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International Teaching Aid
Competition 2023
Reconnoitering Innovative Ideas in Postnormal Times

iTAC
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iTAC 2023
INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AID COMPETITION
E-PROCEEDINGS

PREFACE

iTAC or International Teaching Aid Competition 2023 was a venue for academicians, researchers, industries, junior and young inventors to showcase their innovative ideas not only in the teaching and learning sphere but also in other numerous disciplines of study. This competition was organised by the Special Interest Group, Public Interest Centre of Excellence (SIG PICE) UiTM Kedah Branch, Malaysia. Its main aim was to promote the production of innovative ideas among academicians, students and also the public at large.

In accordance with the theme "Reconnoitering Innovative Ideas in Post-normal Times", the development of novel ideas from the perspectives of interdisciplinary innovations is more compelling today, especially in the post-covid 19 times. Post-pandemic initiatives are the most relevant in the current world to adapt to new ways of doing things and all these surely require networking and collaboration. Rising to the occasion, iTAC 2023 has managed to attract more than 267 participations for all categories. The staggering number of submissions has proven the relevance of this competition to the academic world and beyond in urging the culture of innovating ideas.

iTAC 2023 committee would like to thank all creative participants for showcasing their innovative ideas with us. As expected in any competition, there will be those who win and those who lose. Congratulations to all the award recipients (Diamond, Gold, Silver and Bronze) for their winning entries. Those who did not make the cut this year can always improve and join us again later.

It is hoped that iTAC 2023 has been a worthy platform for all participating innovators who have shown ingenious efforts in their products and ideas. This compilation of extended abstracts published as iTAC 2023 E-Proceedings contains insights into what current researchers, both experienced and novice, find important and relevant in the post-normal times.

Best regards,

iTAC 2023 Committee
Special Interest Group, Public Interest Centre of Excellence (SIG PICE)
UiTM Kedah Branch
Malaysia

BLOCKS OF WONDERS:
A VERBAL VOYAGE TO ENHANCE PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILL

Jacqueline Susan Rijeng
Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sarawak
jacquelinesusan@uitm.edu.my

Imelia Laura Daneil
Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sarawak
imelialaura@uitm.edu.my

Kimberley Lau Yih Long
Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sarawak
kimberley@uitm.edu.my

Tang Howe Eng
Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sarawak
lily@uitm.edu.my

Christine Jacqueline Runggol
Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sarawak
christine@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT
Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is one of the major concerns that often hampers students' performance and acquisition of the English language. It occurs more frequently in output-based activities, where students get apprehensive and may experience fear, leading to an increased level of anxiety when speaking in front of others (Grieve, et. al., 2021). To eliminate anxiety, the Blocks of Wonders: A Verbal Voyage is introduced to enhance public speaking skill. By having a fresh take on the classic stack-crashing game, the revitalized block-stacking experience is aimed at boosting public speaking skills in a captivating and enjoyable manner. This game set comprises 45 wooden blocks imprinted with speaking tasks, providing players with the opportunity to not only build towering structures but also hone their public speaking abilities. What sets this game apart is its seamless integration of interactive, creative, and competitive elements, all within a single gameplay. The interesting questions featured on each block's surface give players the opportunity to elevate their language proficiency and adaptability. Furthermore, the specific vocabulary featured on the blocks has been meticulously chosen from the renowned Oxford 3000 Wordlist, comprising words that are considered vital in English language acquisition due to their significance and practicality. This variation adds value to the novelty of the game, encouraging players to reveal interesting facts about themselves or engage in intellectual sharing. Moreover, it can also serve as a versatile tool for ice-breaking sessions, team-building activities and

complementing English learning initiatives. Having a game that is exploratory and experiential in nature does not only provide challenge but also amplifies a sense of community, creating a vibrant atmosphere among players. It is a surefire way to make public speaking practice more memorable and entertaining!

INTRODUCTION

Public Speaking is an essential skill to be developed among university students especially in the wake of the post-pandemic era, where physical activities have resumed. Public speaking also plays a pivotal role in the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly in the context of SDG Goal 4 - Quality Education which highlights the importance of possessing effective public speaking skills (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020). However, despite its significance, public speaking is known to be one of the most anxiety-inducing forms of communication (Grieve, et. al., 2021). Students tend to associate public speaking with fearful experiences or feeling apprehensive which further resulted in an increased level of anxiety when having to be in front of an audience (Mohammad Batiha, et.al., 2016; Ahmed, et.al., 2017). Subsequently, students feel reluctant and often give excuses to avoid tasks that involve speaking in public.

Various terms were often used in literature to describe the fear of public speaking including glossophobia, communication apprehension or communication avoidance (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Sawchuk, 2017). According to Black (2019), this common type of anxiety is affecting about 75% of the population. In Universiti Teknologi MARA, this common phenomenon is also affecting students in many ways, especially in output-based activities including oral presentations and public speaking. As part of an important aspect of students' experience in their programme of studies, students are required to engage in small or large group settings to complete assignments and other forms of assessment practices related to verbal output. To make things even more challenging, the return of physical activities after the pandemic has posed a considerable amount of pressure to students after not having any face to face exchange for quite some time (Stoian et al., 2022). This causes students to feel overwhelmed when dealing with tasks that demand delivery to an audience which subsequently leads to public speaking anxiety (PSA).

Regardless of these challenges, there are numerous strategies that can help individuals to manage the symptoms of speech anxiety. Past research studies have looked into the strategies to minimise the fear of public speaking including relaxation, visualisation and cognitive restructuring (Motley, 1997; Thomas, 1997; Richmond and McCroskey, 1998; Dwyer, 2012). Interestingly, Prentiss (2021) revealed that skills training is one of the techniques that can be effectively employed to assist individuals with speech anxiety to explore ways to manage their fear. This strategy is commonly carried out in the classroom setting including workshops or

training as it involves students to practice and deliver ideas while collaborating with classmates in an engaging environment (Simonds & Cooper, 2011).

With this in mind, having an open environment that enables students to train and practice their speaking skills is found to be a strong basis to materialise the innovation in this present study. This leads to the birth of Blocks of Wonders - A Verbal Voyage that aims to enhance students' public speaking skills in an exploratory and encouraging setting.

OBJECTIVES

The Blocks of Wonders - A Verbal Voyage is designed as a tool for learning modality with the purpose to enhance public speaking skills among students, particularly students in higher learning institutions. It aims to empower students to overcome public speaking anxiety, foster a sense of community, and make the process of practicing public speaking more enjoyable and engaging. The objectives are clearly outlined as follows;

1. Enhance Public Speaking Skills: The primary objective of this innovation is to improve public speaking skills among students. By engaging in the block-stacking game and completing speaking tasks imprinted on the blocks, players will develop confidence, fluency, and articulation in expressing their thoughts and ideas in English.

2. Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety: Another objective is to alleviate public speaking anxiety (PSA) commonly experienced by students. By providing a captivating and enjoyable platform for practicing public speaking, the game aims to create a positive and supportive environment that helps students overcome their fears and anxieties associated with speaking in front of others.

3. Expand Vocabulary and Language Proficiency: The game incorporates carefully selected vocabulary from the Oxford 3000 Wordlist, focusing on words that are essential for English language acquisition. The objective is to expand players' vocabulary and improve their overall language proficiency through interactive and contextual learning.

4. Foster Creativity and Adaptability: The integration of interactive, creative, and competitive elements within the gameplay encourages players to think critically and creatively. By engaging with interesting questions and speaking tasks on the blocks, players will develop adaptability in expressing their ideas and opinions, enhancing their overall communication skills.

5. Promote Community and Collaboration: The game serves as a versatile tool for fostering a sense of community and collaboration among players. It can be utilized for

ice-breaking sessions and team-building activities, promoting interaction, cooperation, and mutual support. The objective is to create a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere that encourages players to engage with one another and build social connections.

6. Enhance Engagement and Enjoyment: By providing an exploratory and experiential gameplay experience, the objective is to make public speaking practice more memorable, entertaining, and engaging. The innovative approach of combining block-stacking with language tasks adds novelty and excitement, motivating players to actively participate and enjoy the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The gamepack consists of 45 wooden blocks that are imprinted with thought-provoking questions. featuring words that were carefully selected from the important and practical Oxford 3000 wordlist to increase vocabulary. The game provides an opportunity for players to not only stack the blocks but also to build strong bonds with other players by creating a shared experience in an engagingly fun way.

During gameplay, players take turns to remove a block, then answer a question from the two choices given (on the broader surface of the block), and finally stack the block back crossway on the top layer of the tower blocks. If players choose to enhance their vocabulary, players can opt to construct sentences or deliver ideas based on the words given on the narrower sides of the block, instead of answering questions. The game continues with the next player, repeating the same steps until the tower topples down. The players will then restructure the tower to restart the game.

What makes this game unique is the combination of interactive, creative and active elements to motivate and enhance players' engagement. This allows the players to strategize, consider alternatives and think flexibly which help to manage their verbal delivery in a stress-free environment. Moreover, having the option to choose from the interesting questions also provides players the opportunity to expand their proficiency and vocabulary in using the English language. Consequently, it will help to improve their overall language proficiency through interactive and contextual learning other than building confidence and fluency in expressing thoughts and ideas.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Overall, students showcased positive feedback regarding their experience with Blocks of Wonders. Upon conducting a thematic analysis of the students' feedback, it is evident that their responses consistently highlighted "fun and enjoyable", "nerve-wrecking/challenging" and

e-proceedings
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"knowing/sharing of ideas" among players as some of the practical nature of Blocks of Wonders. These resonate with the findings of past research that indicated skills training as one of the imperative techniques to enhance public speaking anxiety in a classroom setting (Prentiss, 2022). Additionally, students provided feedback suggesting areas for improvement in the game. They expressed a desire for a wider selection of intriguing question choices and suggested increasing the height of the tower structure to enhance the gameplay experience. This will add challenge to the game since students are found to participate more actively in a competitive environment.

Additionally, the novelty of this game lies in its multi-game play feature as it can be played in various ways in order to motivate and enhance players' interest. Its versatility in terms of gameplay options allows it to be enjoyed in different ways. This feature serves to both motivate and enhance the players' interest in the game. Moreover, the feasibility of using wooden blocks gives an estimation for an affordable market platform for the game. It is also seen as a key factor for successful commercialization as there are no block-stacking games in the market that puts personal meaning, interest as well as challenge together in a game for optimal brain activation. It can also be utilized as an ice-breaker tool, team-building activity and additional English learning apparatus in educational institutions and even corporate organisations.

Indeed, having a game that is exploratory and experiential in nature does not only provide challenge to players but it also amplifies a sense of community where players feel comfortable expressing ideas in an energized environment. As players struggle to balance the blocks from tumbling down, they also attempt to answer the task in a stress-free environment. This combination of excitement and a relaxed atmosphere creates a unique and enjoyable experience, ultimately enhancing public speaking skills in a fun and engaging way.

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