
A Toolkit for Teaching Influential Persuasive Written Content

Catherine Nguoi Chui Lam

General Studies Department, Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan, Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia
E-mail: catherinenguoi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper presents a survey study of an innovation project called PromoVista. It is a language board game designed specifically for addressing the language needs of students in design-related fields such as graphic design, advertising or multimedia. Drawing upon the needs analysis conducted with the subject matter expert, PromoVista cards were designed to scaffold students in developing strong language foundation to work on their design-related projects and to prepare them for communicating ideas effectively in relation to advertising, marketing, branding or product development. Feedback was gathered from a total of fifteen (15) polytechnic students who have the experience of using PromoVista in the targeted course and the subject matter expert of the course. On the whole, the findings indicate students' positive perceptions towards the use of PromoVista in their language classes. Students were found to enjoy using PromoVista cards to learn. Interacting with PromoVista facilitated their retention of vocabulary and they were more confident in their learning. PromoVista was found to promote students' enhanced understanding and communication performance and boost their motivation to explore further. Some highlighted that they enjoyed the interaction and communication that flourished while playing the game. Some even expressed how they like this new method of learning instead of traditional book-based learning and lecture presentations which were not interesting for them. Product review conducted with the subject matter expert also revealed its high-quality content. PromoVista can thus be used as an effective and practical language game in the targeted course to scaffold student learning.

Keywords : Cognitive load theory; Constructivism; ESP; Persuasive; Vocabulary learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Equipping students with effective communication and language skills in the field of design is one of the main tasks for ESL teachers of English for Design course. Effective communication helps build designers' professional brand. Idea articulation has become a commonplace task for designers. Typically, they need to articulate brand message, explain the reasoning behind their design choices and create persuasive presentations to effectively communicate their creative ideas through design briefs. Good communication skills can help others to better understand and appreciate their design and the creative process involved. Some of them might also need good copywriting skills, particularly in creating compelling and persuasive written content for promotional materials in various contexts. For some, they will always find themselves working closely with copywriters to ensure seamless integration of visual and written elements in advertising projects.

However, struggling with limited resources remains one of the main challenges faced by ESP teachers. There are very limited resources that focus on design and advertising-related materials. It has become a

challenge for ESL teachers to seek for appropriate resources tailored for teaching English for Design students. It is difficult and quite impossible to find materials which align with both language and design objectives.

Therefore, this innovation project was initiated as supplementary material to complement traditional course materials such as notes, books and lectures. The content that covers relevant topics in the course, provides additional insights, or different perspectives to enrich students' understanding. In particular, it aims to help learners to:

- create compelling and persuasive written content
- articulate brand message effectively
- develop communication techniques necessary to succeed in the field of design

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the literature review of the study relating to the underpinning theories and principles and previous studies on games and language learning.

A. The Underpinning Theories and Principles

To create a highly engaging and interactive learning experience, there is a need to review some theories and principles for effective design of instructional materials. Our cognitive system operates within the constraints of a limited working memory [1]. George A. Miller's "seven plus or minus two" suggests that human short-term memory has a capacity limit whereby only seven items, give or take two can be retained by the average person in their working memory. Therefore, instructional materials should be designed in a way that can help minimize learners' cognitive load. There are many design guidelines, for example [1, 2] which have been discussed to help learners reduce extraneous load and manage intrinsic load. In PromoVista, game components, such as game cards were organized into meaningful groups or categories that align with players' mental models so as to facilitate their understanding. Furthermore, using game mechanics, the concepts are unfolded, discovered and mastered by students gradually. The content of the PromoVista was presented in a clear and organized manner, with essential elements highlighted with contrasting colours on the cards so that learners know what to focus on and can effectively manage their cognitive load. Besides, information chunking strategy was to chunk and organize information within the card game to reduce cognitive load so as to allow learners to process the information more efficiently. Therefore, it helps manage the cognitive load placed on learners' working memory. In short, PromoVista helps distribute learners' cognitive load so that they can have a better focus on understanding the underlying principles rather than struggling to grasp a complex concept in a conventional teaching and learning environment.

For learning to be effective, it is advisable to present information in ways that do not burden the students with excessive cognitive load [3]. Same materials can be presented using a unified format. Learning can be better facilitated if efforts are geared towards directing learners' attention and designed in a way that can help them to devote cognitive resources to the activity which is related to their learning. In short, educational materials should be designed in ways that do not overload the limited capacity of working memory. The strategies, which are called effects/ principles, are further elaborated in [2] paper. Segmenting principle suggests that there is a need to break down complex information into smaller chunks or manageable segments. In PromoVista, each activity was designed with its own set of rules and instructions, focusing on specific content, making it easier for players to understand

and follow the gameplay, without feeling overwhelmed. Basic concepts are introduced first before introducing more advanced and challenging ones.

Another principle, 'signaling' is closely related to avoid presenting too much redundant information to the students. It is therefore advisable to design concise instructional materials which only focus on the essential information. Sending cues to let learners know the key elements to focus on is recommended. In PromoVista, important information on cards was highlighted by using colour coding. Consistent colours and symbols were used to help players to quickly understand the game interaction. Clear cues or signals were provided to highlight relevant information and to direct learners' attention.

PromoVista was also designed based on the principles grounded in Constructivist learning Theory. This theory advocates that- learners are active agents when it comes to knowledge acquisition. Learning takes place when learners actively discover, explore and interact with the new information by checking their existing knowledge, hypothesizing, testing their own theories, accommodating, adjusting or revising their existing knowledge, assimilating or transforming the new information by relating it to what they already know and drawing conclusions from their own findings in the learning process [4]. Therefore, PromoVista was designed to accommodate multiple perspectives so as to allow learners explore various approaches and possibilities or solutions related to the concept. Learners are encouraged to actively interact with the learning content by exploring different strategies, making justifications, reflecting on outcomes in developing their new understanding of the learning content based on feedback gathered from team members. Multiple examples were built into PromoVista to enhance student learning. The new concepts can be reviewed by other players for further enhancement of understanding. As for reinforcement purposes, a new or an old concept might be revisited when a new card is drawn.

Besides, as highlighted in another paper [5], the use of scaffolding is one of the characteristics of constructivist learning theory. There is a need to provide sufficient scaffolding to support learners in exploring and understanding the intended content. In PromoVista, many useful tips or resources were provided on the cards to give guidance to learners so that they are able to navigate through the unfamiliar territory. For instance, a list of chosen descriptive words was printed on PromoVista cards, together

with their definition and sample usage for learners to interact with, explore and apply. The content on PromoVista cards was carefully chosen to represent the real-world examples of the persuasive written content and advertising techniques in the field of design. Sufficient clues and contexts were provided on each card to facilitate students' understanding of the concepts. The decision-making scenarios which involve players constructing strategic justifications, articulating rationales and explaining decisions in each PromoVista activity provides opportunities for learners to engage in strategic thinking. This is particularly useful to prepare them for communicating their design-related ideas in the future. Learners are engaged in active learning by actively seeking for the best answers, interacting actively with the learning materials and checking for understanding. They then construct their understanding of the subject matter through critical inquiry. Through the game, learners can figure out where misunderstanding and missing knowledge is and from the feedback gathered from their peers, they can identify misconceived concepts and acquire new input. PromoVista cards were designed with the main aim to present various examples of persuasive written content and advertising techniques used in the field of design so as to build upon learners' prior knowledge towards constructing their refined understanding of the intended content. In order to win the game, each team has to work collaboratively to solve the problems presented using PromoVista cards. For instance, Card Sorting and Pathos Ethos Logos (P.E.L) Match-Up activities require team members to collectively clear all the cards.

B. Games and Language Learning

There is a need for more exploration of game-based learning to identify the best practices for implementation [6] In exploring perceptions on the use and the usefulness of board games in improving students' speaking skill, this systematic review [7] has concluded that board games can have positive impacts to develop students' speaking performance, such as improving speaking competency, enhancing motivation and increasing interpersonal interaction. It was elaborated that the fun and relaxing gaming atmosphere can reduce students' affective barrier by allowing them to speak without the fear of making mistakes. Similarly, the element of fun and the affordance of language games to engage students in real-life interaction were also addressed in another systematic review paper which was conducted to explore language games in promoting students' speaking skills [8]. [9] found a significant relationship between the use of board games and students' oral performance. Students' lower anxiety

levels due to playing board games were found to contribute to the overall enhancement of their oral performance. As highlighted in another study [10], board game was highlighted as a great platform to promote student interaction and in-group discussions which involve information retrieval. In another study [11], board games were found to stimulate students' vocabulary learning. Similarly, [12] highlighted that interactive board games can facilitate student learning by making them more active in learning, assisting them in memorizing the new words, motivating students with the competitive environment and promoting active social relationship among the students.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher delves into the development phases and the design aspects of the innovation project.

A. ADDIE Instructional Design Model

PromoVista was developed using Analysis- Design-Development-Implementation-Evaluation (ADDIE), a well-established framework commonly used in instructional design. *Table 1* illustrates the design and development framework, which was adapted from ADDIE instructional design model. Drawing upon Branch [13], five (5) components of ADDIE were adapted as follows:

Table 1 Design and development framework

Phase	Adaptations in the present study	Details
Analysis	Identified problem statement and target users, understand the needs and lacks, identified goals to be achieved and the required resources	Data gathered from the subject matter expert
Design	Identified the necessary learning activities, prepared the design and interface of PromoVista gameboard, word cards and logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PromoVista gameboard Five (5) sets of PromoVista cards: N=136
Development	Selected relevant input and developed content to be	

	included, developed instructions for activities, created cards and gameboard.	
Implementation	PromoVista was used in language classes as supplementary material to complement traditional course materials for a duration of 5 weeks	Activities: Card Sorting, Pathos Ethos Logos (P.E.L) Match-Up, Colour & Category Swap Challenge
Evaluation	Evaluated and analyzed feedback from target users and subject matter expert	Findings were reported in the next section: Results and Discussion

During analysis or conceptualization phase, data were gathered from a subject matter expert, who was the course coordinator cum course instructor for the said course ‘English for Design’. According to the subject matter expert, material development remains one of the main challenges in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching. This scenario was evident in the course ‘English for Design’. The need for designing materials for teaching English for Design was confirmed when the subject matter expert who has taught the course since it was introduced in the institution admitted that there was “not many materials related to teaching English for Design”. It was highlighted that descriptive language and promotional jargons were the specific language skills which are important for these students to excel in their work and effectively communicate their ideas. Two key challenges faced by this particular group of students are: limited vocabularies and lack of confidence to speak. Design thinking was recommended as the approach that can work well in the context of teaching this course and it was recommended that promotional items or design-related text or materials, movie and youtube videos can be incorporated into the course to help enhance the learning experience for this particular group of learners.

B. Game Design: PromoVista

This innovation project was developed to scaffold students in learning persuasive techniques commonly used in advertising so as to help them to apply these techniques in English for Design course. One of the main challenges for professional designers in the field is to convey messages clearly and persuasively either through text or images in advertisements, websites or other promotional materials.

This innovation project comprises a set of board game, with a gameboard, which is divided into a central playing area, featuring a grid of 20 spaces arranged in a rectangular shape and five (5) sets of PromoVista cards (N=136), with the main content focusing on different modes of persuasion, which include Pathos, Ethos and Logos, a variety of persuasive techniques, which are ‘The carrot and the stick’, ‘Bandwagon appeal’, ‘Writing in the second person’, ‘Call to value’, ‘The scarcity principle’ and ‘Celebrity endorsement’, ten (10) linguistic devices, i.e Onomatopoeia, Pun, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Personification, Euphemism, Rhetorical question, Alliteration, Rhyme and Anaphora as well as thirty (30) descriptive words.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the key features of PromoVista:

- (a) It injects flexibility in which it can be easily adapted to accommodate the diverse language abilities of English for Design students as cards can be designed with varying levels of complexity.
- (b) It encourages interactive learning as students can be actively engaged with various card activities such as sorting, matching or categorizing. Besides, it can effectively provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction in the target language. This is because players are engaged in critical thinking and language use as they are required to make arguments and justifications to explain their decision.
- (c) It allows versatility. It can be used in various contexts and adapted for various educational activities such as vocabulary building, language games and grammar practice.
- (d) It is handy and convenient. It can be easily introduced for use in a language classroom. Card-based activities can be very engaging and motivating for students. It can foster a positive, dynamic and enthusiastic learning environment. Students are excited when playing language games.

- (e) The card activities were designed as such to allow other players to check and provide immediate feedback. Peer feedback is vital for promoting enhanced understanding of the intended content. It also provides sufficient opportunities for other players to revisit learned concepts for reinforcement.
- (f) Well-designed content tailored to address the specific learning needs of the target learners. The input was carefully chosen to suit the language levels of the students. Balanced difficulty principle is adhered to as students are instructed to explore easy games first before moving on to more demanding card activities.
- (g) Clear objectives and rules were provided to students before playing the game. The use of consistent colours can also maintain clarity.
- (h) Good use of vibrant and contrasting colours can enhance readability and aesthetic appeal, can motivate students and facilitate task performance

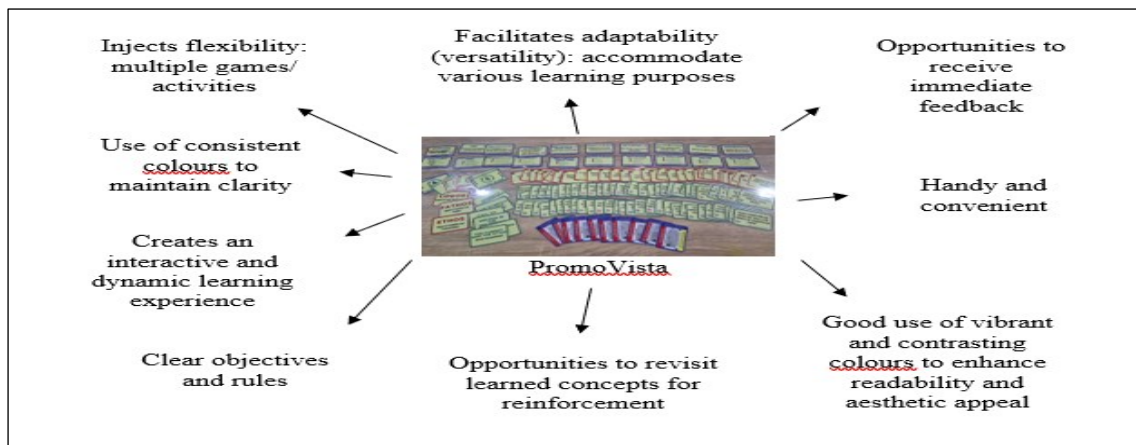


Figure 1 An overview of the key features

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were gathered from a total of fifteen (15) ESL students who were taking English for Design course at the time of data collection in one of the polytechnics in Malaysia. A 13-item survey form which was prepared with reference to questionnaire in [14] study was distributed to the participants who have used PromoVista in their language classes for a duration of five (5) weeks.

Table 2 Mean scores

Item	Statement	Mean
1	I enjoyed using PromoVista cards to learn	3.33
2	Using PromoVista cards helped me become more confident in my learning as it allows me to check my understanding on a particular concept related to my course.	3.33
3	The PromoVista card was more interesting than lecture notes.	3.27
4	The PromoVista cards had a positive effect on my study behavior.	3.47

5	The PromoVista cards enabled me to get sufficient examples to understand a particular concept related to my course.	3.27
6	I was motivated to explore further on the persuasive techniques I was learning with the PromoVista cards.	3.40
7	Interacting with the PromoVista cards helped me remember the English vocabulary better.	3.53
8	I appreciated the corrective feedback given by coursemates when using PromoVista cards.	3.40
9	The game design enhanced my understanding of the concepts.	3.40
10	Using the PromoVista cards to learn vocabularies was more fun and less stressful.	3.53
11	The PromoVista cards helped me prepare for the final test.	3.07
12	Using the PromoVista cards helped me enhance my communication performance.	3.40
13	I would like the PromoVista cards to be implemented in future courses.	3.40

Participants responded to the statements in the survey using four-point likert scale (4= strongly agree, 3= agree, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree). As shown in *Table 2*, overall, participants perceived the use of PromoVista in their language classes positively in which all the means were found to locate in the range of 3.07-3.53. Specifically, participants reported that using PromoVista cards to learn vocabularies was more fun and less stressful (M=3.53). It was also highlighted that they enjoyed using PromoVista cards to learn (M=3.33) and the PromoVista card was more interesting than lecture notes (M=3.27).

These findings were further supported by the data obtained from the open-ended question in the survey which was asked to explore what the participants like or dislike about PromoVista. Positive words such as ‘interesting’ (S1), ‘enjoy’ (S14) ‘better’ (S5) and ‘fun’ (S6) were found. For instance, many students (S1, S6, S7, S9, S13, S14) highlighted the nature of the game which is fun and interesting.

“Fun in(as) a way of learning” (S6)
“We play in the group like we play other card game(s)” (S7)
“learning while playing games” (S9)
“Fun” (S13)
“learning with enjoy(ment) while study(ing)” (S14)
“The game was interesting” (S1)

Some students (S5, S8) compared the new way of learning with the traditional book-and-talk teaching approach:

“Better than the usual oral lecture” (S5)
“Makes me interested in learning English without opening a book just by playing games” (S8)

Some students (S10, S3) expressed that they like PromoVista as it bears similarities with UNO game, particularly with the color and category swap challenge.

As S10 said, “Game (is) similar with UNO” (S10)
“I like when strategizing the available cards (UNO activity).” (S3)

The same was reported by the subject matter expert. In terms of student motivation, it was highlighted that PromoVista could spark students’ interest in learning the topic and can enhance student engagement with the learning content. The materials could motivate students to use English for meaningful purposes.

These results confirmed the findings in [8] study when it was highlighted that many language games can create an enjoyable learning environment for

ESL students. It was also mentioned that language games can serve as a good source of motivation for students as they develop students’ interest and curiosity which sustain their interest to play the games. [15] also found that majority of the students enjoyed playing Vocathon, a game which was innovated specifically for vocabulary learning at tertiary level. Vocabulary learning was made fun and effective with the innovative game. The use of colours and shapes on gameboard can capture students’ visual-spatial intelligence, thereby generating their interest and creating a sense of excitement among the players. In another study [10], the motivational effect of the games was also highlighted as one of the factors leading to the participants’ increased active participation.

As for perceived usefulness, PromoVista was found to facilitate student learning in many ways. For instance, interacting with the PromoVista cards helped them remember the vocabularies (M= 3.53). When PromoVista was reviewed by the subject matter expert, it was also highlighted that PromoVista is appropriate and applicable for English for Design students. The content is relevant and can address the learning needs of the target students as it is aligned to the topics outlined in syllabus. It could thus enhance target students’ mastery of vocabulary related to their field.

These findings resonated with those from [11] as it was found that language games allowed experimental group to perform significantly better than the control group which experienced traditional book-based method in terms of vocabulary knowledge. These findings were also consistent with those from [12] study when students’ enhanced vocabulary achievement was reported. The games were found to encourage students to be more active in their learning and they were also pushed to remember more new vocabulary.

In terms of oral performance, the subject matter expert agreed that is effective in improving students’ communicative skills. Similarly, students also agreed that using the PromoVista cards helped enhance their communication performance (M=3.40). PromoVista can stimulate prompt, critical and quick thinking from the students. It requires them to do some reasoning and rationalization as well as problem-solving. This finding was further supported by the data obtained from the open-ended question in the survey. S11 highlighted his perceived usefulness of playing PromoVista, i.e in improving his English language in speaking. As he said, “can improve my English

when speak(ing)” (S11) In addition, S14 and S15 also mentioned the similar point.

As S14 said, “improve my vocabulary and skill to speak” (S14)

“Because this is the part that people speak English more” (S15)

These findings were consistent with previous research from [9] when it was reported that 84% of the participants had a quantitative improvement of their oral performance after a four-week study. Participants experienced lower levels of language anxiety as they played the games in small groups. As highlighted by [7], many studies have addressed the significance of board games in increasing students’ motivation and enhancing their confidence to do speaking in the target language. This is because board games were reported to have the potential to reduce their speaking anxiety and with the game-like atmosphere, it was made easy for them to express their ideas. Besides, it was also highlighted that grammar in the speech can be acquired subconsciously by the students through board games. Similarly, the results in this study also support this view when students highlighted that they could expand their vocabularies and improve their skills and language to do speaking in the target language. This finding resonates with those from [8] when they found that promoting real-life communication and reduced level of language anxiety were some of the affordances offered by language games.

Not only that, students also responded that using PromoVista cards helped them become more confident in learning as it allows them to check their understanding on a particular concept related to their course. (M=3.33). This is also supported by the data obtained from the open-ended question when some students (S2, S3, S4) responded that they valued the interaction with their friends when playing PromoVista.

“Having argument amongst other team to justify your point” (S2)

“I enjoy using it when exchanging opinions and new information shared by friends.” (S3)

“How there was more communication than just plain old writing and the sense of involvement from all of my coursemates that comes with it” (S4)

“Communication in group” (S12)

Students appreciated the corrective feedback given by coursemates when using PromoVista cards (M=3.40) and most of them indicated that they would like the PromoVista cards to be implemented

in future courses (M=3.40). The significance of obtaining immediate feedback, particularly the explanation and corrections made when playing the games was also highlighted by participants in [10] study. Through immediate feedback provided by the peers when playing PromoVista, students can check their own understanding on the concepts learned and therefore become more confident in the whole learning process.

PromoVista helps to build up social skills as it fosters interaction and communication among the team members, particularly when they are deciding whether the given answers can be accepted. Feedback from the team members also helps to identify misconceived concepts and allow them to assimilate new knowledge. This is also evident in [11] study when it was reported that a better social relationship was established in experimental group as they cooperated as a team when playing the language games. Again, a similar finding was discussed in another vocabulary study [12] as it was highlighted that playing games in groups allows students to have active social relationships with their friends. Besides, playing in small groups also provides sufficient opportunities for them to get more new words to remember and use in the activity.

Also, students responded that the PromoVista cards enabled them to get sufficient examples to understand a particular concept (M=3.27) and it had a positive effect on their study behavior (M=3.47). They were motivated to explore further on the persuasive techniques that they were learning with the PromoVista cards (M=3.40) and the game design enhanced their understanding of the concepts taught (M=3.40) and helped them prepare for the final test. (M=3.07).

This is in line with data gathered from the subject matter expert. Apart from relevance, it was also addressed that PromoVista could provide sufficient input and appropriate depth of knowledge to enhance student understanding on promotional language. It could help the target students to understand promotional language as it has good coverage of the promotional items for the course. The content in PromoVista is easy to understand and aligned with prior knowledge of target learners. Not only that, PromoVista presents information in interesting ways, provides flexibility in use, and can support students’ self-directed learning.

This is in line with the data gathered from open-ended question when some students (S1, S8, S15) highlighted the content of the PromoVista that captured their greatest enjoyment. As S15

mentioned, “The Persuasive Technique” (S15). Similarly, S8 also talked about the content of the game. “I can understand the technique very well.” (S8)

“The questions asked was knowledgeable” (S1)

Similar findings were found in [10] when participants reported the usefulness of the games to help them recall the content discussed in class. As highlighted by [10], content in the game can be organized effectively to allow participants to prioritize and notice the key points, enhancing the urgency and significance of acquiring the highly relevant content. Also, as emphasized by [15], language games, if designed appropriately, can be used effectively to cater to students’ intrapersonal intelligence. It can be used to create awareness among the students that they are the ones in charge of their own learning. Thus, learning can be geared towards the student-centered ends so as to enable students to take on more responsibility in their own learning. With carefully designed content in PromoVista, students are pushed to engage actively in the interaction with the learning materials, resulting in deep learning. By participating actively in the learning process, students develop skills for autonomous learning.

However, amidst the positive feedback, there is also a need to simplify the instructions given in PromoVista as complicated rules were highlighted by two students (S13, S19), as follows:

“the complicated rules” (S19)
“Hard to understand” (S13)

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from this study demonstrate that PromoVista is a fun and interesting language game which can cater for learning needs of students who are taking *English for Design* course. By providing sufficient examples to enhance students’ understanding of the intended content and promoting student interaction and active learning, PromoVista can be used effectively to scaffold students in vocabulary learning and communication in the target language. It does not only provide students with a good exposure of vocabularies related to their field of study, but also covers a wide range of advertising and persuasive strategies, thereby enabling them to work on effective persuasive content in their field. In light of these results, it is recommended for more language games to be developed for the purpose of teaching English for Specific purposes. However, some suggestions

from the subject matter expert, such as providing more colorful visuals and brighter background in relation to card design, providing clearer instructions in separate instruction manuals and appropriate sequencing or progression of card activities should be taken into account when revising the language game at a later stage. Expanding on the current research, future studies could explore the effectiveness of using PromoVista in facilitating ESL students’ vocabulary learning. Also, interactive assignments can be designed as a follow-up activity to provide opportunities for students to effectively integrate language and design with the concepts learned. It should also be noted that the findings of this study are restricted due to the small number of participants limited by the small group of students for the targeted ESP course. Therefore, the findings from this study cannot be generalized and applied to all teaching contexts.

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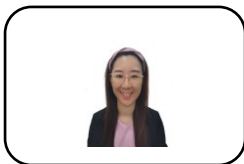
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AUTHOR'S INFORMATION

Author: Catherine Nguoi Chui Lam



General Studies Department, Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan, 81700 Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia.

E-mail: catherinenguoi@yahoo.com