

Using AI to develop gameful language learning experiences

Game-based language learning is touted as an effective approach to learning (Reinhardt, 2019), but appropriate games are difficult to find, they may be hard to learn to play, and they may not be easily matched to specific learning goals. With the advent of AI, however, teachers can learn to make their own games--analog, digital, or hybrid-- for a particular learning objective, matched with curricular content, and adapted for individual, group, or class play.

Three types of custom games are of interest. First, social deduction games have students role-play different characters in an unfolding mystery that is solved by class detectives. Next, escape games have students 'escape' a dire situation by solving a string of interconnected puzzles. Finally, interactive fiction games have students 'read' the game, following branching storylines to make narrative choices that result in different endings. All three types of games require the players to use language meaningfully, both as an object of analysis in the game and as a medium of player communication. Games are relatively easy to brainstorm and develop using AI if certain guidelines and design formula are followed, appropriate prompts are used, and output is carefully edited.

In the workshop, participants will be introduced to game-based language learning and teaching and the benefits of designing custom games using AI. Examples of all three game types will be shared for learning English and other languages, and guidelines will be provided on how to create, pedagogically frame, and implement them. We'll also discuss how students might be involved in their creation and implementation, and how they might be used in a research project.