

A Playful End-of-the-Year Gathering

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Event: Introducing University Students to TTRPGs (Tabletop role-playing games): The Good Kind of Contagious

Date: December 22, 2023

RSVP by December 18th at <https://forms.gle/4ux1Cs7SoAbYn8oLA> .

Time: 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM (Must leave the building by 10 PM)

Location: Aoyama Gakuin University, Building 15 (Goucher Hall): Room 15-301
[Breakout sessions will take place in neighboring rooms: 15302 & 15304]

Guest Speakers: Kinsella Valies, Timothy Gutierrez, and Dax Thomas

Target Audience: Those interested in the educational applications of Role-playing Games and who would like to experience them for themselves in a relaxed atmosphere.

Sponsor: JALT Lifelong Language Learning Special Interest Group (LLL-SIG)

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Plan for the evening:

Three speakers, Kinsella Valies, Timothy Gutierrez, and Dax Thomas, will give brief talks about the ways they have used Role-playing Games in personal, professional, and research contexts. They will give participants the opportunity to experience several game types by leading them as gamemaster (GM).

We will first meet all together in Room 15-301 from 6:30 PM before breaking up into different game groups at 8:00 PM.

You may bring snacks to share. Hot water and limited quantities of tea and coffee will be available.

1st Speaker: **Kinsella Valies** (6:30 PM - 7:00 PM)

Title: **Mission Possible: Leveling up in English at home and beyond**

Summary:

According to Schneider (2023), table-top roleplaying games (TTRPGs) simulate meaningful encounters of human behavior and interaction that allows learners to try out different social and communicative strategies without facing any real-world penalties. The main objective of this presentation is to examine how the integration of TTRPGs in informal, adult EFL can lead to significant positive outcomes for learners. The theoretical framework is phenomenologic, based on dialogues, interviews and, reflections between the researcher and the five participants. Participants were lifelong English learners and native speakers from varied backgrounds with the common denominator of having more than 10 years of TTRPG experience. By exploring the impact of table-top RPGs through phenomenology, the researcher aimed to provide recommendations for learners seeking to enhance their motivation, autonomy, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and fluency. After this talk, you may better appreciate how RPGs can serve as valuable, transformative educational tools.

Bio:

Kinsella Valies, an assistant professor at Jissen Women's University, has worked with age groups ranging from elementary school students to adult professionals and the elderly. Having taught in Japan, China, the Netherlands, Curacao, and the US, she is comfortable with teaching formats that range from one-to-one and intensives, to language camps and classroom-based or online teaching. In addition to English, she has taught Dutch and French. She has long held an interest in the potential for RPGs to create community and offer exciting educational applications.

2nd Speaker: **Timothy Gutierrez** (7:00 PM - 7:30 PM)

Title: **Lunchtime Adventures for University Students using (Advanced) Fighting Fantasy**

Summary:

In this talk, the presenter will demonstrate one method for employing tabletop roleplaying games as educational materials to develop foreign language skills with students at the university level. These materials have been used with university students during lunchtime language development sessions in the foreign language teaching division of a global research and education center. Firstly, the presenter will briefly discuss how the materials were implemented during these sessions, including one idea for linking this activity with extensive reading. Following this explanation, the audience will experience the materials first-hand and discuss effective practices for using tabletop role-playing games with students developing their foreign language ability.

Bio:

Timothy Gutierrez is an associate professor at Nihon University's College of Humanities and Sciences. As part of his duties facilitating English language development activities for lunchtime activities, he organizes English Salons and an English Extensive Reading Club. Recently, he has included his love of TTRPGs with his love of teaching English as a foreign language. He can be found discussing playful teaching in the Ludic Language Pedagogy discord server or through his online research laboratory at blog.gutierrez94580.com

3rd Speaker: **Dax Thomas** (7:30 PM - 8:00 PM)

Title: **Me, Myself and Jean-Luc Picard: A Proposed "Play What You Know" Approach to Introducing TRPGs to University EFL Students**

Summary:

In a recent video for his *YouTube* channel, "How to be a Great GM", Guy Sclanders outlines a three-part exercise to help new TRPG players come to terms with the difference between "role-playing" and "acting". In the first part of this talk, it will be suggested that this three-part approach could also be applied when introducing TRPGs to university EFL students to help ease them into the unfamiliar task of role-playing in a second language. The second part of the talk will showcase a simple TRPG system and some supporting materials that can be used to accomplish this in the classroom. Participants will have an opportunity to create their own example characters.

Bio:

Dax Thomas is an assistant professor in the Centre for Liberal Arts at Meiji Gakuin University. He has been an English teacher almost as long as he has been a GM and enjoys all genres of tabletop role-playing games. His most recent research has been on word formation and vocabulary usage in science-fiction and fantasy games and he has just recently begun to explore the application of TRPGs in the EFL classroom.

From 8:00 PM, participants may try out games organized by the speakers in rooms 15-301 & 15-302.

Room 15-304 will be used as a space for casual socializing and partaking in refreshment.

The festivities will take part on the 3rd floor of Goucher Memorial Hall (AKA Building 15).

