CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

English as an international language has become something important in this globalization era. Sharifian (2009) states that English has 'traveled' to many parts of the world and has been used to serve many various purposes. English is the most widely language in the world and this language is a native language for many countries. In everyday, millions of people will use English in their social life. Meyer (2009) states that English is the most widely spoken language not just in the world but in the history of civilization. English is widely used around the world, not just in countries in which it is a native language (Australia, Canada, Ireland, Great Britain, New Zealand, and United State) but in many other countries in which it is either a second language (e.g. Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Tanzania, and Singapore) or a foreign language (e.g. most of Western Europe).

According to Rohmah (2009), English is spoken by people throughout the world as their first language, second language and foreign language. English is learned not only in the countries where it is used as their first language or their 'mother tongue', but also in other countries where their first language is not English. The existence of multiple languages worldwide enables individuals to master more than one language and use them in various contexts.

Altun (2023) mentions that language has a significant impact on how we see ourselves, communicate with others, and negotiate the complex dynamics of our social fabric, whether in personal or societal circumstances. Language plays a crucial role in shaping communication, identify, and meaning in various domains, including digital spaces. In the realm of virtual items, such as those found in online games, digital marketplace, and software applications–the naming process is essential for branding, usability, and user engagement. Effective naming conventions help distinguish products, convey functionality,

and enhance user experience. Given the increasing prominence of virtual environments, understanding the linguistic mechanisms behind naming virtual items is an important area of study.

It is stated by Rodman (2003) that morphology is an essential aspect of language knowledge. Knowledge of morphology includes knowledge of individual morphemes, their pronunciation, and their meaning, and knowledge of the rules for combining morphemes into complex words. Studying morphology helps learners recognize word structures, making it easier to deduce meanings and increase vocabulary.

Yule (2006) states that word formation is a fundamental linguistic process that governs the creation of new words in a language. Previous studies have explored different methods of word formation including morphological structures and semantic influences. However, there is limited research specifically addressing how these processes contribute to the naming of virtual items. This gap presents an opportunity to analyze the patterns and structures involved in naming conventions, providing insights into linguistic creativity and digital communication.

This study is grounded in the conceptual framework of morphology, particularly focusing on morphemes and word formation processes as outlined by Yule (2006). Morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in a language, are classified into different types, including free morphemes (which can stand alone as words) and bound morphemes (which require attachment to other morphemes). Additionally, derivational morphemes create new words, while inflectional morphemes modify existing words to fit grammatical contexts.

In addition to morphemes, word formation processes play a central role in this study. Yule (2006) identifies multiple ways new words are formed, including: Etimology; Coinaige; Borrowing; Compounding; Blending; Clipping; Backformation; Conversion; Acronyms; Derivation; and Multiple processes. In this research, the researcher will only focus on six types of word formation processes that are most relevant to naming virtual items. They are :
1. Coinage – the creation of entirely new words, often for branding or

commercial use, 2. Borrowing – the adoption of words from other languages, 3. Compounding – the combination of two or more words to form a new one, 4. Blending – merging parts of two words into a new term, 5. Acronyms – forming words from the initial letters of a phrase, 6. Derivation – adding affixes (prefixes, suffixes, infixes) to modify or create new words. This study focuses on these word formation processes as they are the most relevant to the data collected. By analyzing linguistic strategies in virtual item naming, this research aims to uncover patterns influencing naming conventions in virtual environments.

One of the most popular technological developments in modern society is video games. Besides being a source of entertainment, games also serve as a medium for teaching and learning languages, particularly foreign languages. Many video games use English as their default language. Video game becomes so popular in society. Javanovic (2022) states that video games have grown so much recently, both as a hobby and industry. Right now, the music and movie industry put together earn less than video game companies. Javanovic (2022) also mentioned that there are 3.24 billion gamers in the world. Most people that play video game is adult. According to Javanovic (2022), the average age of the gamers is at 35 years old. Not only as a hobby, some people play video game as their main job. One such popular game, played by over 10 million users, is Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game, which serves as the subject of this research.

Highrise is a virtual game that emphasizes fashion, is also a creative virtual universe where the users can create avatars, express themselves, make friends, join a social communities, and participate in virtual chats. Highrise (2025) notes that users can design and build their own virtual spaces, fostering creativity and self-expression. "Millions of people are experiencing Creator-built worlds in the Highrise virtual universe". The game also functions as a social media platform. Players of this game are free to do anything as long as it does not conflict with the provisions of this game, one of which is to communicate negatively with other players. Highrise (2025) stated, to create wholesome content and interact with other players in positive ways that foster friendships

and exploration. You should never interact with players with the intent of being negative or discouraging. You should also never create content with the intent to anger other players or illicit adverse reactions. The main objective of Highrise is to strengthen friendships worldwide through virtual interaction. "We love bringing people together through play at Highrise. That's why we built it! The friendships that are formed by thousands of people on Highrise every day are what drive us to create this special world and we plan on continuing to build and evolve our world for as long as we can." (Highrise, 2025).

Donoghue, Heras, Li, Middleton, and Jung (2023) stated that 74.6% of all respondents reported an increase in their gaming time during the initial months of the pandemic. These findings align with reports of a 75 to 130% surge in video game engagement during the first weeks of lockdown. Our data also suggest that the amount of time spent gaming was influenced by the severity of the lockdown and by individuals' levels of physical activity (PA) prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic COVID-19, people reported spending more time playing video games. Therefore, Highrise Virtual Metaverse is a perfect game that provides an alternative way for people to socialize, stay connected, and experience a sense of normalcy while adhering to pandemic restrictions. Its immersive environment offers a safe and engaging platform for users to interact and maintain social bonds during challenging times.

As Susanti (2021) noted, playing video games can improve English language skills due to frequent exposure to English vocabulary. Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game, which is rich in English-named virtual items, offers an ideal environment to observe this phenomenon. Understanding how these items are named not only supports players in navigating the game but also reflects broader linguistic patterns and learning opportunities in digital spaces.

In the global gaming landscape, English functions as the dominant language, particularly in the creation and development of virtual content. It is widely used in in-game instructions, item descriptions, character dialogues, and even player interactions. The vast majority of video games released by international developers use English as either the default or primary language,

regardless of the players' native tongues. This has made English not only a medium of communication but also a critical tool for navigation and understanding in digital spaces. As a result, gamers from non-English-speaking countries are often exposed to English passively and actively, leading to incidental vocabulary acquisition and improved comprehension skills.

The use of English in games also reflects a wider phenomenon where digital environments act as informal learning platforms. Games encourage language immersion through repeated exposure to item names, commands, quests, and dialogues, which are often rich in vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Players decode meanings, guess unknown words based on context, and learn functional language intuitively. This aligns with the view of Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016), who argue that digital games are a powerful source of extramural English learning, enhancing vocabulary, spelling, and overall language proficiency in a non-instructional context. Therefore, investigating the linguistic features of a game like Highrise offers insights not only into word formation but also into the role of digital games in second language development.

Furthermore, virtual item naming is a linguistic phenomenon that combines creativity, cultural trends, and social identity. In virtual communities, naming is more than just labelling—it is tied to branding, status, and belonging. Players often gravitate toward items with appealing or clever names, which can carry meanings that reflect the culture or trends within the game's ecosystem. Understanding how these names are constructed helps to uncover the broader linguistic strategies users rely on to create an engaging and recognizable digital presence. This also opens up avenues to explore how language is used to market, attract, and communicate value within a game.

From a morphological perspective, the study of word formation in digital platforms is still emerging. While previous research has examined word formation in traditional media, social platforms like TikTok, and journalistic writing, few have focused on virtual gaming environments where language serves functional, social, and aesthetic purposes simultaneously. Given the global rise of metaverse-style games like Highrise, a closer examination of their

5

naming conventions can contribute significantly to the understanding of contemporary language change. It also highlights how morphological processes adapt to meet the communicative needs of fast-paced, visually-driven digital spaces.

In addition, this study intersects with the field of Internet linguistics, where scholars analyze how the internet and digital platforms influence language use. David Crystal (2006) emphasizes that online communication has birthed a new form of linguistic creativity—shortened forms, blended words, acronyms, and entirely new vocabulary born from digital culture. Highrise provides a microcosm of these changes, especially through its item naming system, which showcases the everyday use of creative morphology by both developers and players.

Finally, the relevance of this research extends to sociolinguistic inquiry. The names given to virtual items often reflect the identity, group belonging, and social positioning of players. Some items are named using prestigious or rare-sounding words to convey exclusivity, while others rely on humor or pop culture references to connect with a wider audience. In this way, language becomes a tool for community-building and social navigation within the game. Studying this naming behavior allows researchers to see how digital users encode meaning, express creativity, and assert identity through morphology in a highly interactive environment.

Several studies have explored word formation processes in different contexts. Iffah Al Hikmah, Hamzah Machmoed, and Harlinah Shahib (2024) analyzed word formation in TikTok content, identifying processes such as compounding, abreviation, blending, affixation, coinage, conversion, acronym from the data that have been collected by observing the TikTok account of Charli Grace D'Amelio. In this research, Acronym is the most commonly found types of word formation processes e.g., FYP – "For Your Page", LOL – "Laugh Out Loud", RN – "Right Now", NGL – "Not Gonna Lie". Vlietstra (2012) suggested, "The acronym are listed in capital letters". Delahunty and Garvey (2010) also stated, Acronyms are new words formed from the intial letters of a

set of other words. Swarniti (2024) focused on derivational morphemes in CNN political articles, classifying them into noun, verb, adjective, and meaning-changing affixes. Fitria (2021) examined new terms that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as *lockdown* (compounding), *Covid* (blending), and *WFH* (acronym). Yunitaka and Zainollah (2022) analyzed word formation in the Madurese language, highlighting processes like compounding, clipping, derivation, reduplication. Lastlt, Sundari and Faisal (2023) studied word formation in English and Indonesian football commentary, finding that compounding and coinage were the most common processes.

While these studies analyze word formation in various contexts such as social media, journalism, language preservation, and sports commentary, this research focuses on word formation within the *Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game*. Unlike previous studies, this research aims not only to identify how item names in *Highrise* are formed and how they contribute to in-game communication, but also to examine how they influence players' understanding of English vocabulary in a digital environment. In contrast to traditional or semi-traditional digital platforms such as social media or online news, *Highrise* represents a newer, more immersive virtual environment that blends social interaction with virtual avatars, spaces, and creative item naming. These metaverse platforms are still underexplored in linguistic studies, especially in terms of word formation, making this research significant in filling that gap. Although the title emphasizes word formation processes, this study also incorporates morphological analysis, identifying the types of morphemes such as free, bound, lexical, functional, derivational, and inflectional morphemes used in the item names. This approach provides a deeper understanding of both the surface-level construction and the internal linguistic structure of virtual terms. Based on this background, this research paper is titled: ***"Word Formation of Items in Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game."***

1.2 Statement of Problem

In recent years, many teenagers and young adults have increasingly acquired new language skills through digital platforms, including video games. *Highrise*: Virtual Metaverse Game uses English as its main language, especially in item names and gameplay. These item names often feature creative and varied word formation, offering rich, authenetic language examples. Given this context, this research aims to analyze the word formation processes found in the item names of *Highrise:* Virtual Metaverse Game. The goal is to better understand how these linguistic forms can serve as meaningful teaching materials for learning English Morphology. By examining real examples drawn from the game, learners may gain clearer insights into how English words are formed and used in context. Based on the background of the problem can be formulated into the research questions, as follows:

1) What are the types of word formation processes involved in the item names of *Highrise*: Virtual Metaverse Game?

2) How are the word formation processes operated in the labelling of virual items in *Highrise*: Virtual Metaverse Game?

1.3 Research Objectives

From the view of the background and the research problems above, here is the objectives of this research:

1) To identify the types of word formation processes in *Highrise* virtual item names.

2) To analyze how these processes operate in the naming of in-game items.

1.4 Research Significance

Academically, it is anticipated that this study will offer a comprehensive understanding of how new words are formed and evolve in language. By analyzing the word formation process in the Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game, this study can contribute to linguistic research, particularly in the field of morphology. It also highlights the relationship between digital culture and

language development, showing how gaming influences vocabulary expansion. Additionally, the findings of this research can be useful for educators in designing more engaging language-learning strategies using digital platfoems. Especially for those with an interest in the fashion industry, understanding how item names are formed in the game can provide insights into branding and marketing language.

Practically, the researcher hopes this research can give several benefits for the students and language learners by serving as an additional reference in studying morphology particularly word formation. Since many teenagers and young adults acquire new vocabulary through gaming, this study can help bridge the gap between entertainment and education. By examining real-world examples from Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game, students can enchance their understanding of word formation in an engaging game-based learning approaches into language education. Hopefully, this study will expand the reader's knowledge and insight into how language adapts and evolves within digital spaces.

1.5 Defintion of Key Terms

To prevent any misunderstandings in this study, the writer provides clear explantiona of several key terms. The definitions are outlined as follows:

a. Morphology

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words, including how morphemes (the smallest units of meaning) combine to from complex words.

b. Morpheme

A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language. Morphemes can be free (standing alone as a word) or bound (must attach to other morphemes).

c. Word Formation

Word formation refers to the process by which new words are created or existing words are modified in a language. This involves various techniques like derivation, compounding, and blending that allow languages to grow and adapt.

d. Coinage

Coinage is a type of word formation where entirely new words are invented, usually for branding or commercial purposes.

e. Borrowing

Borrowing is a process in which a words is taken from another language and used in a new context or language.

f. Compounding

Compounding is a word formation process where two or more independent words are combined to form a new word.

g. Blending

Blending is merging parts of two existing words to form a new one.

h. Acronym

Acronym is a word formed from the initial letters of a series of words, usually pronounced as a single word.

i. Derivation

Derivation is a process of word formation by adding affixes (prefixes, suffixes, or infixes) to a base or root word.

j. Virtual Items

Virtual items are digital objects found in online games or digital platforms. These items can include clothing, accessories, avatars, or furniture and often have specific names that carry meaning and function.

k. Highrise: Virtual Metaverse Game

Highrise is an online social metaverse game where users can create avatars, interact with others, design virtual rooms, and express themselves creatively. It serves as both a game and a social media platform.

l. Digital Linguistics

Digital linguistics explores how language functions and evolves within digital environments, including gaming, social media, and virtual communication platforms.

m. Virtual Environment

Virtual environment is a computer-generated space where users can interact with each other and digital objects in real-time, often in the form of games or simulations.