

“Narrative Application in Gameplay”: The Enhancement of Creative Thought of Teaching Staff at the Centre for International Languages, UniMAP

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the narrative or storytelling aspect of tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs). The primary intention of this paper is to introduce TTRPGs as an effective alternative teaching and learning method that could benefit students in classrooms. The activities implemented could train students to be more creative, think outside the box, and spontaneously generated narrative and infused with characteristics such as – in this case – bravery, comedy, and horror-comedy. The research subjects are 6 teaching staff of the Centre for International Languages, UniMAP. The participants comprise of four English language teachers, one Bahasa Melayu teacher and one Bahasa Melayu lecturer. Each participant has their duties. One is the gamemaster who acts as the general narrator and arbiter of the rules of the game, while the other five are players who play roles within the setting of the game. The TTRPG used in the game sessions was Cubicle 7's The Laundry RPG based on author Charles Stross' series of horror-comedy novels, The Laundry Files. Three sessions were run from November 2018 to March 2019, each taking from 90 minutes to two hours. In helping to develop creative ideas using The Laundry RPG, three episodes of the narrative were derived from the gameplay of the TTRPG, each from one session. First is entitled The New Normal, the second an Unbelievably Wooden Dialogue and the third episode Getting Ahead of Themselves. The Narrative Paradigm theory framework by Walter Fisher (1985) is used in the analysis of the discussion of this paper. The three stories that were derived from the three The Laundry role-playing game activities can be read at this website: <https://hishgraphics.com/category/rpg-actual-play/rpg-campaigns/laundry-the-musang-king-directive/>.

Keywords: Tabletop RPG Gamification, Narrative Application, Enhancement of Creative Thought, Theory Framework by Walter Fisher (1985).

1. INTRODUCTION

"Gamification" is an alternative teaching and learning technique in the education system, not only in Malaysia but also applied worldwide. "Gamification" also applies game principles to non-gaming situations. Gamification activities are more likely to succeed if students are more willing to become active participants in their implementation. They are naturally attracted to game aesthetics and immediately understand and respect their mechanics and regulations. The rapidity of the world of borderless technology has now made human minds creative and critical. This creative and critical thinking also deals with thoughts that are thought out of the box. Hence, writers and lecturers at the International Language Centre took an alternative to make the "Gamification" medium as one of the teaching and learning techniques to be applied to students especially students of the UniMAP Higher Education Institution, Malaysia. This suggested technique is believed to be effective as students are more interested in learning in a relaxed situation especially in-game modifications that are altered to explore the field of science

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especially in the aspect of writing that is digested through the idea of creative thinking in a group. That is why gaming is the medium of intermediary between students and faculty in the classroom for brainstorming in creative writing. It is, therefore, appropriate to bring this "gamification" game into the classroom as a primary medium of teaching and learning.

"Gamification" also applies the "critical thinking" aspect among students. Critical thinking means the ability to use mind to assess the reasonableness of an idea, to examine the advantages and benefits and weaknesses of a matter before making reasonable judgments by submitting true and relevant evidence and reason (Som Hj Nor and Dahlan, 2000). Critical thinking is associated with left brain. The word "critical" relates to the word "critical" derived from "kritikos" which means questioning or enhancing knowledge. Bloom (1956) says that critical thinking involves three types of mind activities namely analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. To think creatively, the most used part of the brain is the right side. Individuals with creative thinking skills use mind to explore various possibilities of producing new and original things whether they are both concrete or abstract (conceptual or ideas). In this case, the most important thing is that the individual is capable of producing something new (to create). Therefore, critical thinking skills should be applied in the "gamification" teaching and learning activities.

In this paper, the gamification activity employs a collaborative storytelling game generally known as tabletop role-playing games (TTRPG) which requires no computer, laptop, game consoles or mobile devices. There are many types of TTRPGs using different types of rules covering a wide range of genres. The most famous TTRPG is of course *Dungeons and Dragons*, published by Wizards of the Coast, which is a fantasy role-playing game. Other TTRPGs in the market include *RuneQuest*, *Shadowrun*, *Edge of the Empire*, *Tales from the Loop*, *Eclipse Phase*, *Seventh Sea*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Paranoia*, *Cyberpunk 2020*, and *The One Ring*.

In general, playing TTRPGs require a group of players, one of them acting as a referee, moderator and rules arbiter known as a gamemaster (GM). During play, the GM would initially set a scenario for the players to react to, and the problems for the players to surmount, employing the rules of the TTRPG being used. A single session might or might not have an ending. A series of a continuous session is called a "campaign". Playing in an RPG campaign is akin to reading a novel or watching a long form serialised television show. However, instead of passively experiencing the unfolding story by reading or watching, the players immerse themselves in the world as a character within the story. They have to listen to the narration by the GM and react to his narrations by primarily speaking. When a player character needs to do a task that he or she might succeed or fail, the player traditionally rolls dice using the ruleset of the game being played. This back-and-forth interaction between player-and-player and players-and-GM generates what should be a compelling narrative that the players would be invested in.

This long term investment in playing in an RPG campaign would, in theory, improve the players' critical thinking as explained by Som Hj Nor and Dahlan (2000) as they would have to understand not the just the problems of the narrative in order to solve them, but also the intricacies of the campaign world and genre for them to fully engage with the game.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. To introduce "Gamification Tabletop RPGs" as an alternative and effective teaching and learning tool for students in the classroom.
- ii. To produce a creative narrative text of collective thinking in group TTRPGs activities.

3. SUBJECT OF STUDY

The research subjects involve 6 teaching staff of the Centre for International Languages, UniMAP. The participants comprise of four English language teachers, one Bahasa Melayu teacher and one Bahasa Melayu lecturer. Each participant has their duties. One is the gamemaster who acts as the general narrator and arbiter of the rules of the game, while the other five are players who play roles within the setting of the game.

4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The TTRPG used in this research's game sessions were *The Laundry* RPG published by Cubicle 7 Entertainment. Therefore, the setting of the game was based on author Charles Stross' series of horror-comedy novels, *The Laundry Files* which explore the themes of mind-numbing civil service, deadly espionage and existential horror. The rules used by this TTRPG is the Basic Role-Playing (BRP) which uses a percentile dice system for task resolution. Three sessions were run from November 2018 to March 2019, each taking from 90 minutes to two hours. English is the main language of communication in this activity. However, the participants also included Malay terms to further enhance this "gamification" activity because *The Laundry* RPG campaign game mastered by Mr. Hisham was set in present day Klang Valley, Malaysia.

Three sessions were played as part of an ongoing storyline within the *The Laundry* campaign. Each play session produced an episode, which could be perceived as a narrative text. Each episode was written as a blog entry by Mr. Hisham. The first episode was entitled *The New Normal*, the second *An Unbelievably Wooden Dialogue* and the third *Getting Ahead of Themselves*.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Role-playing games are narratives but interactive. Using elements of fiction as setting and inspiration for characters, one must wonder if there are any differences between role-playing games and fiction. Kim (2006) argued that "an essential difference between role-playing games and fiction is that RPGs are created interactively." Players are working together to make the story; the game master and the players need to communicate. According to Kim (2006), "lack of communication or miscommunication about genre can cause arguments and bad feelings." Tabletop role-playing games are story-driven adventure games in which each player takes control of a character and embarks on mystical quests guided by the game master to save a character or to save the world. In RPGs, players must keep notes of events, including lists of possessions and narrative accounts of events transpired, similar to journals, as well as communicate with each other in order to allow the story to progress. These games thrive on the fact that they are interactive narratives or interactive stories.

Davis-Phillips (1995) states that "Role-Playing activities offer opportunities for real use of the language. Although they are more often used in many English for Special Purposes courses, they can be used with general classes too at any level." He says that although the ones who can benefit the most out of using tabletop RPGs in the classroom are students of English for specific purposes, the activity can be modified to fit other levels. Role playing has several beneficial language learning characteristics which Ladousse (1987) has effectively described in her useful introduction to the topic, *Role Play*. Many of these characteristics are also present in tabletop RPGs. It should be noted that role play and RPG activities are not limited to language practice as language learning certainly is also taking place during the games (Ladousse, 1987). For RPGs to be effective in this way, they should be part of what Ladousse (1987) calls that "category of language learning techniques sometimes referred to as low input high output the teacher-centered presentation phase of the lesson is very short" (9). Role-Playing activities offer

opportunities for real use of the language. Although they are more often used in many English for Special Purposes courses, they can be used with general classes too at any level (Mugglestone, 115:1977).

5.1 Narrative Paradigm Theory

This study is based on the Narrative Paradigm Theory by Kenneth Burk. Walter Fisher (1985) described the narrative paradigm as one of the communication theories. Fisher is Professor Emeritus at the Annenberg School of Communication. Work by Walter Fisher (1985) is based on the concept of storytelling by the community that acts as a narrator. The outcome of the application of communication theory with the narrative approach was successfully awarded the Golden Anniversary Monograph Award from the Speech Communication Association for his article introducing narrative theories in the aspect of communication. The following describes the Narrative Theory framework:

- i. Society is the main audience in this forum.
- ii. The narrative paradigm has made it clear that man is a narrator who is tackled with values, emotions and aesthetics which are the basis and conviction.
- iii. The story of a good story should be based on the values that constitute a stake in society.
- iv. The storytelling is the result of the life story of the people.
- v. Fisher tried to show a narrative paradigm as a merger of logic and aesthetics.
- vi. Human is essentially a narrator (*homo narrans*).
- vii. The result of a story must yield a positive story.
- viii. Positive storytelling is determined by history, biography, culture, and character.
- ix. All communications are narrative, and all life is compiled from stories or narratives (Fisher, 1987).
- x. Cohesions and coherent underlie a story.
- xi. Coherence is the standard of understanding applied to certain narratives.
- xii. Truth

6. RESEARCH DISCUSSION

The narrative results of the effort and activities implemented in the game can be accessed through a weblog known as Hishgraphics developed and maintained by Mr Hisham. Below is about "hishgraphics":

My name is Khairul Hisham and I have done several things from art, writing, translation and running tabletop roleplaying games (RPGs). My day job is teaching English at a public university here in Malaysia.

I have done a range of science fiction, horror, and fantasy artwork – both cover and interior work – for a number of clients, from self-published writers to tabletop game creators. Click on the Gallery link to view some of them.

I am also an English teacher and Malay-to-English translator where I work although I am able to do both on a freelance basis.

I have also been combining my interest in tabletop RPGs with teaching English, and thus I have been using RPGs such as Mini Six, Edge of the Empire and BareBones Fantasy to teach my students when I can. In fact, I am presently undergoing a master's degree programme where I explore the benefits of using tabletop RPGs as a language learning tool, especially for ESL learners.

The programme participants:

- Azizah a.k.a. Jijah (played by Madam Yuziana Yasin) – a Fifth Form student who is also an experienced spy from Pulau Langkawi.
- Badrul (Mr Muhammad Bazli Mahmood) – a 65-year-old antiquarian from Ipoh, Perak.
- Lucy Abdullah (Ms. Farahhein Johari) – a “plumber” from Tangkak, Johor.
- Rayha aka Ray (Dr Noriha Basir) – a linguist from Batu Pahat, Johor.
- Talhah Abdullah (Mr. Azrizal Salleh) – a computer hacker from Segamat, Johor.
- The GM (Mr Khairul Hisham Jamalludin)



The participants from the UniMAP Centre for International Languages (L-R): Mr Hisham, Mr Azrizal, Mr Bazli, Dr Noriha, Ms Farahhein and Mdm. Yuziana.

Title Graphics as Created by Hishgraphics:



Here is the text of the third session story of the Centre for International Languages' *"The Laundry"* RPG campaign, written by and reproduced here with the permission of Mr Khairul Hisham Jamalludin, from an audio recording of the session. The campaign is entitled "Musang King

Directive" and the session is entitled "Getting Ahead of Themselves". The text of the first two sessions can be read from the link provided in the abstract of this document.

The story so far:

Team Bunga Tahi Ayam was sent to Ulu Yam to look for the missing Team Bunga Kemboja of Capital Laundry Services agents. Their de facto field supervisor Pn. Izani escorted them in their car while micromanaging them loudly and obnoxiously. The trail of the agents leads them to the kedai runcit of En. Sabri Mat Hassan where a pair of undead armed with automatic weapons attacked them. Later, they discovered the house of En. Saad Ibrahim, a sculptor who works with wood. One of his sculptures had been possessed by an extradimensional entity and killed Team Bunga Kemboja leader Keith Yong. It seemed like this was caused by occult pages of a book that was found all over the countryside.

The conclusion of the encounter with the possessed wooden sculpture was a blast...

Table 1 Chapter 1: The Anomalous Tahi Bintang Observation

Team Bunga Tahi Ayam was recalled to the car by Pn. Izani after destroying En. Saad's possessed sculpture, plus En. Saad's entire *kampung* house is a C4-caused ball of fire, immolating the bodies of Saad and Keith Yong. They carried the wounded Rayha back to the car, her thigh injured by a shrapnel.

"You're taking too long! Let's go! Let's go!" harangued Pn. Izani from the back seat of their car, still parked at the side of the lonely woodland road. She still had her cellphone on her ear. "We should be going to the Director's house now! It's Maghrib already!"

They all climbed into the 1996 Isuzu Trooper with Talhah in the driver's seat. Pn. Izani ordered, "Go towards the Director's house!"

Sunlight disappeared into darkness as the Trooper rolled deeper into the jungle road. (*Everyone rolled their Sense skill. Ray succeeds.*)

Ray, at the back of the car and looking up at the sky, spotted a shooting star through the jungle canopy. It seemed lower than it should. She suddenly yelled, "*Berhenti!*"

Talhah stopped the car abruptly with a loud screech. Pn. Izani, "HEY! Now what? You are the most troublesome team ever. What is WRONG with you? I'm your field supervisor. You're not showing me you have what it takes to be agents of the Laundry."

Talhah said apologetically, "I think we should drive on."

"Yes! The Director's road is another 5 km up the road," said Pn. Izani. "Follow this path!"

And they resumed their travel. Suddenly the twilight sky flared up, becoming brighter than ever. It was like a meteor flew through the air among the trees. In the front seat, Badrul and Talhah caught sight of something flying. There might be a tangle of dark hair and a glint of fangs. (*Both lost Sanity Points. Having to make a Drive check at -10 because he was driving faster than normal, Talhah rolled a 64 over 10.*)

Talhah swerved, lost control of the car and flew off the road into the jungle. The car plunged through the brush kicking up a cloud of dirt, *lalang* and fern. (*Talhah's Drive check resulted in a*

67/20, a definite failure. The Isuzu Trooper hit the trunk of a thick tree in a sudden outburst of violence. Each player receives 1d6 damage, but Ray gets a 5, resulting in a -2.)

Blood streamed down Rayha's face. She was unconscious. The others were frantically trying to administer first aid to Rayha when Talhah suggested, "Guys. I think we need to get out of this car. We're in a crash. I saw something weird fly over the road. And our friend is already out cold."

Lucy agreed, "Let's pull her out."

"What are you doing? What are you doing?" said the bewildered Pn. Izani as she pulled a large hard-cover binder-marked The Musang King Directive-out of the car with her. When they ignored her, she relented and said, "Okay, I'll follow you."

That's when they realised that not far away, beyond the trees, were multiple sources of lights.

"Let's go approach the lights," Lucy said, helping to carry Rayha.

"Yeah. Let's go into the light," Talhah said sardonically.

But who would step into the light first?

Table 2 Chapter 2: The Blood-Soaked Research Attempt

The light, it turned out, came from a clearing in the woods. Talhah took point, with his handgun and his laptop backpack, leading the party. There was a small *surau* surrounded by several wooden houses on stilts in the clearing. They headed for the *surau* as it was now *Maghrib* prayers. Talhah said, "There's a *surau*. Let's help our friend Rayha there."

Pn. Izani told them she would be looking for the toilets, still carrying the comically oversized binder in her arms.

Lucy set Rayha down on the *surau's* outer veranda. Suddenly, she realised that Rayha was covered in more blood than she thought. The blood was wet and warm, but she realised that it was not Ray's. It was flowing from inside the *surau*.

They realised that no one was around even with the *surau's* lights on. What was going on in the place of worship?

They attempted to provide first aid to Rayha. Talhah tried but was unable to stop Ray's bleeding. Badrul however (*rolling a 07 on the percentile dice*) was successful in quickly cleaning the wounds with water and antiseptic, and bandaging the injury. (*Rayha rolls 1d6 and regains 4 hit points.*)

All of a sudden, Rayha gasped loudly and sat up immediately, scaring everyone. She looked around and saw that they were at a *surau*! She exclaimed happily, "*Alhamdulillah!*"

Jijah quips, "She hasn't *solat Maghrib* yet."

While catching their breath, they took out the ancient pages from what might be a Nusantara occult book of spells that they discovered discarded in the jungle trail and from En. Saad's house.

First parchment had an illustration of a *keris*, a short & wavy traditional blade weapon, among the peculiar-looking *jawi* script. Translating the text, Badrul discovered that it was the "*Keris Dato' Gunong*", a weapon that protected its user from any magical assault. Also on the same page was the description and instructions for a "*Mantera Apian Dato' Gunong*" spell which gave the spellcaster the ability to throw a ball of fire.

Second piece of paper that they found in En. Saad's house contained a pair of spells, namely the "*Panggilan Semangat Retakan*" & "*Usiran Semangat Retakan*". No one knew what "*Semangat Retakan*" was except that one spell summoned it and the other banished it.

Only Badrul and Rayha were able to decipher the text. However it would take them 10 minutes to read and understand each spell to be able to cast it. It would take longer to teach any of the others. "Let's go check where the blood is coming from," said Lucy, her weapon trained on one of the many sliding doors of the *surau*. Everyone hesitated, En. Saad's deadly animated wooden sculptures are still fresh in their minds (*from the previous session*).

Ultimately, they all entered the *surau* together. Immediately, their wards began to heat up at their chest. There was a fresh corpse by the door. More dotted the *surau* interior. They looked as if they had been eaten, gnawed on my teeth. One was even missing an arm.

Table 3 Chapter 3: The Unspeakable Surau Violence

Suddenly something staggered towards them from the *minbar* of the *surau*. The figure stumbled, blood spurting from his neck. It was the *imam* of the village *surau*, his *jubah* stained red. The team rushed to help the man. Then they spotted a second figure slowly revealing itself from the darkened alcove of the *minbar*.

It was a middle aged woman. She wore a white *telekung*, but it was stained by fresh blood. Although her face was pale and emaciated, the skin around her mouth also tainted with fresh blood; blood that is not hers. Lucy, ever the plumber, fired her gun and struck the woman on her shoulder (*doing only a damage of 1 with a 1d10*). The *mak cik zombi* suddenly lunged at them at great speed.

Rayha reacted fastest and took out the Hand of Glory given to her by the Quartermaster. She pulled the magnesium tab, ignited its thumb and disappeared into thin air. The *mak cik zombi* still charged at them. Jijah and Lucy drew their pistols and fired. Jijah's bullet hit the wall beside the *minbar* while Lucy's precise shot popped open the *mak cik zombi's* head like a balloon.

It fell dead.

The *imam* was dying, blood flowing out of his carotid artery. Badrul tried to stop the bleeding. The *imam* choked on his words, "His wife! His wife! She is - She has something in her - " and then he died.

They all looked at the remains of the *mak cik zombi*.

"Who's going to check?" asked Lucy.

"Talhah."

Talhah glared at them. He advanced on the headless body, brains all over the floor behind it. (*I had Talhah roll a 1d8 where 5-8 triggers something. He rolled a 6.*) The corpse of the *mak cik zombi* farted. She farted loudly and for a long time. (*The humour here made the players laugh and released some of the tension of the scene.*)

Within the *telekung*, the *mak cik zombi* was wearing a black t-shirt which read, “MARI BAYAR P.T.P.T.N.”

Also hidden in the *telekung* is a third page from the occult book. The page listed a family of spells named “*Mantera-Mantera Ketujuh*.” Badrul read their titles aloud: “*Merah Terpanggil*”, a spell that could infected a person by some blight called the “*Merah*” and body dies, the *Merah* takes over; “*Sebaik Darah*”, a healing spell; “*Mata Kehitaman*”, some sort of an attack spell; and “*Pukulan Gajah*” which allowed a long distance and amplified punch of its caster. Like before, Badrul would also require about ten minutes to learn a single spell from the page.

Talhah found *Mak Cik Zombi*'s purse and identity card. She was Pn. Maimunah Selamat. In her purse is a photo. The photo showed her along with her beaming husband and two smiling children. Her husband, it turned out, was En. Sabri.

Ray and Badrul spent the next ten minutes learning spells from the loose page.

From outside the *surau*, they heard the loud, nagging voice of Pn. Izani, “What is all this? Why is there blood everywhere?” They headed outdoors with the new occult page hidden to meet their field supervisor who still held on to the Musang King Directive binder. They spotted a trail of more dead bodies northwards. The team felt obliged to follow the macabre path. She whined, “No! Let’s go back to the car. I’m going to go there and call for help. I need protection. Come with me.”

Talhah tried to persuade Pn. Izani followed them on their investigation (*but failed his Persuade roll, even with a +20 bonus.*) She balked, saying, “I’m not going with you. I’ll wait in the car.”

The team left without her, making her more afraid surrounded by nothing but dead bodies and blood. Talhah used the opportunity to get her to follow them (*with a +30 bonus to Persuade, but rolling a 94 out of 65.*)

She yelled, “I don’t want to die with you people,” she said and ran southwards back towards the main road clutching her precious binder.

Talhah stood there alone for a moment, then yelled back at the now-disappeared Pn. Izani, “OK! Fine!”

Table 4 Chapter 4: The Altercation At The Antediluvian Abode

It was about 8.30 pm.

They headed up the path through the underbrush between tall trees and arrived at a clearing. There sat a single-story bungalow house, perhaps a decade old and surrounded by flower pots. There was a tarred path that led east, presumably to the main road. The house’s front sliding door was smashed outwards, the safety grill broken and there was a trail of blood that led out from it. The house was small, looked like an ubiquitous three-bedroom, two-bathroom *kampung* bungalow.

When they were trying to decide who would take the point in entering, they realised that there were only four of them. "Wait, where's Ray?" On cue, Rayha popped into existence when her HOG flame finally gave out.

They peered through the smashed entryway, weapons ready. The living room was empty. It has a sofa set, a flatscreen TV on the wall, a bookcase and a fabric curtain hung from an opening separating it from the rest of the house. The trail of blood began in the middle of the living room.

"We're less of an investigative team now," quipped Talhah, "and more of a zombie-hunting team. So who goes first?"

"Ray's back, right? So, Ray, can you go in first?"

"*Bismillahirrahmanirahim,*" Ray loudly said while smiling.

The living room was like any normal living room, with a television, a bookcase and a sofa set. There were framed beautiful *khat* calligraphy on the wall. Each was adorned by Sabri's signature at the bottom. On the bookcase, there were framed certificates of appreciation from schools and companies. Apparently local organisations and institutes paid En. Sabri for his skills in creating *khat* for them as decorations and gifts.

On a shelf there was a picture of En. Sabri and the sculptor En. Saad outdoors holding up a freshly-caught fish. They were friends! Beside the picture was a small box. Within it was an ancient keris. From its shape it was definitely the *Keris Dato' Gunong*. Lucy grabbed it immediately.

Talhah led the way through the curtains into the dining room. They felt their wards heating up, triggered by the presence of strong magic.

That was when they saw it.

En. Sabri was seated at the dining room with a smile on his face, pouring them tea. "You've arrived!" he exclaimed gleefully. Lucy said cautiously, "You've been expecting us?"

"Yes! I've been expecting you! Come! Come! Come! Careful, the tea's a bit hot." There were also some *karipap* and *cucur udang* served on the table. "Thank you for coming! Thank you for coming! How do you like my keris?" He gestured at the blade Lucy had at her belt.

"I think it's lovely," said Lucy. Badrul tried to assess if En. Sabri was all right, but he seemed just fine talking to them in a cheerful manner.

"I found the keris in an old abandoned house very high up Gunung Jerai."

"Oooh," Lucy said. "So you found it and took it home?"

"Yes! Yes!" he happily said. "Have a seat!"

Talhah stepped forward to arrest En. Sabri. "En. Sabri, we found your wife earlier at the *surau*. What do you know about what happened to her?"

"Well, you know, I needed to know whether all these spells work, so I had to test them. You cannot make an omelet without breaking a few eggs."

“Oooh,” said everyone.

“But the biggest experiment is yet to come. I still need help. I need your help. We still need a few more bodies!”

A few more bodies for what?

The entire west wall and part of the roof exploded outwards, showering them with a chaotic miasma of debris. Something had ripped it out. Outside was a colossal bipedal form with a large central torso with arms and legs.

There were two things that struck the team. One: the creature was physically made out of dozens and dozens of human bodies stuck together to form its shape. Each constituent corpse had sickly glowing green eyes and mouths. Two: Each of the human body was laughing hysterically and, it went without saying, maniacally too.

(Everyone rolled Sanity. Talhah and Jijah failed. They both lose 1d12 Sanity Points. Talhah loses 5 Sanity Points. Jijah loses 9 and receives a minor temporary insanity: homicidal mania! As long as the gigantic creature is present she becomes extremely aggressive and insane with bloodlust.)

Ray was so bad-ass that before the others could act, she walked up to the creature’s foot and slapped one of the human bodies that made up its leg with all her might. The once-human stopped laughing. The green glows from its eyes and mouth dies down. It had become an unmoving corpse stuck to the leg of the unholy beast that was about to kill them all. The creature pulled its leg back in surprise.

Jijah, in her homicidal blood-lust, drew her gun and fired easily hitting the huge entity. Bullets hit two of the constituent corpses. The two stopped laughing. Their eyes and mouths ceased to glow, emitting green gases from their bullet wounds as they died a second time.

Lucy ran forward and stabbed a leg-body with Keris Dato’ Gunong, but it pulled its leg up and she missed.

Talhah turned to Sabri and asked, “How do you kill this thing?”

Sabri was elated, looking at the towering creature. “Why would I want to kill it? Behold, he who is the Charnel House. The first of many to come and they will reward me greatly!”

Badrul closed his eyes and cast out with his arms. The spell whipped out and some of the bodies on the torso flew away. They realised that they were the bodies of Team Bunga Kemboja.

Ray concentrated to cast Pukulan Gajah. The creature’s head, 20 meters away exploded into their constituent corpses.

Still running amok and homicidal, the little Jijah drew and fired her handgun viciously at the beast, but only hitting an ear of one of the bodies. A disembodied ear fell in front of the team.

It was then, Lucy flung her keris at it. Upon implanting itself in the flesh of one of the component corpses, the keris began to glow blue. The blue glow supplanted the green and spread throughout the nearest laughing corpses. The blue glow throughout the creature became brighter. It seemed to tremble in agony.

Then the entire gestalt creature exploded into its constituent corpses. Dead bodies, no longer glowing, were raining down all over the ruined house of En. Sabri. Sabri's mind appeared to have gone bye-bye. He stared into the distance and stuttered, "My... my... my..."

They looked around and discovered a Toyota Unser behind En. Sabri's house. They tied up En. Sabri drove out towards the main road, informing Pn Izani via the Laundry's secure WhatsApp group that they were en route to pick her up.

Pn. Izani:

ARE YOU DONE?!? IF YOU'RE DONE THEN LET'S GO TO THE DIRECTOR'S HOUSE!!!

She had typed her text in all caps.

Table 5 Chapter 5: The Director's House Deception

As Talhah drove them to where Pn. Izani was waiting by the roadside, Badrul called for Laundry clean-up support from the main office to help clean up the carnage at the *kampung*. They tied up En. Sabri at the ruins of his house for the Laundry plumbers to come pick him up.

Soon, they arrived at the boss's house. It was a two-story bungalow perched on the side of a hill surrounded by jungle. It did not look like a typical *kampung* bungalow. It had large windows, curtained, especially on the second floor where there is a wide balcony with a garden.

Pn Izani led the way with her ridiculously thick binder of documents.

They entered and discovered that the interior looked chic and modern, complete with a fireplace, a cozy den and a kitchen island with a marble top. Pn Izani asked them, "You've never met the director before, right?" Then she gestured up the spiral staircase that led to the top floor.

Lucy took point up the stairs. The upper floor is a combination of a bedroom and study. It has a tall ceiling and two of its four walls were glass. The sliding door was fully open to the humid evening sky and the wind was blowing in the curtains.

Jijah had come down from her amok state and was thirsty. She took some cold water from the Director's fridge to drink to the others' horror. Then she went up the stairs. Talhah, Badrul, Rayha and finally Pn. Izani followed after.

It was eerily silent. The Director of Capital Laundry Services (Malaysia) was nowhere to be seen. Pn. Izani turned on the lights and they saw a headless body sitting in the big chair on the office table. It was a woman's body. It was just sitting there in a *baju kurung* with a gaping hole where the neck should be.

Talhah quipped with half-hearted humour, "Okay, let's just put the document on the table and leave." Then they realised that they were all petrified, paralysed where they stood.

Pn. Izani appeared to be the only one who could move. She slowly walked to the front and said, "Thank you for bringing me here. I couldn't do it alone because the house's wards will not let me pass because they would know who I really am and what my intentions are."

She opened her binder and drew a *keris* hidden within. The *keris* was not wavy. It looked sharp and made of silver. She slowly crept up to the table and pointed the blade at the headless body.

Lucy struggled to move and touched the *keris* she had at her belt. Suddenly, she was free.

Pn. Izani raised her *keris* with the pointy end pointed downwards, about to stab the headless body. Her voice turned unbelievably sinister when she muttered, "Black Chamber will take Malaysia once again." Lucy threw *Keris Dato' Gunong* at the assassin. The blade missed, but it made Pn. Izani turned towards her. "You're still alive? You can move?" She eyed the gun at Lucy's belt and lunged at the plumber with her silver *keris* in an attempt to stab her.

Lucy drew her gun and shot her supervisor, hitting her on her thigh.

That was when something dropped from the shadows in the ceiling. It was an unholy mass of hair and flesh and blood. Something bit into Pn. Izani's neck. Blood spurted out like a fountain. The thing was unyielding, fastened onto her flesh long enough for the life to finally drain out of the supervisor's body.

Pn. Izani was dead.

"You're the new ones aren't you," said the tangled mass of hair and flesh. It floated upwards. The team saw that it was the head of a woman with long black hair. Below the head, tied together by some dark magic were a pair of lungs and a stomach and intestines. The head positioned herself above the sitting body, then lowered its organs in through the gaping neck orifice, making a series of unpleasant wet noises. Finally, the head landed on the shoulders and the hole disappeared.

It was apparent that the woman before them, the *penanggal*, was Director Lela Abdullah. She smiled at the agents and told them, "You have proven yourselves to be wonderful agents."

Everyone looked at the Director and at each other in horror.

The Director said, "I think you will all go far in the Laundry."

(All the players were visibly horror stricken at the fact that their director was a penanggal for a moment, then applauded upon the conclusion of the session.)

THE END

Bahasa Melayu – English Glossary

- Alhamdulillah – "Praise be to God"
- ayam – chicken
- Bahasa Melayu – Malay Language
- bayar – pay
- berhenti – stop
- bintang – star
- Bismillahirrahmannirahim – "In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful"
- bunga – flower
- bunga kemboja – frangipani
- bunga tahi ayam – lantana camara (big sage flower)

- darah – blood
- Dato' – a Malay title or honorific
- encik (En.) – mister
- gajah – elephant
- gunung – an archaic form of "gunung" – mountain
- Jawi – traditional Arabic script adapted for Bahasa Melayu
- jubah – robes
- kampung – village
- kedai runcit – grocery store
- kehitaman – blackness
- keris – kris
- ketujuh – seventh, from the base word "tujuh" which means seven
- khat – jawi calligraphy
- lalang – imperata cylindrical
- mak cik – auntie
- Maghrib – Muslim ritual prayer between total sunset and total darkness
- mantera – mantra
- mari – come
- mata – eye
- minbar – pulpit of the surau
- musang – civet
- Musang King – a popular cultivar of durian
- panggilan – summoning, from the base word "panggil" – call
- Pengarah – Director
- P.T.P.T.N – Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (National Higher Education Fund Corporation)
- puan (Pn.) – madam
- pukulan – strike, hit
- retakan – cracks or fissures, from the base word "retak"
- sebaik – as good as
- semangat – spirit
- solat – Muslim ritual prayer
- surau – a small masjid/mosque.
- tahi – excrement
- tahi ayam – chicken shit
- tahi bintang – meteor, literally "star shit"
- telekung – Muslim prayerwear for women
- terpanggil – called
- usiran – banishment, from the base word "usir" – chase away
- zombi – zombie, obviously

7. CONCLUSION

From the write-up of the actual play session of *The Laundry* RPG entitled "Getting Ahead of Themselves", it can be concluded that the GM provided a scenario and situations that allowed the players to engage effectively linguistically and cognitively. There was also impromptu infusion of in-character humour that enlivened the game session. Humour also enhanced engagement during the game session, whereby information (whether via in-character or out-of-character interaction) could be shared and discussed between players.

There are many opportunities to infuse teaching and learning for players during a game session. This gamification of narrative should be applied as an alternative teaching and learning method in the classroom. The leisurely teaching and learning techniques are expected to give students a

better cognitive engagement and a thorough, hands-on understanding of lessons that are taught not just in UniMAP but in many educational settings.

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