Dax Thomas

Meiji Gakuin University

thomas@gen.meijigakuin.ac.jp

**Title:**

From “Roll-Playing” to Role-Playing: Introducing TRPGs in the University EFL Classroom

**Poster Summary:**

When introducing tabletop role-playing games (TRPGs) into the university EFL class, scaffolding is often needed. This paper discusses the use of a closed-style “choose your own adventure” story game to help students transition into a more typical open-style TRPG. Students start by making simple binary decisions with prescribed results, then discuss alternative actions their character could have taken that are not prescribed for them in the story. This bridging step helps students build the agency needed for more typical TRPGs.

**Extended Abstract:**

When introducing tabletop role-playing games (TRPGs) into the university EFL class, it is often necessary to scaffold the process. This paper discusses the use of a closed-style “choose your own adventure” story game to help students transition into a more typical open-style TRPG.

To begin, students work in pairs to create a simple character which they then use to walk through a preplanned story--in this case, the classic *Fighting Fantasy* book, “The Warlock of Firetop Mountain”--where they are presented with a series of choices, make simple binary decisions, and read the results of those choices to move forward through the adventure. Students are asked to predict what they think will happen as a result of their choice and discuss their reasons for making those choices with their partner. Students then read on to learn the prescribed results of their choice as written in the book and are told precisely what their character does next.

Finally, students discuss alternative actions their character could have taken that are not prescribed for them in the story. This bridging step helps students to then gradually transition into open-choice situations that will allow for student agency and autonomy in a typical open-style TRPG.

**Presenter Biography:**

Dax Thomas is an assistant professor at Meiji Gakuin University. His research has focused on both vocabulary coverage in EFL textbooks and materials, and vocabulary usage patterns in fantasy, science fiction, and historical texts. He is currently exploring the use of tabletop role-playing games and cooperative learning in the EFL classroom.