beyond the relationship of the player and their creation (character) in the game; it only analyses the result of the creation themselves. The second research is by Neil A. Douse and Ian Chris McManus (1993), *The Personality of Fantasy Game Players*. Douse and McManus also focuses on the players' personality, showing that the subjects of fantasy role playing game (the players) are shown to be significantly having less emphatic concern than controls. Compared to that of Douse and McManus, this

research requires the players to have more empathic concern than controls in order to sublime within the character and develop the character to enhance the interactivity of the game.

Furthermore, this research next focuses on dominant levels of narrative representation in computer game chosen by both Pottersworld's creators and players in order to create the alternate universe from J.K. Rowling's original *Harry Potter* universe. The data are taken from several topics in Pottersworld and analysed using several concepts on cyberliterature and authorship in computer games. Therefore, the research titled **Precursory Authorship of "*Harry Potter*" in Pottersworld.net Text-Based Role Playing Game** is conducted.

### 1.2. Research Questions

As described from the background above, the research questions to this study are as follow:

1. What is the dominant level of narrative representation chosen to create the alternate universe of Pottersworld RPG in the process of precursory authorship?
2. What are the impacts of the dominant level of narrative representation on the implied author's contribution in the process of precursory authorship?

### 1.3. Objectives

In order to answer the research questions, the objectives therefore are:

1. To identify dominant level of narrative representation used in Pottersworld by using Neitzel's concept of four levels of narrative representation identifiable in computer games and combining it with Viires's cyberliterature ideas, Iser's reader response ideas and Love's ideas on precursory authorship
2. To discover the impact by adjusting the levels of representation with Pottersworld's development and limitations

**1.4.Significance to Knowledge**

Theoretically, this research is expected to give other significant information of how precursory authorship occurs in online games. This research also aims to highlight the phenomenon about post-modern literature, in the form of cyber-literature which "expands the boundaries of traditional literature" (Viires, 2005), and narrative represented in computer games.

Practically, the result of this research can be made as an example or future reference for similar study, so that it will produce much better development of the study in the future. Personally, this research is conducted in order to expand the researcher's knowledge and comprehension about reader response theory, precursory authorship and levels of narrative representation in computer games. Moreover, the researcher aims to highlight the fact that readers can become authors, and authors can become creators. The study also makes the researcher aware that besides the traditional, printed-out texts, there are still many forms of literature that can be discovered, not limited to role playing games. As the term text-based role

playing game is still unfamiliar, the researcher hopes to introduce the form in order to provide more expansive view of role playing game, and how it triggers narrative to the existence based on the interactivity of the game which folds through texts posted on the internet.

### 1.5.Framework of Theories

In order to analyse the precursory authorship issues, this research uses several concepts on cyberliterature by Piret Viires (2005) and authorship in computer games by combining reader response theories by Wolfgang Iser (1972), precursory authorship by Harold Love (2002) and for levels of representation by Britta Neitzel (2005).

Cyberliterature, according to Viires (2005), can be roughly defined as a derivation from digital literature's concept, or using computer as a media to create and present literature itself, such as text-based role playing games. In Pottersword, the theory is used due to the importance of elements of the internet in the player's profile, such as username, avatar, member badges, and so on, that also need to be put into consideration for analysis. Other than that, as Pottersworld is a role playing game based on text, the interactivity of the players in fabricating plots are needed in order to make the game more dynamic.

The second theory is reader response theory by Wolfgang Iser (1972). The theory argues that the interactivity between readers and the text is also significant in bringing texts and the narratives into life. In Pottersworld, the readers are the

players, and the interactivity between players are needed in order to make the fabricated plot more engaging to the players for the game to keep going. However, though Iser suggests the reading process prioritizes the text and the reader, Rosenblatt (1996) adds writing to the picture. She proposes that the reader also "composes hence writes an interpreted meaning" of the text itself. Therefore, it is not impossible for the reader to become writer. In Pottersworld, the players are the readers of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* before they become the writers of their own version of *Harry Potter* itself, which is by fabricating a different plot from the canon. As they experience a shift from readership to authorship, the concept of authorship is also questioned because they are inspired by other writer's creation to become a writer themselves.

The shift from readership to authorship in that case is also known as precursory authorship. According to Love (2002), precursory authorship is a situation where works directly embody a relatively large amount of material from a previous work into a new one. There are two terms of precursory authorship, one of it is multiple authorship. Multiple authorship occurs when more than one writer gives contribution in a work. It is indefinite to the extent of what kind of work is being contributed, without being limited to a computer game of text-based role playing.

Before experiencing the shift, the game needs to raise potential narrative into existence. Only when the game is actually played, any action is made, the potential narrative can come to the surface (Neitzel, 2005:60). This initiates the concept of shared authorship due to the requirement of players in making the

sequence of events. In order to create it, the players must give each other's contribution as it is carried through the narrative actions. Therefore, they can be described as co-authors of the story (2005:53). Connected to Love's concept of multiple authorship, the players indeed experience it as the actions are made by more than one player in order to create the dynamic and interactivity of the narrative actions and game. Neitzel does not emphasize on the players' light significantly; she proposes the term 'implied author', an authority created by a supervisor text to the narrator and spans the entire text. It is not dependent, however, as it is constructed by other "entity" which is the implied creator. The implied creators are the creators of the game world who provide and control the production of narrative texts of the implied authors. They are also responsible to form the virtual world of the game, while the implied authors are the players. The responsibilities are divided into four levels of representation identified in computer games: the world design (the implied creator's responsibility), the visual design (the implied creator's responsibility), the plot design (the implied author's responsibility), and the chronological design (the implied creator's responsibility). Therefore, the framework of theories is as follows.

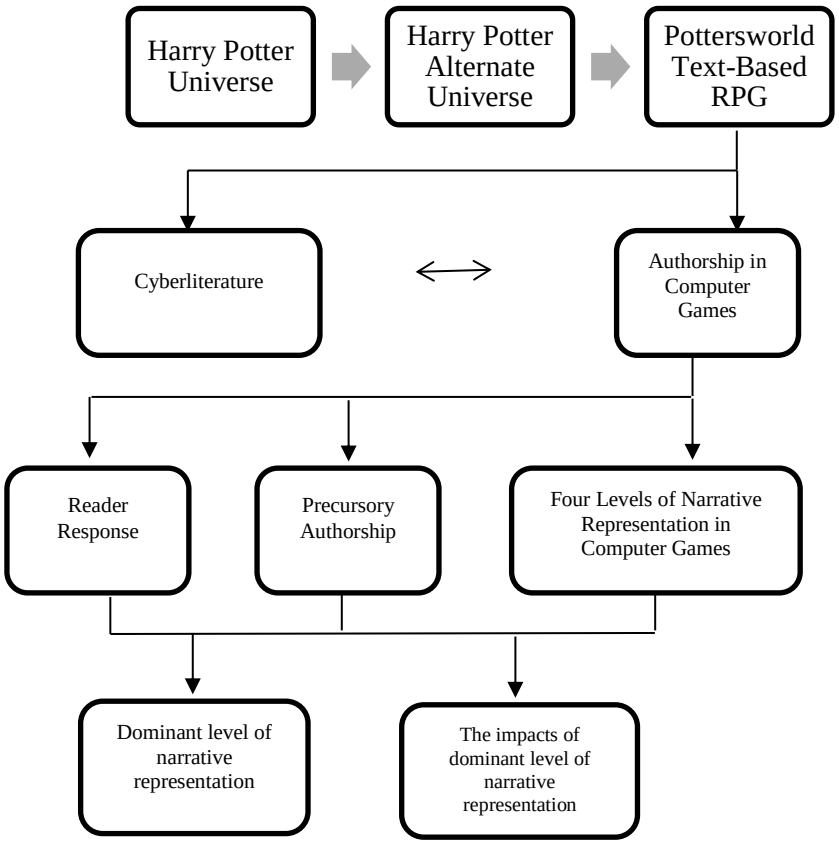



Figure 1.1 Framework of Theories