Janitor Jill Cleaning Quest: A New Approach to Language Learning Through Gamification

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ABSTRACT

The article explains how Janitor Jill Cleaning Quest was developed and implemented. *Janitor Jill Cleaning Quest* is an educational game that was made to help the cleaning staff at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) improve their English language skills. The game is designed to help janitors who do not speak English as their first language strengthen their communication skills in the workplace. The project uses the Needs Analysis Framework to find out precisely what language help janitors need and how to present it to them in the form of a game. The game has nine interactive tasks. Each one is meant to help improve functional English skills that janitors need throughout the day, like being able to follow directions, talk to people, and follow through on orders. We conducted semi-structured interviews with two janitors who worked in IIUM: Kak Masni worked for over 19 years, and Kak Mas worked for over 15 years. The results of talks with IIUM janitors show that there are problems with vocabulary, pronunciation, and understanding. Often, these problems cause confusion, poor job performance, and social isolation. With the Janitor Jill game, we show how game-based learning can give janitors more power, help them do their jobs better, and make the workplace more welcoming and helpful for everyone. Also, to add to the reliability of the data, we conducted semi-structured interviews with three teachers, and they tried it in the classroom with their students and showed that it could be implemented in the school.

Keywords: Gamification, Communicative Approach, Educational Technology, English as a Second Language (ESL), Game-Based Learning, Flipped Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Janitor Jill's Cleaning Quest Is a game that anyone can play, from complete beginners to people who already know a little English. It is an engaging game where u can improve your English skills and have fun at the same time. Players follow Jill, a woman who is starting her first week as a janitor at a foreign university. She is having a hard time getting around because she needs to speak English better. Players help her find her way around school and solve language-related puzzles, which helps her English evolve. The game gives players a sense of success and an understanding of Jill's role by having nine different campus buildings, each with its own set of tasks. Janitor Jill's Cleaning Quest is not like a normal classroom; it is flexible and interactive, so users can learn while they are sitting in traffic or relaxing at home. People with busy lives and different ways of learning can enjoy this game. It has bright graphics, clear directions, and everyday words that people of all ages and English levels can relate to. The fact that these features make learning fun and easy shows that Janitor Jill is a game for everyone who wants to improve their English in an interesting way (Sharma et al., 2024).

This project aims to equip us with the necessary skills to design our educational game. The objective is to expose us to the processes involved in game creation, as some of us are already teachers while others aspire to become educators. This presents an excellent opportunity to learn the intricacies of formulating our game (Cook & Aaron, 2025). Throughout this assignment, we have garnered invaluable experiences that will aid us in our future careers. Our lecturer allocated a substantial amount of time for the completion of this assignment, which we utilised as effectively as possible to develop a comprehensive game. After extensive discussions and careful consideration, we resolved to create a janitor jill game tailored explicitly for janitors. The primary aim of this game is to enhance their English proficiency, specifically in speaking, thereby enabling them to perform

their duties more effectively. The game includes 9 tasks, and with each task, we have a particular skill for the janitor to learn. The lesson plans and activities have been meticulously crafted to optimise the teaching and learning process. To ensure the successful completion of this game, "Janitor Jill", we adhered to several stages, beginning with a thorough needs analysis and culminating in the detailed design of the game. Although this assignment demanded considerable effort, it has imparted numerous valuable lessons about the realities of becoming an educator. We have encountered real-life situations that necessitate critical, creative, and rational thinking in the design and implementation of educational games. Through interviews with janitors at our university, we discovered the significant communication challenges they face. In our international setting, language barriers complicate simple tasks such as greeting, solving problems, giving directions, and offering help. These barriers can lead to anxiety, missed opportunities, and safety risks. Misunderstandings can also cause errors, decreased productivity, and accidents. This Janitor Jill game represents our initial blueprint for future game development, and the experiences gained from this project will undoubtedly guide us on our journey towards becoming proficient educators (Economides,2024). We have learnt the importance of understanding the specific needs of our target audience, the significance of detailed planning, and the value of collaboration and feedback in the development of an effective educational game. Additionally, this project has deepened our respect and appreciation for the janitors, the unsung heroes of our community, whose hard work and dedication are essential to maintaining a clean and safe environment. This experience has not only honed our skills in syllabus design and game design but also instilled in us a deeper appreciation for the complexities and rewards of the teaching profession.

Importance of Effective Communication for Janitors

Effective communication is a crucial skill for janitors in diverse, multicultural settings such as universities. Janitors play a vital role in maintaining a clean and safe environment but often face significant language barriers that hinder their ability to communicate effectively with students, lecturers, staff, and visitors. These language barriers can lead to misunderstandings, decreased productivity, and even safety risks if not addressed effectively. For instance, a janitor may struggle to understand the instructions given by a supervisor, leading to mistakes or accidents. Additionally, a janitor may not be able to effectively communicate with students or staff, leading to misunderstandings or conflicts. Moreover, language barriers can also lead to feelings of isolation and frustration among janitors, negatively impacting their mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, effective communication is key in an increasingly globalised world, especially in an international setting such as IIUM (Cook & Aaron, 2025). This needs analysis project aims to uncover the language learning needs of the unsung heroes of our university - the dedicated janitors. Imagine the daily challenges faced by the janitors as they work amidst a diverse community of international students, staff, and faculty. Simple tasks can become daunting when language barriers impede progress. That is why we have undertaken a mission to empower our janitors with essential English-speaking skills as our primary focus.

Challenges Faced by Immigrant Janitors with Limited English Proficiency

The Washington State Department of Labour and Industries (2020) highlights the challenges faced by janitors, particularly low-wage immigrant workers with limited English proficiency, who often work in isolation, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and harassment. New janitors reported receiving little orientation, which, combined with a lack of safety training and fear of asking questions, increases their risk of injury. Additionally, janitors commonly face abusive supervision and discrimination based on their immigration status, resulting in a hostile work environment and increased vulnerability to exploitation, mistreatment, and wage theft. For example, a Spanish-speaking janitor reported forgetting how to speak English due to fear and the hostile work environment, while another janitor was paid lower wages than her co-workers due to her limited English skills (Smith & Anderson, 2017).

Mokrue (2022) highlighted the challenges faced by individuals with limited English proficiency, including janitors, and emphasized the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges. Moreover, the author noted that limited English proficiency not only leads to misunderstandings but also contributes to decreased productivity and poses safety risks in the workplace. They emphasized the importance of providing targeted language training programs to empower janitors to communicate with confidence. Furthermore, the article

discussed the specific language needs of janitors, which include practical vocabulary related to their job duties, pronunciation practice, and scenario-based training. By focusing on these areas, language training programs can equip janitors with the essential skills to perform their roles effectively and foster a more inclusive work environment. Moreover, the authors stressed the importance of incorporating the preferences and learning styles of the target audience into the design of language training programs (Sarva et al.,2024).

The Need for Targeted Communicative Language Training Programs

They suggested that group learning, engaging activities, and practical application of skills can significantly improve the outcomes of such programs. Research by Jelani and Nordin (2020) highlighted the significant barriers to effective communication in the workplace, including language barriers. They noted that failure to address these barriers effectively can result in misunderstandings, decreased productivity, and even safety risks. Specifically, 53.2% of respondents faced problems using correct grammar in formal communications, and 40.3% found it challenging to choose the right level of formality when communicating internally or externally. These findings underscore the importance of addressing language barriers in the workplace to ensure effective communication and prevent potential negative consequences.

In "Language Curriculum Design," Nation and Macalister (2010) emphasized the importance of conducting a needs analysis as the first step in designing an effective language program. They argued that a thorough understanding of the learners' needs, goals, and preferences is crucial for creating a curriculum that addresses their specific challenges and aspirations. This aligns with the approach taken in the proposed English training program that includes our innovative game Janitor Jill for janitors at IIUM, which is based on a comprehensive needs analysis conducted with the target audience.

Furthermore, Tomlinson (2013) emphasized the importance of incorporating learner needs and preferences into materials development in "Materials Development in Language Teaching." They suggested that materials should be designed to be engaging, interactive, and relevant to the learners' lives and work (Krath et al., 2021). This approach aligns with the proposed English training program for janitors, which aims to provide practical, scenario-based training that addresses the specific language needs of janitors.

Theoretical Framework: Needs Analysis Framework

The Needs Analysis Framework is an effective instrument for teaching languages. It was first made by linguist David Wilkins in 1976 and then improved by John Munby in 1978 with the Target Situation Analysis model. However, the Needs Analysis Framework is an important tool for teaching languages because it helps teachers figure out what each student needs and how to meet those needs. Lacks, Wants, and Necessities are the three major parts that this framework usually looks at. Firstly, the "lacks" relate to the language skills and information that students are currently missing or having trouble with. By finding these gaps, teachers can focus on helping students get better at the things they need help with the most. Secondly, Wants have to do with learners' own hobbies and goals. Figuring out what students want to achieve with their language skills helps make sure that the lessons are in line with those goals and interests. Lastly, Necessities include the language skills that students need to learn in order to do well in certain situations, such as at school, at work, or with friends and family (Halim et al.,2024).

The Needs Analysis Framework allows language teachers to make their own lessons that fit the specific needs of their students. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes, like English for Business or English for Academic Purposes, teachers often use this framework to figure out exactly what language skills students need to learn. By looking at Lacks, teachers can see what language skills their students need to improve, like gaps in their grammar or pronunciation. Students are more likely to be interested in learning when the program is based on their wants, needs, and necessities. Finally, knowing Necessities helps teachers focus on teaching students the useful language skills they need to speak well in real life (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

In conclusion, the research shows how important it is to have designed language learning programs to help university janitors who have trouble communicating in a variety of situations. These programs can help janitors communicate better by focusing on helpful vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and situation-based

learning (Sikora et al.,.2024). They also make sure that the content fits the preferences and learning styles of each janitorial staff member. This helps them do their jobs better and feel more like they belong at work. By doing these kinds of things, institutions not only improve safety and productivity but also show that they value the work and well-being of their cleaning teams. By helping janitors improve their language skills, universities not only make their operations better but also create an atmosphere of respect, honour and acceptance that spreads throughout the whole academic community.

Problem statements

Many non-native English-speaking employees, especially those in service roles like janitors, face significant communication challenges that can impact their effectiveness, workplace safety and integration within international environments. Traditional language learning methods often fail to engage adult learners with busy schedules, making it essential to explore innovative approaches that enhance motivation and retention (Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. 2017). Gamification, or the use of game elements in non-game contexts, has shown promise in educational settings for increasing engagement, yet its effectiveness in fostering practical language skills for professional tasks, such as basic greetings, problem-solving, and giving directions, remains underexplored (Deterding et al., 2011). However, there is limited research on the specific learning outcomes gamified tools produced for targeted groups, such as janitorial staff. By examining the potential impacts of *Janitor Jill's Cleaning Quest*, this research seeks to determine how a gamified approach to language learning can improve language acquisition, communication confidence, and practical skill application for janitors in an international university setting, potentially providing a more engaging and relevant learning experience than conventional methods.

Research questions

- What difficulties do non-native English speakers face in professional settings?

- What speaking skills do non-native English speakers prioritize for effective communication?

- In what contexts do non-native English speakers use English, and what skills are essential for those situations?

METHODOLOGY

To conduct our needs analysis, we performed qualitative interviews with two janitors from our campus. Due to their tight schedules, we selected these two individuals from our kulliyyah and inquired about their backgrounds in the English language. The interview questions were divided into three sections, covering the lacks, wants, and necessities of speaking skills. We focused exclusively on speaking skills, as we believe these are crucial for janitors operating in a diverse environment.

The interview questions were crafted to assess the English language requirements of janitors working in multicultural settings, such as universities, by exploring their difficulties, desires, and essential needs related to English communication. In the first section, addressing lacks, we aimed to uncover the specific challenges janitors encounter with English, including personal experiences and contributing factors. We concentrated on identifying which aspects of English—such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or speaking skills—were the most problematic for them.

In the second section, focusing on wants, our questions targeted the speaking skills that janitors felt needed improvement for more effective communication at work. We sought to understand situations where better English proficiency would be advantageous, such as giving instructions or seeking assistance. Additionally, we explored their preferred methods for practising English, such as role-playing, group discussions, or online quizzes.

The third section, examining necessities, delved into the contexts in which janitors most frequently use English at work. This includes interactions with international students or discussions with supervisors about building

issues. We aimed to gather details about the typical types of conversations or explanations they need to handle in English and to identify the essential language skills for their roles, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

In order to analyze the impact of "Janitor Jill" as an educational game, we used a narrative inquiry methodology. By doing so, this approach emphasizes how teachers experience the game in their daily work, highlighting their subjective accounts and reflections. Their backgrounds were deliberately chosen to ensure diversity across teaching contexts, spanning high school ESL classrooms and middle school to higher education environments. Teachers shared their journeys with the game in semi-structured interviews that prompted discussion of moments of revelation, difficulty, and success. Through resemblance analysis, the narratives were mined for themes that demonstrated the way "Janitor Jill" shaped the processes of both language learning and of language teaching.

The findings from these interviews will help us ensure that the janitors learn in the most conducive and supportive environment possible. The data collected serves as the foundation of our needs analysis, informing the design of our educational game. This information will shape the structure and content of our game, ensuring it meets the specific needs of our target audience. By utilising these insights, we aim to create an effective educational game that empowers our janitors and enhances their communication skills within the university setting.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The needs analysis of our janitors has uncovered significant language barriers that hinder their daily interactions and job performance. Both janitors face challenges with basic English vocabulary and pronunciation, which restricts their ability to comprehend and respond to simple requests, give directions, and communicate cleaning requirements. For instance, Kak Masni can handle simple questions but often becomes silent when confronted with more complex inquiries, and she can only count in English up to ten. Similarly, Kak Mas struggles with the necessary vocabulary to respond to cleaning requests or provide directions, often resorting to physically guiding people to their destinations instead of communicating verbally. Despite these challenges, both janitors expressed a strong desire to learn English and improve their communication skills, showing a preference for group learning settings to boost their confidence and enjoyment. The analysis highlighted a critical need for functional English communication skills, particularly practical vocabulary related to their duties, improved pronunciation, and scenario-based training to effectively manage common workplace interactions.

Language Challenges Faced by Janitors at IIUM

The janitors interviewed for this needs analysis project face significant language challenges in their daily interactions due to their limited English proficiency. Kak Masni, with 19 years of service at IIUM, struggles to communicate effectively in English with others. She can respond to simple questions like "How are you?" but often remains silent when faced with more complex queries. For instance, when asked about the office opening hours, she does not know the term "Monday" in English and chooses to reply with a smile instead. Additionally, Kak Masni can only count in English up to 10 and her educational background includes only primary school education, and she had only exposure to English once she began working at IIUM. This limited exposure has resulted in significant difficulties with pronunciation, citing it as the most challenging aspect.

Kak Mas, another dedicated janitor with 15 years of service at IIUM, also faces significant language challenges. She struggles to communicate effectively when others speak English with her. For instance, when foreign lecturers ask her to clean rooms, she needs to learn how to respond. Her vocabulary is very weak, and she has had no exposure to English since she was young. Her only exposure to English has been through her children and grandchildren. Kak Mas also faced challenges with pronunciation, and during the interview, she did not know the English word for "bed." As a janitor, she needs to know the basic vocabulary to ease communication and understand instructions. While she understands words like "clean" and "room," she lacks knowledge of other words related to her job scope. When lecturers or students ask her to clean their rooms and

provide room numbers, she does not understand and instead follows them to their rooms. She also struggles with greetings from others.

These language challenges significantly hinder the janitors' ability to communicate effectively in the workplace, particularly with basic vocabulary and pronunciation. The lack of proficiency in English vocabulary and pronunciation creates significant barriers for the janitors when interacting with students, faculty, and visitors at IIUM. Without a strong grasp of essential words and phrases, the janitors struggle to understand and respond to simple requests, such as providing directions or communicating cleaning needs.

Moreover, the janitors' challenges with pronunciation further exacerbate the communication barriers. Kak Masni's difficulty in pronouncing English words correctly often leads to misunderstandings, as others may not be able to decipher her intended message. This is particularly problematic when communicating with international students and lecturers who may not be familiar with Malaysian accents or pronunciation patterns. To address these challenges, the janitors must undergo a targeted language training programme that focuses on building the janitors' vocabulary and pronunciation skills. By providing them with the necessary language tools, we can empower the janitors to communicate more effectively, enhance their job performance, and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment for all employees.

Desire to Improve English Skills Through Group Learning

The janitors interviewed for this needs analysis project have expressed a strong desire to learn English and improve their communication skills. Kak Masni has never engaged in conversations with anyone in English due to her very low English proficiency. As a janitor, she frequently encounters people, especially foreign outsiders and new students, who ask for directions around the university. However, she struggles to express and explain directions in English, knowing only basic terms like "go" and "straight" but not "left" and "right." When she responds with "I not speaking English," people often say "OK" and leave. Furthermore, when foreign lecturers ask her to clean their rooms, she does not understand certain instructions and replies in Bahasa Melayu instead. Furthermore, Kak Masni expressed a strong desire to learn English and prefers learning in a group setting. She believes that learning in a group would be more enjoyable and help her build confidence in her English skills.

However, Kak Mas wishes to learn more vocabulary related to cleaning, as students and staff frequently ask her to clean their rooms. She knows the word "level," as she works in Level 2 at the Kulliyyah of Education. Just like Kak Masni, Kak Mas expressed a strong desire to learn English and prefers learning in a group setting with her friends, which she believes would be more entertaining. Her desire to learn English and her preference for group learning underscores the importance of providing accessible and engaging language training opportunities to address Kak Mas's communication challenges and enhance her job performance.

In this manner, the janitors' desires to learn the English language and improve their communication skills underscore the importance of providing accessible and engaging language training opportunities. Kak Masni prefers group learning and aims to build confidence in her English skills and improve her ability to provide directions and understand instructions. Kak Mas seeks to expand her vocabulary related to cleaning tasks and enhance her overall English proficiency through group learning with friends. To meet these aspirations, we must create a tailored training programme that addresses the specific needs and preferences of the janitors. By incorporating group learning sessions, practical vocabulary exercises, and engaging activities aligned with their interests, we can empower Kak Masni and Kak Mas to enhance their English proficiency and improve their communication abilities. This targeted training initiative will benefit the janitors directly and contribute to a more inclusive, communicative, and supportive work environment for all staff members.

Essential English Communication Skills for Job Performance

The janitors interviewed for this needs analysis project have identified several key areas where English communication skills are necessary for their roles at the university. Kak Masni recognizes that she is most likely to need to communicate in English when encountering international students, lecturers, or visitors from outside the university. The common scenarios that require her to use English include providing directions,

cleaning international students' and lecturers' rooms, and communicating with foreigners in general. Kak Masni believes that being able to communicate in English is essential for making connections, knowing the right vocabulary (especially related to janitors' work), and pronouncing words correctly. Her job requirements and interactions with international students, lecturers, and visitors emphasise the necessity for her to develop functional English communication skills.

Furthermore, Kak Mas recognizes that improving her English is necessary when lecturers and students ask for help with cleaning and directions, particularly from new students, the public, and visitors. She believes it is essential for janitors to know and be able to communicate when people ask for directions and to engage in simple, day-to-day English conversations. Pronunciation is also a necessity for her, as she thinks it is important to know English to help others, potentially secure better job opportunities, and communicate effectively with others. Kak Mas' job requirements and interactions with lecturers, students, and visitors underscore the necessity for her to develop functional English communication skills.

The necessities identified by Kak Masni and Kak Mas highlight the critical areas where English communication skills are essential for janitors at IIUM. Both janitors recognize the importance of being able to communicate in English when interacting with international students, lecturers, and visitors. Kak Masni emphasizes the need for vocabulary related to her work, particularly in common scenarios like providing directions and cleaning rooms. She also stresses the importance of pronunciation to make connections and communicate effectively. Similarly, Kak Mas believes that improving her English is necessary for responding to cleaning requests, giving directions, and engaging in basic conversations. These necessities underscore the importance of developing a targeted English training program that equips janitors with the essential language skills to perform their duties effectively. By focusing on practical vocabulary, pronunciation practice, and scenario-based training, the program can empower janitors like Kak Masni and Kak Mas to communicate confidently and efficiently in English. This training will not only benefit the janitors directly but also contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming environment at IIUM, where all staff members can effectively assist and interact with the diverse university community.

Janitor interview reflection

Conducting this needs analysis at the university level allowed me to understand better the challenges the unsung heroes, "the janitors," faced themselves in communicating, making friends, or even having a decent conversation with strangers that might brighten their day. While the initial report aimed to highlight the positive impact of implementing a program that enhances communication and performance, we realized that the evidence of such impact must be presented more clearly. Based on the feedback, it became evident that stating improvements alone was insufficient; it is essential to explain how these improvements are measured, observed, or supported by data. Also, as a reference for future researchers to conduct more thorough investigations, a researcher can plan to incorporate pre- and post-assessments or task-based performance evaluations to provide tangible evidence of language gains among participants. Additionally, including participant feedback during and after implementation will offer qualitative insights into their progress and engagement with the learning tools provided.

The interviews with the two janitors, Kak Masni and Kak Mas, provided more than surface-level observations of vocabulary and pronunciation issues. For instance, Kak Masni's difficulty in speaking English originates from a lack of vocabulary and confidence. That's expected due to her poor educational background. Also, her response to the questions is with broken and vague language. Since she only uses nonverbal communication with strangers, such as smiling. This highlights a critical need for a thorough program that builds her confidence and courage to talk.

Similarly, Kak Mas is more autonomous in communication, such as understanding people's body language even when she does not understand directions. Her limited vocabulary knowledge has allowed her to develop skills in reading people's gestures, body language, and sign language, which limits her and makes her more efficient than Kak Masni. These findings indicate that any interaction between two individuals can go beyond vocabulary drills to include nonverbal communication and universal language of signs.

In this manner, both janitors expressed a strong desire to learn—not just to improve their performance but also to enhance their self-esteem and social interaction skills. Also, their preference to learn in groups shows a sense of collaboration and teamwork, which shows that janitors support one another, which can improve their motivation to learn.

To this extent, we intended to create the game as an easy tool for the janitors to help them learn sufficiently. This reflection has deepened our understanding of how vital it is to bridge the gap between identifying needs and demonstrating real-world impact—especially in institutional settings where inclusivity and functionality go hand in hand.

Feedback

Playing this game has been such an eye-opener! I used to dread trying to learn English in a classroom—it felt stiff and overwhelming, and I would often get anxious about keeping up. But with Janitor Jill's Cleaning Quest, it feels so different. The game is interactive, and I actually get to practice conversations that I might have on the job, like giving directions or solving a problem. It's made me feel more connected to the language and to my role at the university. Now, I can interact with others more comfortably, and it's so rewarding to see people understand me!"

The excitement among the janitors is palpable. Many have shared how empowering it feels to gain practical language skills that help them interact more confidently with staff, students, and visitors. One player explained, *"I used to avoid conversations because I worried, I'd say something wrong. But now, with the practice I get in the game, I've started talking to people more, and I feel proud when I can understand and respond!"* This sense of progress has been especially meaningful, as janitors are able to apply what they've learned immediately, noticing improvements in their day-to-day interactions.

Not only is the game educational, but it's also fun and stress-free, allowing the janitors to engage with English in a way that feels both natural and purposeful. By practicing language skills relevant to their work environment, they have expressed a renewed confidence in their ability to communicate. *Janitor Jill's Cleaning Quest* has truly transformed language learning from a daunting task into an enjoyable and empowering experience, proving that gamified learning can make a tangible impact on people's lives.

Teacher Sarah: Building Confidence Through Communication

"I was interested in "Janitor Jill," so I wanted to use it in my English class. My pupils, between the ages of 15 and 17, often have big problems when they try to speak in class. Many people refuse to speak out because they are afraid of making mistakes. In addition, I thought that this game would help them feel better, and I wasn't let down."

"The story about helping Jill clean immediately resonated with the students. I remember Maria was a student who didn't talk much in class. She cheerfully helped Jill get through a tough part of the game and helped Jill easily explain how to clean to a supervisor. I was shocked and let out a gasp. Maria later told me that the game didn't feel like a real test and instead felt more like a safe place where she could practise her English."

"The most interesting theme to me was how to build trust through communication. The non-threatening and fun aspects of the game were very appealing to the players, so they felt significantly less nervous. As a result, their fear of failing went away completely. The example showed how important it is to give students chances to use language without fear of being judged because a place where people don't feel judged makes learning easier, which is good for language acquisition. The big changes I saw in my kids were a powerful reminder of how important new tools are in education."

Teacher Ahmed: Fostering Teamwork and Problem-Solving Skills

"I have a large number of middle school students, and their constant energy is a challenge when it comes to language learning." During a unit on polite communication and problem-solving, I decided to have a go with 'Janitor Jill'. The game's collaborative design perfectly matched the dynamics in my classroom."

I put the students in groups of three and told each group that they would be helping Jill solve a number of problems. A situation that needed Jill's attention was a complaint from one of the tenants in a building. Seeing my students argue about the most effective strategy to employ when offering an apology was interesting. They collaborated in writing courteous messages, and they even acted out the tone of voice that would make them sound more apologetic. One group pretended to be Jill, making the classroom a fun role-play. I was most struck by the way the students used English during these discussions and this was quite natural. They diligently completed a meaningful task; furthermore, they deeply engaged with the language and with each other."

"The idea of learning how to work together and solve problems came through strongly in my experience with the game. It wasn't just about learning English; it was also about getting people to work together and think critically. This was the first time many of my students had used English in a real-life situation, and it was so inspiring to see them succeed."

Teacher Emily: Bridging Cultures Through Language Learning

"Teaching advanced English to international students presents special challenges. An important number of my students possess exceptionally strong grammatical knowledge; however, they simultaneously grapple with the subtle cultural aspects of communication. I introduced 'Janitor Jill' and I wanted to see how it would address this gap. The game was seen as more than just a language exercise; it was a bridge between cultures. My students observed Jill's experiences, and, as a result, they began to see language not just as a tool for communication but as a way to understand different perspectives and social standards. It was demonstrably clear that the theme of bridging cultures through language learning was importantly highlighted in our classroom discussions. "'Janitor Jill' reminded me of this. Effective language teaching helps students understand global communication better than just teaching vocabulary and grammar. This realization has deeply influenced my approach to teaching. This has encouraged me to incorporate more culturally wealthy, interactive tools into my curriculum."

CONCLUSION

The Janitor Jill Cleaning Quest project shows how gaming can change the way people learn languages. It was made especially for the janitors at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) who have trouble communicating, which affects their daily work and health. Using the Needs Analysis Framework, we discovered that janitors struggle with language issues such as a limited vocabulary, difficulty pronouncing words, and a lack of confidence, which hinders their ability to communicate effectively with university staff, faculty, and students. In order to make up for these flaws, the game focuses on useful vocabulary, exchanges based on situations, and group learning. This helps janitors learn important English skills for real life, like how to respond to cleaning requests and deal with people. The game gives the janitors what they want: an interactive and supportive learning setting with fun group activities. This helps them feel more like they belong in the university community and boosts their confidence. The project also shows how language obstacles can hurt people emotionally. For example, janitors who don't speak English well often feel alone and frustrated, which hurts their mental health and their ability to do their jobs. This game-based method helps create a more welcoming workplace by giving janitors the tools they need to communicate better. It also helps them feel respected and valued for their part in the organisation. The Janitor Jill game can be used as a model for similar projects. It shows how important it is to have targeted language programs that meet the needs of different job types. This makes the workplace more efficient, welcoming, and respectful for everyone. In conclusion, the Janitor Jill Cleaning Quest project not only improves the language skills of the cleaning staff but also shows how language learning can break down barriers, improve professional skills, and recognise the important contributions of all members of the academic community.

Appendix A: Semi-structured interview

Lacks

Do you face difficulties in English? If yes, could you share experiences where you encountered difficulties in English?

What are the causes of your difficulties in English? Are there specific factors contributing to these difficulties?

Which aspect do you find most challenging in using English? Is it pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, or speaking skills that are the main focus?

Wants

In your job, what speaking skills do you think you and your coworkers could get better at to communicate more effectively?

Can you talk about any times at work when you felt it would be helpful to speak English better? Like when you're giving instructions, asking for help, or telling about problems?

How do you like to practice speaking English? Do you prefer practicing with others, like pretending to be in different situations, talking in a group, or talking one-on-one? Or do you like doing quizzes online to get better?

Necessities

In your job, where do you mostly talk in English? Like when you talk to students from other countries, talk to bosses about the building, or deal with urgent situations?

Can you tell me more about the usual talks you have or things you need to explain in English for your job?

Thinking about your job at the international university, what English skills do you think are really important? Like saying words right, knowing the right words, getting grammar right, or speaking smoothly?

Appendix B: International Competition Certificates

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