Dare to Speak 2 – Turning Nerves into Network Power

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ABSTRACT

Dare to Speak 2 is an innovative board game designed to help mitigate speaking anxiety in the workplace. Evolving from its original version, Dare to Speak 1, introduced in 2013, which focused on English language learning, the game has expanded into multiple languages, including Bahasa Melayu (Minda Kritis), Mandarin (Fun with Mandarin), and Arabic. Dare to Speak 2 incorporates gamified learning principles by combining the concepts of Snakes and Ladders with Monopoly, offering learners a fun and engaging gamification platform to expose and practice workplace communication. The project uniquely incorporates authentic film dialogues with workplace themes to expose learners to different forms of phrases in offers, acceptances, and declines, helping them manage speaking anxiety, and at the same time, are perceived as polite in real professional scenarios. With existing recognition awards (Silver 2013 and 2015; Gold 2018) and prior registered intellectual property under MyIPO and UiTM's RIBU, the project is well-positioned for wider adoption. These recognitions validate the product's innovation and effectiveness, strengthening its credibility for potential investors, collaborators, and licensing opportunities. Future collaborations with education technology companies, Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka (DBP), and industry partners may further support the sustainable commercialization, ensuring that Dare to Speak 2 continues to evolve and meet the dynamic needs of workplace communication training.

Keywords: Speaking anxiety, Gamified learning, Workplace communication, Board game, dare to speak

INTRODUCTION

Speaking anxiety remains one of the major barriers to effective workplace communication. Employees, particularly fresh graduates, often struggle to express themselves due to a lack of confidence, limited exposure to professional language use, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986; Woodrow, 2006). In workplace settings, this anxiety can affect employability, professional growth, and overall organisational productivity. Employers consistently report that effective communication and interpersonal skills are among the most highly valued competencies, yet many new employees fall short in these areas (OECD, 2019; Robles, 2012). This highlights a pressing need for innovative solutions that go beyond traditional classroom instruction to equip learners with practical communication skills in safe and motivating ways.

Gamification has been increasingly recognised as an effective approach in language learning and professional training, as it reduces anxiety, increases engagement, and fosters practical skills (Kapp, 2012; Prensky, 2001). By embedding learning tasks in interactive and playful environments, gamification encourages risk-taking, experimentation, and active participation, which are often inhibited by fear of negative judgment in

conventional training contexts. In language education, game-based approaches have shown promise in supporting both linguistic proficiency and affective factors such as motivation and confidence (de-Marcos et al., 2014). These findings suggest that gamified tools could serve as a powerful medium to help learners practise workplace communication while simultaneously addressing their anxiety.

Dare to Speak 2 was developed as an innovative response to this challenge. Evolving from the original Dare to Speak (2013) (Figure 1), which was designed to support English language learning, the game integrates the mechanics of Snakes and Ladders with Monopoly to create a dynamic board game experience. What sets Dare to Speak 2 apart is its incorporation of authentic film dialogues, which expose learners to real-life expressions of offers, acceptances, and declines in workplace scenarios. This combination of gamification and authentic input provides learners with opportunities to practise language in a contextually rich, engaging, and low-anxiety environment (Schwienhorst, 2002). By merging entertainment with purposeful practice, the game not only strengthens communicative competence but also empowers learners to build confidence in managing workplace interactions.

Figure 1 Dare to Speak game board

Problem Statement

Many ESL learners experience anxiety when faced with high-pressure speaking situations, especially in professional environments (Md Yusof & Rahmat, 2020). Many scholars have conducted studies involving speaking anxiety among Malaysian students in Malaysian universities (Lingaiah & Ishak, 2023; Mohd Sobri Paridaluddin et al., 2023; Ong, L. S., & Zuraidah, M. D., 2022; Rahmat, N. H., (2021). This anxiety can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and decreased confidence. Although language instructors aim to prepare students for such challenges, there is a lack of targeted, interactive teaching methods that focus on specific workplace communication needs, like offers, acceptances, and declines. ESL learners need to be exposed to have good workplace communication.

Workplace communication requires employees to interact effectively through offers, acceptances, and declines. However, many individuals experience speaking anxiety that hinders their ability to respond appropriately in professional contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986; Woodrow, 2006). Traditional training methods often fail to address the psychological barrier of anxiety, focusing more on linguistic accuracy than communicative confidence (Young, 1991). Hence, there is a need for innovative learning tools that not only teach workplace language but also create a safe, engaging, and motivating environment for practice (Kapp, 2012; Prensky, 2001).

Objectives

1. To mitigate speaking anxiety in the workplace environment using film dialogues embedded in Dare to Speak 2.

2. To provide learners with exposure to multiple language options of offers, acceptances, and declines in workplace communication.
3. To create an engaging and collaborative platform that integrates gamified learning with authentic communication practice.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

Dare to Speak 2 is a board game that combines the principles of Snakes and Ladders and Monopoly. Players navigate the board by answering communication-related tasks derived from authentic film dialogues. Each task requires learners to practice speech acts such as making offers, accepting or declining politely, and responding to workplace scenarios.

This study is utilizing Design and Development Research (DDR). In this study, the ADDIE model, which consists of five fundamental areas, is used as a support model for game design and development

The game has evolved from its first version (2013) designed for English, to localized versions in Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic. Collaboration with linguists, language educators, industry practitioners, and workplace trainers makes the product holistic and adaptable across contexts. The methodology involves iterative design, feedback from learners and industry partners, and integration of authentic dialogues into gameplay.

POTENTIAL FINDINGS AND COMMERCIALISATION

The product has strong potential for commercialisation, as it directly addresses a growing demand for workplace communication training in universities, corporate training centres, and industry workshops that emphasize soft skills and professional development. Employers increasingly prioritise communication competence and confidence as key employability skills for graduates entering the workforce (OECD, 2019; Robles, 2012). Dare to Speak 2 offers a practical and engaging solution that bridges the gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations.

What distinguishes Dare to Speak 2 from other training tools is its unique blend of gamified learning and authentic film dialogues, which not only enhances linguistic ability but also helps participants overcome speaking anxiety in realistic workplace contexts (Kapp, 2012; Prensky, 2001). The multilingual adaptability of the game, which already expanded into Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic, further increases its market reach, making it suitable for diverse cultural and professional settings.

In terms of scalability, the physical board game can be complemented with a digital or mobile application version, allowing for broader distribution and integration into blended learning environments. Such adaptability enhances the product's relevance across different educational levels and industries, from higher education institutions to corporate training initiatives (de-Marcos et al., 2014).

With existing recognition awards (Silver 2013, 2015; Gold 2018) and prior registered intellectual property under MyIPO and UiTM's RIBU, the project is well-positioned for wider adoption. These recognitions validate the product's innovation and effectiveness, strengthening its credibility for potential investors, collaborators, and licensing opportunities. Future collaborations with edtech companies and industry partners may further support sustainable commercialisation, ensuring that Dare to Speak 2 continues to evolve and meet the dynamic needs of workplace communication training.

NOVELTY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The novelty of Dare to Speak 2 lies in its integration of gamified learning with authentic workplace dialogues, providing not only language practice but also psychological support in overcoming speaking anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Kapp, 2012). Unlike conventional board games or training modules, this product addresses both the linguistic and affective dimensions of communication competence, making it a unique pedagogical tool. Its multilingual versions demonstrate adaptability across different cultural and linguistic contexts, which is critical

in today's globalised workplace where multilingual competence enhances employability and intercultural communication (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; OECD, 2019). This flexibility makes the game suitable for higher education, corporate training, and cross-cultural professional environments.

Future Developments May Include Digital Versions, Mobile Applications, and Ai-Driven Personalised Feedback. Such Expansions Align with The Growing Shift Towards Digital and Blended Learning Ecosystems, Where Gamification and Adaptive Technologies Have Been Shown to Significantly Increase Learner Engagement and Retention (De-Marcos Et Al., 2014). By Leveraging These Technologies, Dare to Speak 2 Can Scale Its Impact, Making Communication Training More Accessible, Personalised, And Sustainable.

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