ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

Gaming and Literacy in the Age of AI: Perspectives and New Directions

Abstracts and Speaker Bios

Date: Wednesday, 18 March 2026

Time: 18:00–20:00 (EET, UTC+2)

Venue: Online; Zoom link (registration required)

Contact: Konstantinos Sipitanos (sipitanoskonstant@gmail.com); Eleni Katsarou (katsarou@uoc.gr)

Foundations of Digital Game-Based Learning: Insights for the Classroom and Beyond

Presenter
Earl Aguilera, Ph.D.
Teacher Education and Educational Technology
California State University, East Bay

Abstract
Concepts such as “gamification,” which describe the application of elements from video games into non-game environments, have been attracting attention and interest in educational spaces. However, these approaches can be critiqued for lacking authenticity, co-opting out-of-school practices to reinforce standardized learning, and emphasizing behavior control over student agency.

In this presentation, we will trace the connections between the Learning Sciences and Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL), emphasizing its often-overlooked sociocultural dimensions. After a brief review of the literature, we will explore examples of DGBL applications for engaging in meaning-centered teaching and learning. Participants will explore the idea that one might not even need games in the classroom to apply the fundamental lessons of DGBL to teaching and learning. The presenter will ultimately

argue that a major re-orientation toward meaning-making experiences in school is the most sustainable response to the modern challenges posed by AI.

Presenter Biography

Dr. Earl Aguilera is an associate professor in the Teacher Education Department at California State University, East Bay. He is a lifelong gamer and has been researching Digital Game-Based Learning since 2014. Prior to his university appointment, he was a high school English / Language Arts teacher and Literacy Specialist. Currently, he teaches courses on literacy, technology, and research methods. He is a committed union leader, community organizer, and scholar-activist.

Victory in the Digital Multiverse: Bridging Gaming Literacies and the AI Frontier

Presenter
Raúl Alberto Mora, Ph.D.
Literacies in Second Languages Project
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana

Abstract
The digital environments of modern learners have transformed into complex 'multiverses' where language, identity, and technology intersect in critical contexts. This webinar, based on the volume *Understanding Second Language Users as Gamers: Language as Victory* (2025), explores innovative approaches to language learning, digital literacy, and gaming for educators, researchers, and students interested in these fields. This presentation will first break down the 'Language-as-Victory' (LaV) framework, which redefines 'victory' as a complex achievement encompassing communicative competence, identity-building, and networking.

This presentation will then look at how the LaV framework works as a complex linguistic, semiotic, aesthetic, and identity issue. Rather than providing a dry academic overview, we share the collective lessons learned by a group of young gamer-researchers and their mentor over a decade of longitudinal research. We discuss the key insights we gained from understanding the framework's major components, such as the language used in competitive gaming, how we interpret game worlds, and how new digital identities are created. By focusing on the perspectives of these "novice" researchers, we show how mentoring in a research lab fosters a unique epistemic partnership that bridges the gap between classroom theory and digital reality.

Finally, we take a critical look at the "transcendent approach" to the LaV Framework, as proposed in the volume, an emerging link between gaming, literacy, and artificial intelligence (AI). As AI becomes more integrated into digital play—from responsive NPCs to generative game worlds—there is a need for a shift toward proactive, critical, and historical "AI literacy." Participants will leave with a framework for integrating digital play and emerging technologies into their teaching practices, helping them feel better prepared and more relevant in an ever-changing digital landscape.

Presenter Biography

Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora is an associate professor at the School of Education and Pedagogy at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana in Medellín, where he teaches courses on bilingual education, discourse analysis, literacy, and critical theory at the undergraduate and doctoral levels. He is a Senior Researcher (Minciencias) with EDULAAP research group. He has served as a visiting professor, scholar, and guest lecturer at universities in Colombia (including Uninorte), Poland, Mexico, Czechia, Brazil, the United States, Spain, and Norway.

He is currently researching how people learn languages in cities and gaming communities, how to teach different types of literacy in language education, the importance of critical approaches to teaching English and multilingualism in developing countries, and how to use AI thoughtfully in language teaching, topics he explores with his research team at the Literacies in Second Languages Project (LSLP) Research Lab (aka the #LSLPLegion), which he chairs at UPB.

He co-edited *The Handbook of Critical Literacies* (Routledge, 2021), *Translanguaging and Multimodality as Flow, Agency, and a New Sense of Advocacy in and From the Global South* (Routledge, 2024), *Reimagining Literacy in the Age of AI* (CRC Press, 2025), and the forthcoming volume *English Language Teacher Education in Latin America* (Bloomsbury, 2026).

He has presented his work, both in person and virtually, at events across Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, India, Indonesia, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the U.S., and Vietnam. Dr. Mora received the Clare de Silva Award from the Colombian Association of Teachers of English (ASOCOPI) for his contributions to ELT teaching and research in Colombia. His research lab, the Literacies in Second Languages Project, was the recipient of the 2023 Divergent Award for Excellence in Implementation of Literacy in a Digital Age.

Discussant

Dr. Zoi A. Traga Philippakos
Associate Professor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dr. Zoi A. Traga Philippakos is associate professor in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware and specializes in reading and writing instruction, strategy instruction, self-regulation, and teacher professional development. A former elementary teacher and literacy coach, she bridges research and practice, supporting educators in implementing effective literacy strategies. She is the author and coauthor of several influential books on genre-based writing instruction and literacy education, and most recently edited a Routledge volume on Artificial Intelligence and Literacy. She actively contributes to the field through her leadership in the Literacy Research Association (LRA) and the International Literacy Association (ILA) and regularly presents her research at national and international conferences.