

Innovating a Card Game to Teach EAP Post-Covid19

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to create a method of improving presentation and communication skills through an entertaining game. Improving students' speaking skills is crucial; an innovative card game is one of the best methods to do so as it can be used by students of different proficiency levels and background knowledge as an in-class teaching aid or a casual game outside class. The initial processes of creating this game were a combination of writing down prompts/tasks for the cards, drafting the basic rules and regulations to play the game, and crafting the exterior designs. Afterwards, the digital documents of each work were printed by a third-party – a printing company. The result was a finished product complete with its own set of playing rules aptly named “Cartedinal” that can be deemed as a comprehensive and handy card game which had been priced at RM20 per deck. Following the completion of this innovative card game, a pilot study involving university students playing this card game in-class and outside class is in the works. Future results and discussions of the pilot study will be published in a separate article once it has been completed and extensively reviewed.

Keywords: Innovative Card Games, “Cartedinal”, English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Introduction

Students or people in general struggle when it comes to presenting, and there are not that many opportunities for people to put themselves in scenarios they must speak in a public or stage setting. This project aims to give people that rare opportunity into a fun activity that can be played frequently. With experience from playing the game, their confidence will rise, and anxiety will lower as a result. According to Cheng (2018), board games are able to lower student's anxiety when it comes to speaking in other languages in front of others (Cheng, 2018). Along with that, this also gives a good opening for business as social games are already popular amongst people. As according to Satu Perjanen (2017), “*Gamification is very effective in co-operative type of tasks*” Parjanen & Hyypiä (2019) This idea was formed through taking aspects of popular social games such as; “Jackbox.tv” of its interaction of players-audience and “Cards Against Humanity” with its prompt creation through cards, while also giving it an educational addendum to its gameplay benefits. As they play, they will improve their

language capabilities with their friends as according to Limantoro (2018) "*Games related to word is impactful, educational and enjoyable*" (Limantoro, 2018). The build up to the idea of this project is from drawing reference from games in "*Jackbox.tv*" and the card game "*Cards Against Humanity*". Using interaction elements of players-audience from *Jackbox.tv* and the physical card game aspect of *Cards Against Humanity*, along with both of their gameplay structure of creating prompts through players' imaginations and creativity. With the ideas being finalized, the presentation game will be a card game of 56 cards which makes it easy to carry along anywhere at any time.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this project is to create a presentation game that is accessible to people along with a randomized variability of prompts to create "*replayability*" (replay value) for the game to have constant refreshing experience for the players. With enjoyment of the learning experience comes as a bonus, games play a crucial role in achieving the most effective and interesting learning experience for its participants (Liu et al., 2021). The randomized factor and customizable factor of blank cards in the card game will also help players facing many and any different scenarios for presenting or talking. This will help people with their talking skills to adapt and be creative to any scenarios that were to happen. According to Mercier and Lubart (2021), board games can enhance a fundamental element of creativity (Mercier & Lubart, 2021).

Literature Review

Educators and education institutions worldwide are currently progressing from the recent Covid-19 pandemic with various initiatives and plans for the upcoming years. The pandemic has altered the character of universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) in general. The education world has been shaken by Covid-19. It has presented both challenges and possibilities. The many efforts made by universities and HEIs are commendable since they demonstrated that, despite the disturbance, they were and continue to function at the most efficient and effective levels possible. All of these initiatives, however, are far from complete. (Damio & Abdul Wab, 2022).

Education is essential for attaining the peak of sustainability. One of the primary essential areas of current education sustainability difficulties is the educational programme challenges experienced by university administrators, particularly when they were initially rolled out into the university environment. The basic concept is that society works best when all of its members are educated. Most people conceive of education as the process by which people learn knowledge, such as mathematics or languages. Meanwhile, educational initiatives must be distinguished from the notion of education itself. Educational programmes are a dynamic concept that incorporates all aspects of public awareness, education, and training in order to encourage or improve understanding of the links between concerns of sustainable development (Yusof, et al., 2019). In general, educational programmes emphasise tutorial activities and other relevant social and environmental variables in order to provide a comprehensive, integrated, and interdisciplinary approach to higher education (Johari & Jamil, 2014; Abidin et al., 2023).

Apart from online programs which have been initiated by universities for their students over the last three years Johari & Jamil (2022); Mohamed et al (2022); Johari & Jamil (2022), there were also gamification-based methods which have been introduced Ng et al (2022) that had followed the progressive trends Yan & Matore (2022) in education.

Specifically focusing on speaking skill teaching, there were also reviews that had been done to compare before and after Covid-19 pandemic times (Liew & Abdul Aziz, 2022). This research project catapults the notions above by innovating a card game to teach speaking skills under the domain of EAP.

Research Methodology

The starting stage for the creation of the game was finding a template to write on and suitable to print out cards.

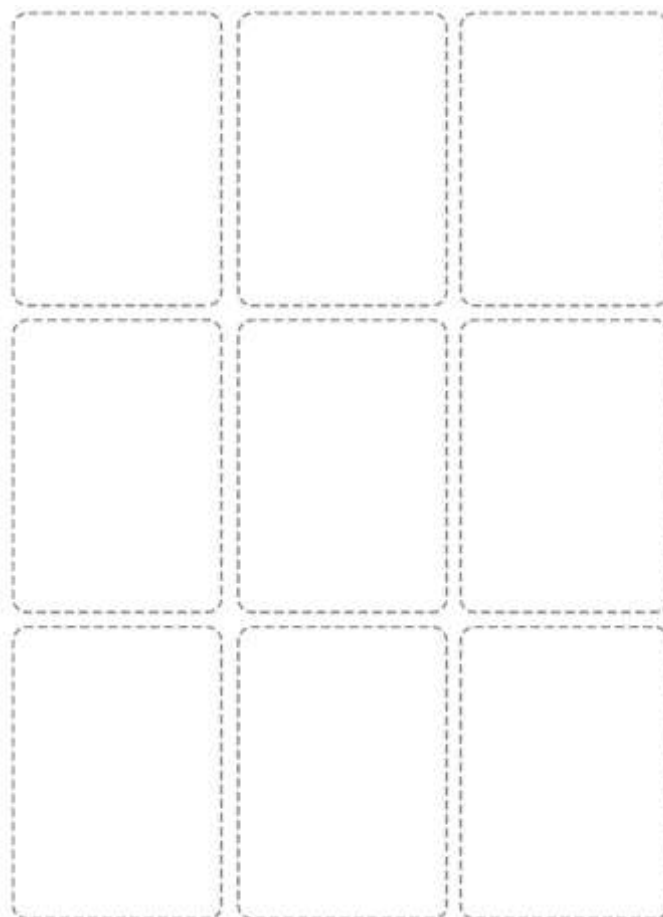


Figure 1 – Playing card template

Figure 1 above shows a template used for the prompt creation phase of the project, which involves a blank template that was taken online. The blank template was then filled with different type of prompts which are categorized into three main parts; “*Product*”, “*Audience*”, “*Setting*”.

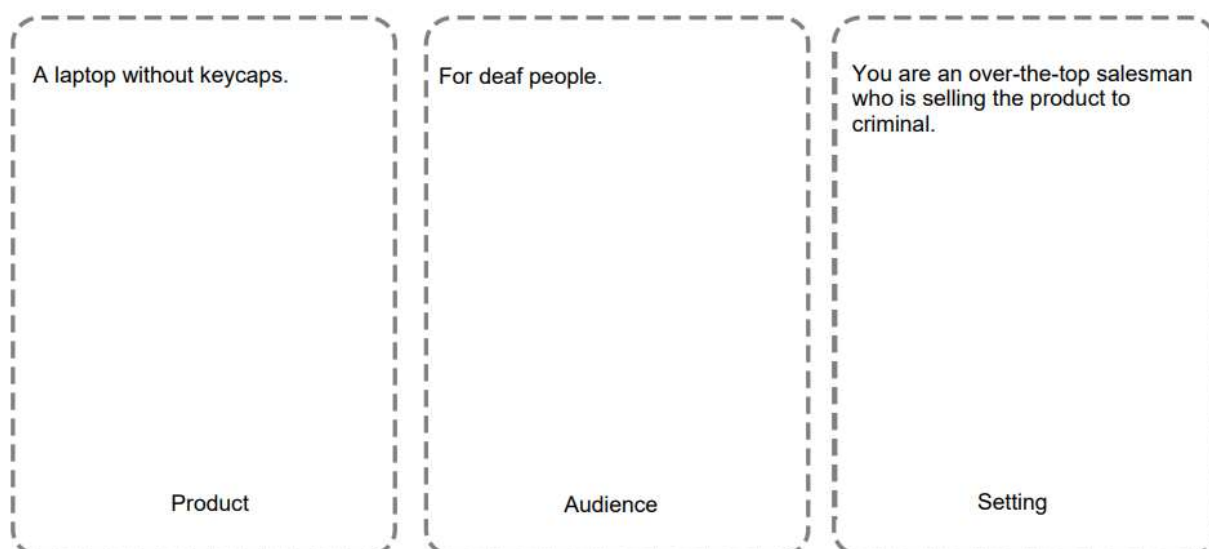


Figure 2 – Card categories

The reason behind having cards of different categories as shown in Figure 2 above is it helps make variation and randomization when making prompts for the presentation part of the game. The idea was to have one player and three judges. The three judges will give out a card, one of each category and have the player act out the given scenario. The mix & match variability also keeps the scenarios fresh, and the players will not feel the game is repetitive.

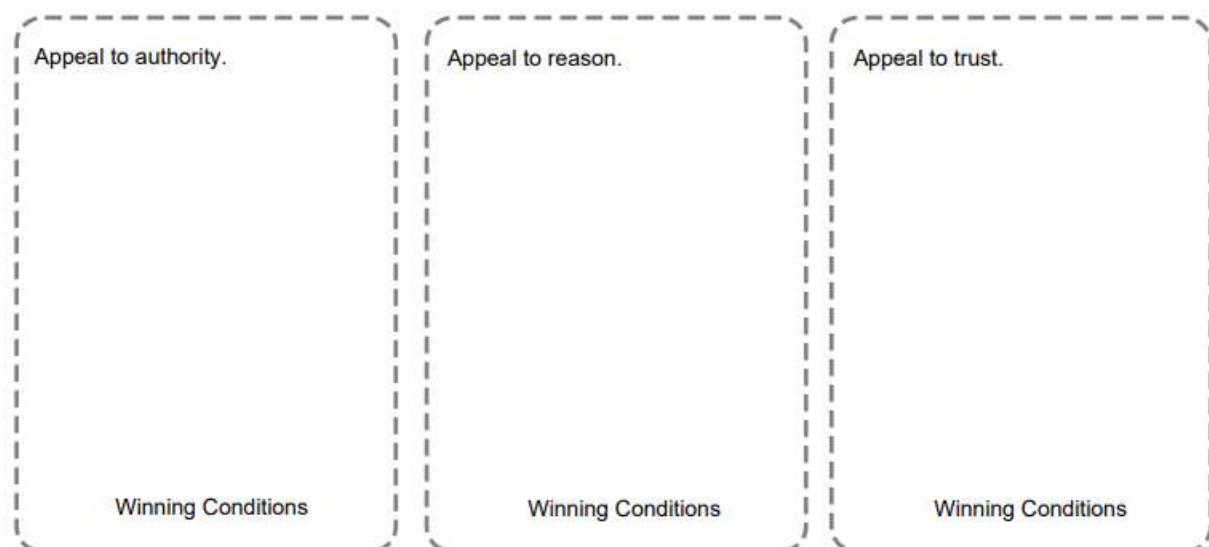


Figure 3 – Examples of Winning Conditions cards

The judges will also deal out “*Winning Condition*” cards (Figure 3) which the player must follow to win points from the judge. The winning conditions are the educational elements added into the game. Specifically taken by the player, the winning conditions also include common persuasive techniques used to attract audiences; they are *Appeal to authority*, *Appeal to reason*, *Appeal to emotion*, *Appeal to trust*, *Plain Folks*, *Bandwagon*, *Rhetorical questions*, and *Repetition*.

This implementation will help players learn and familiarize not just the meaning of these techniques but also on how to effectively use them in a practical setting. Later, there was an update which involves separating the persuasive techniques to “Winning Conditions” and

basic English proficiency rules such as “*Coherent points were made*”; and “*Suitable vocabulary in setting.*” were changed into “*Extra Conditions*”.

Afterwards, the digital process is finished, the next step of the project is to print them out for a physical copy of the product. The first idea thought was to have the template printed out with also using a suitable material that most playing card game uses and have a printing service also help with cutting the template into actual card pieces – which can be referred to in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4 – Printing-store prototype

The aftermath of executing the printing idea went poorly. As the backside of the cards are not properly aligned and the workers of the printing store did not even cut the outline of the template properly. The pricing was also undesirable as the material used, printing cost and the cutting service for one set which was 9 cards costs about RM 7.64; there was a total of 7 sets which would lead to the product being more than RM50.00 which is overpriced especially for an indie type of product. Which leads to the next step of the project of finding a professional or better service that can create playing cards at a affordable price with quality results.

Finally, the printing service that was found and used online is by a company called “Pixajoy” (Pixajoy Inc., 2020). The service cost for creating a deck of 56 cards costs about RM16.00 and around RM5.00 for the delivery; they also host sales where the services are sold at a discount, which the card production service costs around RM14.00.

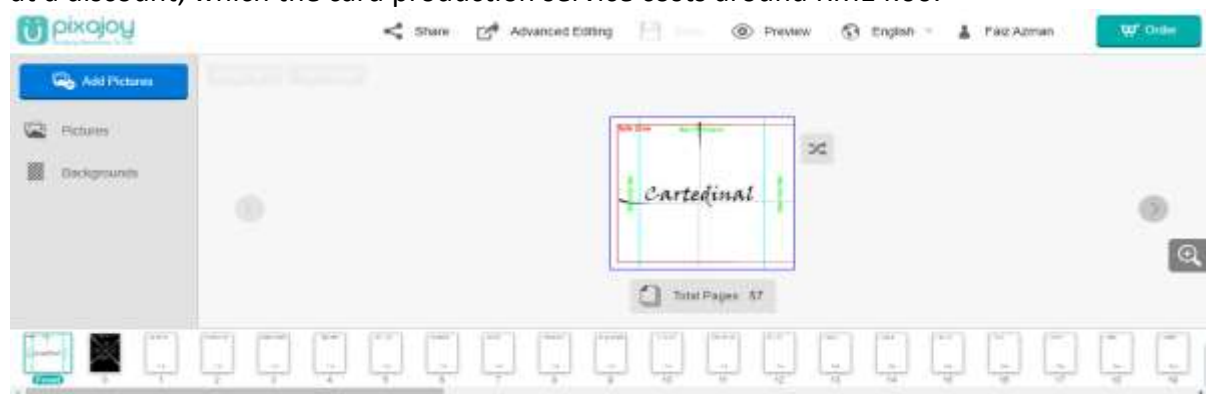


Figure 5 – Pixajoy Inc.’s program (Pixajoy Inc., 2020)

The website provides a browser software program that helps its users customize the cards the way they want. The choice of picking existing templates and also allows uploading designs from your computer's folder. The designing also includes for the cover art for the card box and also the design for the backside of the cards.

After the cards were finished, the final part of the project now left with just creating the rules for the game. Testing out how the game works in terms of progress, how points are given, and how cards are dealt and kept on the deck.

The first part that needs to be tackled in a card game's rules are how the cards are dealt to player's hand, and how the cards are kept on the deck. Especially for a game such as Cartedinal which involves three main different card types and all three are needed to play the game. A unique problem, such as players not having all card types to create a proper prompt, might occur. Therefore, the cards kept on the deck must be separated depending on category.



Figure 6 – Cartedinal's method of sorting

Figure 6 above shows on how the cards will be separated on the deck, so the players may have a full proper hand and restock their hands properly.

Next step is to decide on how many cards should players hold at a time. Having 1 of each card type would be good for the small total card deck, however the problem with variability comes with how the players do not have much choice or options when dealing or picking certain cards. So, the rule was decided to give players 2 of each card type which results in a total of 6 cards, albeit it takes a toll on the number of cards are left on the deck, however the players are given more options to choose when it comes to presenting or having what others will present on.

Moving forward now with how the cards kept on hand will be dealt to be played. Problem with the old rule of having multiple judges and them deciding "yes" or "no" for the presentation is progress for the game. If the judges were to just say "no", and the presenters do not get any points, the game is not able to progress. We decided to take look at another card game which follow the same concept of judge-players interaction – which is "Cards Against Humanity", where the "judge" of the game is only one per round and the "judge" picks which player has the best prompt combination.

We decided to do something similar with “Cartedinal” which is; there will be one judge at a time, and the other players are presenters, the judge will pick which player presented the best. This means, the judge can only say “yes” and the game will always progress in terms of points. How the cards are dealt is by in one round has one judge and the rest are players. The judge will deal out one card that will be fixed throughout the whole round. And the players who are presenting will deal out the other two card types to create a prompt out of the one card dealt by the judge. The cards dealt by the presenters will only be used for their turn, so each presenter will deal out two cards of their own to create variability into the presentation. Afterwards, the judge will decide which player did the best for the presentation.

Result and Discussions

The rules and regulations that have been decided for the game will be as Figure 7 below:

1. Cards are separate to “Prompt Cards” and “Winning Conditions”.
2. Prompt Cards; Product, Audience, Setting.
3. Product: The item to be sold
4. Audience: The target customers of the item.
5. Setting: The theme of the scenario.
6. Winning Condition: Extra requirement to follow.
7. Every card category (Product, Audience, Setting, Winning Condition) are sorted out on separate stacks of its own category of four cardinal directions in same position of the design of the back of the card.
8. Players are given 2 of each “Prompt Cards”.
9. Round will start with one judge, and the rest of the players are presenters.
10. The person being the judge will be changed on each round clockwise.
11. The judge will deal out one of the Prompt Card types from their hand.
12. The other players will deal out two of the Prompt Cards from their hand to complete the prompt, the prompt made from a player will be played by another player.
13. The “Winning Condition” deck will have one card activated for one of each player and shuffled back into its deck.
14. After each players present, the judge will pick which one wins the point for the round.
15. The next round starts with the next judge.
16. The game ends after everyone gets to be a judge for one round.

Figure 7 – Rules and regulations of Cartedinal

In addition, Figure 8 below showcases the final designs created for the product:



Figure 8 – Cartedinal's final product design

The design for the cards is made that way to reference the word “cardinal” or the “cardinal directions”, with the back having “**P:Product** (North)”, “**A:Audience** (East)”, “**W:Winning Conditions** (South)”, “**S:Setting** (West)”. The cards are also sorted in cardinal directions in themed with the name. With “*carte*” just another way of saying “*card*”, hence “*carte-dinal / cartedinal*”. We picked a simplistic design with only using the color black and white to make the game fit for a wide demographic.

With the visuals and rules done, the final thing to mention is the pricing. The cost of having these cards created is RM14 to RM 16, and RM5 for shipping. The decided price is RM20, where it is worth buying for an indie-made product. It is not too expensive for people to be afraid to try out and buy the game.

Gameplay wise, the game executes perfectly with progress and incentives to win. Along with the competition also comes with experiences of learning while socializing with the players' friends.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the creation of the card game is a success along with the rules that allows it to function as a game. As there have been game sessions with participants that enjoy the game, understand the rules, and able to learn and improve their presentation or speaking skills. Along with all that, they can continue on sharpening said aspects with the game as it is a “*replayable*” and easy access game that can give them presentation scenarios at any moment of time while making it a fun experience with their friends. A pilot study on the card game's usage has been carried out and will be published in due time.

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