

DIXIT: A CASE STUDY ON IMPROVING GROUP COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study shows the advantages of playing a board game in improving group communication. Dixit was expected to enhance and develop a participant - observant type of group communication. It reinforces positive characteristics that help the group reach its goal in playing the game. It helps improve group communication by allowing all the players take turns to be leaders. Using video recorder, the whole game was recorded. The study examined four characteristics which define an effective group communication - participating, observing, evaluating, and adapting. Results show that most of the participants improved in group communication while playing Dixit and they developed positive traits by following the rules and enjoying the game. Dixit is recommended as a tool to enhance group communication in a target group but some limitations would be considered: players should be literate, tool is relatively expensive, and it must be played in a safe and controlled area.

Keywords: Dixit, group communication, micro-culture, coffee shop, passive-observant

1. Introduction

Teaching language to various groups is considered important; as we all know language is universal. It is needed in our lives, in our basic necessities as vehicle of our mind and culture. For us to be understood by others, we must learn how to speak, act, or even write, thus everyone must learn the basic of the trade. As part of language, it is inevitable to tackle the study of communication. Language is considered as the tool on one hand and on the other, communication is the process. Centuries have passed, scholars from different eras introduced theories of communication - from Aristotle Model (Barnes, 1984) up to Berlo's SMCRE (Source, Message, Channel, Receiver, Effect), 1960. These models explain the nature of communication and possible hindrances to having an effective one. To make communication effective and to explain efficiently the whole process of communication, it is essential to identify critical points of the process where it may affect the completeness of communication.

Group communication as a type of communication is focused on multiple individuals with common goal and the reason why they are formed. The basic structure is at least three members to form a small group regardless of function and goals. These groups exist in different industries or institutes e.g. classroom, offices, organization, etc. The common denominator among them is they have specific goals. This study focuses on group communication and with the use of specific a tool, it is expected that it will improve the aspects of communication, due to the elements it offers. This tool is called board game – specifically, DIXIT.

The main goal of achieving an effective group communication is having a participant - observer perspective amongst the members of the group (Adams, Brilhar, and Galanes, 2004). This type of perspective must have the key active elements: participation, observation, evaluation, and adaptation which expectedly can be achieved by the rules and characteristics of Dixit.

The elements of the game will be discussed further in this study but recently there are publications and articles on how board games help improve skills of specific/target group and some of the examples are improving grammar, tool to foster specific class of special children, and even in

the local scene, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduces the use of board game as learning tool for elementary and secondary education. In connection with the study, it focused on the effects of DIXIT to a specific group which are the customers of Koffee and Dize Cafe in Pacita Complex, San Pedro, Laguna, Philippines.

1.1 Overview of Dixit

Using imagery in public speaking is an effective way of conveying ideas. Using visual as one of the senses to persuade is vital in group communication. Dixit mechanics mainly deal with imagery. The board game itself was awarded as board game of the year by Spiehl Des Jahres in 2010. The award-giving body is known for juries that shared experiences while playing analog board games and focusing on cultural assets of the game that is best suited to the community.

Dixit requires at least three players to play and up to six players. The participants can be classified as a small group. The main objective of the game is to select the best description of the card that will give them maximum points.

One of the mechanics of Dixit that will induce group communication is cycling of active player. Active player is the one who is responsible for giving the description. Since everyone needs to score and will compete for 30 points, each participant is required to be the active player up until the game ends.

1.2 KaDz Cafe and Micro-culture

Koffee and Dize was established on the 18th of March 2017. Currently, business is located at #4 Waling Waling Street Phase 6A1 Pacita Complex, San Pedro, Laguna, Philippines. The main theme of the cafe is providing leisure and entertainment by playing board games. The collection of board games is vast and can cater to beginner and advanced players. At present, the cafe has been one of the places where people meet and communicate with each other. Coffee shops differ in themes and services they offer. For example, Dunkin Donuts offers fast and quick service for people that are always on the go. Board game cafes allow customers to stay longer due to game sessions and activities. Starbucks caters to both, even though it does not offer leisure games, the ambience of the coffee shop makes people stay longer. It is logical to assume that there are micro-cultures present in coffee shops. Customers' interactions are affected by what kind of services or themes a coffee shop offers (Malcolm, 2012). KaDz café's regular customers are high school students from different schools around Pacita Complex, young professionals, hobbyists, and individuals who want to try board games. These sets of customers create micro-cultures. Customers perform and represents their values, ideas, and attitudes (Ehninger, Gronbeck, McKerrow, and Monroe, 1986) by playing board games or by just having a cup of coffee. The interaction happening inside the cafe is an enactment based on the rules created by board games or unconsciously by the customers of the cafe.

1.3 Group Communication

Understanding group communication for this study is critical as it mainly deals with the effects of Dixit in group communication and proving that it is beneficial. Forming a group as defined by communication scholars relies on the reasons or needs of a specific situation. Identifying these needs would be the next step on which the study will focus into. First, group is formed due to interpersonal attraction (Rothwell, 2001). The similarities in cultural background tend to create attraction among the members of respective groups. The commonality of experiences and

background creates a group. Second is attraction to group activities or knowing the group's function. It is possible that the goal of a specific group is not that attractive but what it does is. One great example is the services offered by the cafe, as the main goal of each group of customers might vary, but the idea of fun in playing games is likely positive to most of them.

Lastly, the development of group communication inside the cafe must be seen. From the formation phase, where they will work as a group and find commonality in the activity they are bound to participate - playing Dixit. Every member will have his/her specific roles and goals towards the end of the game, thus making them undergo the second phase of the process - production phase. Under this phase, the members of the group will be efficient for each role given to them by the mechanics of the game.

2. Scope and Limitation

The study was limited geographically inside Kadz Cafe in San Pedro, Laguna, Philippines. The customers came from the nearest town and city (Sta. Rosa, Binan, Muntinlupa). Since literacy is a requirement in playing Dixit, players must have a good grasp of basic writing and reading. For social status, most of the customers are from low middle class up to higher middle class, with youngest age of 16 years old.

3. Methodology

The study involved players, 14 - 56 years old, 16 females and 10 males. Eighteen of them are young professionals, three were senior high school students, and five parents. Using video recorder in an iPad, the whole game was recorded until the game ends. The participants of the study are the customers of KaDz Cafe during its operating hours. The cafe operates from 3:00 PM up until 12:00 Midnight on Monday to Thursday. During Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the operation is longer – 2:00 PM up until 1:00 AM. This is due to the behavior of customers around Pacita Complex. It usually starts in the afternoon as most of the customers are coming from work or school. The process of accepting guests in the cafe starts on the time they reach the area. Majority of the guests come in groups consisting of at least 3 individuals and can go as high of 12 members. The location is inside the Pacita Complex which is considered as one of the biggest subdivisions in the city of San Pedro. The means of travel is via private car, tricycle, and van. It depends on where they will be coming from. The dining area consists of 3 Japanese style tables, 2 long tables for large groups, and 2 heptagon shaped tables designed for heavy gamers. After guests secure their respective places, the employee assigned to dining area will get the orders from the customers and will inform the kitchen. Guests will wait for their respective orders and this is the part where the game master will recommend one board game from a vast collection of the owners. The guests can get board games that can be appealing to them, or they have already played. But generally, the recommendation of the game master will be followed by the customers. For the duration of the research, the game master was instructed to recommend Dixit as featured game of the month. The rules and set up of the game will be followed and facilitated by the assigned game master:

3.1 Contents of Dixit

One scoreboard

84 cards

36 voting tokens in 6 different colors, numbered 1 to 6

6 game pieces in 6 different colors

3.2 Game Set Up

Each player chooses a game piece and places it on the starting space of the scoreboard. The full deck of cards is shuffled and 6 are dealt to each player. The remaining cards form the draw pile.

- With 4 players, each player takes 4 voting tokens (numbered 1 to 4)
- With 5 players, each player takes 5 voting tokens (numbered 1 to 5)
- With 6 players, each player takes 6 voting tokens (numbered 1 to 6)

It is important that cards should not be seen by the other players.

3.3 Turns of the Game

1. The active player's role

One of the players is the active player for the current game turn. That player examines the 6 cards on hand. Based on one card, he/she thinks up a clue and says it out loud (without revealing the card to the other players). The clue can take many different forms: it can be made up of one or more words or can even be a sound or group of sounds that represent the clue. It can be invented on the spot or it can take the form of already existing works (a part of a poem or song, a movie title, a proverb, etc...).

Choosing the first active player: The first player to create a clue for a card in his/her hand announces to the other players that he/she will be the first active player of the game.

2. The Role of the Other Players

The other players choose from among their 6 cards the one which seems to best illustrate the clue given by the active player. The selected cards are handed to the active player, without being shown to the other players.

3. Revealing the Cards

The active player shuffles the cards handed in together with his/her own. The cards are randomly revealed on the numbered spaces of the scoreboard.

4. Voting and Attempting to Identify the Active Player's Card

The goal of the players is to find the active player's card from among those revealed. Each player votes in secret for the card he/she thinks is the active player's (who doesn't get to vote). To vote, each player (other than the active player) places face-down in front of themselves their voting token showing the number of the location that the player believes contains the active player's card. Important: under no circumstances can a player vote for their own card.

5. Revealing the Votes

Once everyone has voted, each player's voting tokens are turned face-up and placed on the cards they designate. The active player then reveals which card was his/hers.

6. Scoring

If all players find the active player's card:

- Active player: 0 points
- Other players: 2 points

If no players find the active player's card:

- Active player: 0 point
- Other players: 2 points (+1 bonus point per vote for his/her card)

If at least one player, but not all players have found the active player's card:

- Active player: 3 points
- Players who have found the card: 3 points (+1 bonus point per vote for his/her card)

7. Advancing Along the Scoreboard

Each player moves their game piece on the scoreboard as many spaces as points earned.

Important: An overview of the scoring rules is on the scoreboard.

8. End of Turn

The cards that have been used are discarded. Each player draws a new card from the draw pile to refill their hand up to 6 cards. The new active player is the one to the left of the last active player. A new turn then starts.

3.4 End of the Game

The game ends when one of the players has reached 30 points or when the last card of the draw pile is drawn. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

3.5 Changes for 3 Players

- The players have 7 cards in their hand instead of 6.
- Each player takes 5 voting tokens numbered 1 to 5.
- Once the active player has created their clue, the other 2 players hand him/her 2 cards (instead of the usual 1) from their hand that could correspond to the clue. Thus, 5 cards are revealed.
- The voting and scoring rules do not change. At the end of the turn all of the players refill their hand back up to 7 cards.

4. Empirical and Qualitative methodology

Before the game started, members were advised that the whole process will be recorded. Using Ipad, the game was recorded from teaching of the rules, setting up the game, play time, up to end game. The characteristics of effective group communication such as participation, observation, evaluation, and adaptation are identified during the game:

Group Evaluation	Yes	No
Participating		
Observing		
Evaluating		
Adapting		

The duration of the game was included; date and time the group visited the cafe. Individual evaluation was applied with same qualities stated above, but the score on the game was added.

Individual (color)	Yes	No	Score
Participating			
Observing			
Evaluating			
Adapting			

Group number (respective to the first group recorded on video), time started, and time the game was completed was identified. The demographic information include age, gender, school (if they are studying), company (if they are working), and occupation.

5. Results and Discussions

Group #1

Number of Players: 5

Gender: Four Females, One Male

Age Range: 50 - 60

Duration of Teaching the Rules: 7 minutes

Duration of Game: 43:35



Illustration 1.1

Group #1 Playing Dixit

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation
1	Mid	High	Mid	Low
2	Mid	High	Mid	Low
3	High	High	High	Mid
4	High	High	High	Mid
5	High	High	High	Mid
6	High	High	High	High
7	High	High	High	High
8	High	High	High	High
9	High	High	High	High

Player Yellow

Gender: Female

Age: Early 50's

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1(active)	High	Mid	Low	Mid	0
2	High	High	Mid	Low	3
3	High	High	High	Mid	7
4	High	High	High	Mid	10
5	High	High	High	High	12
6 (active)	High	High	High	High	15
7	High	High	High	High	17
8	High	High	High	High	21
9	High	High	High	High	24

Player White
 Gender: Female
 Age: Early 60s

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Low	2
2(Active)	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	5
3	High	High	High	Mid	9
4	High	High	High	High	12
5	High	High	High	High	14
6	High	High	High	High	14
7 (Active)	High	High	High	High	14
8	High	High	High	High	18
9	High	High	High	High	21

Player Blue
 Gender: Male
 Age: Late 50s

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Low	Low	0
2	High	Mid	Mid	Low	0
3 (Active)	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
4	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
5	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	5
6	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	5
7	High	High	Mid	Mid	7
8 (Active)	High	High	High	High	7
9	High	High	High	High	7

Player Pink
 Gender: Female
 Age: Late 40s

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Low	Low	2
2	High	Mid	Mid	Low	5
3	High	High	Mid	Mid	5
4	High	High	Mid	Mid	9
5 (active)	High	High	High	High	9
6	High	High	High	High	13
7	High	High	High	High	15
8	High	High	High	High	17

9	High	High	High	High	20
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Player Green
Gender: Female
Age: Early 60s

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Low	Low	2
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	6
3	High	High	High	Mid	6
4 (Active)	High	High	High	High	9
5	High	High	High	High	11
6	High	High	High	High	13
7	High	High	High	High	15
8	High	High	High	High	17
9 (Active)	High	High	High	High	20

Group #2

Number of Players: 4

Gender: Three Females, One Male

Age Range: 15-34

Duration of Teaching the Rules: 5 minutes

Duration of Games: 31:50

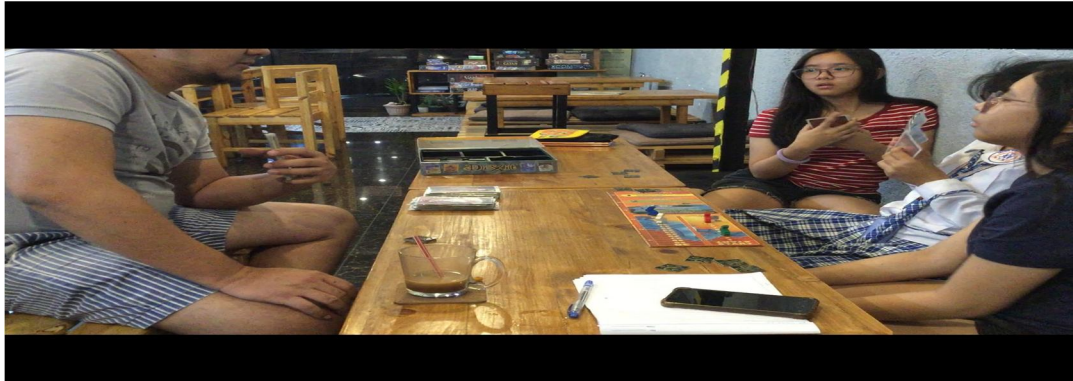


Illustration 1.2

Group #2

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
3	High	High	High	Mid
4	High	High	High	Mid
5	High	High	High	Mid
6	High	High	High	High
7	High	High	High	High
8	High	High	High	High
9	High	High	High	High

Player White

Gender: Male

Age: 30+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1 (active)	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
2	High	High	High	Mid	8
3	High	High	High	High	12
4	High	High	High	High	16
5 (active)	High	High	High	High	19
6	High	High	High	High	22
7	High	High	High	High	24
8	High	High	High	High	28
9 (active)	High	High	High	High	30

Player Green
 Gender: Female
 Age: 15+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
2 (Active)	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
3	High	High	High	High	3
4	High	High	High	High	3
5	High	High	High	High	3
6 (Active)	High	High	High	High	3
7	High	High	High	High	4
8	High	High	High	High	7
9	High	High	High	High	10

Player Red
 Gender: Female
 Age: 15+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	3
3 (Active)	High	High	High	High	3
4	High	High	High	High	4
5	High	High	High	High	7
6	High	High	High	High	10
7 (Active)	High	High	High	High	12
8	High	High	High	High	12
9	High	High	High	High	15

Player Blue
 Gender: Female
 Age: 15+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	4
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	4
3	High	High	High	Mid	7
4 (Active)	High	High	High	High	10
5	High	High	High	High	11
6	High	High	High	High	14
7	High	High	High	High	18
8 (Active)	High	High	High	High	18
9	High	High	High	High	18

Group #3

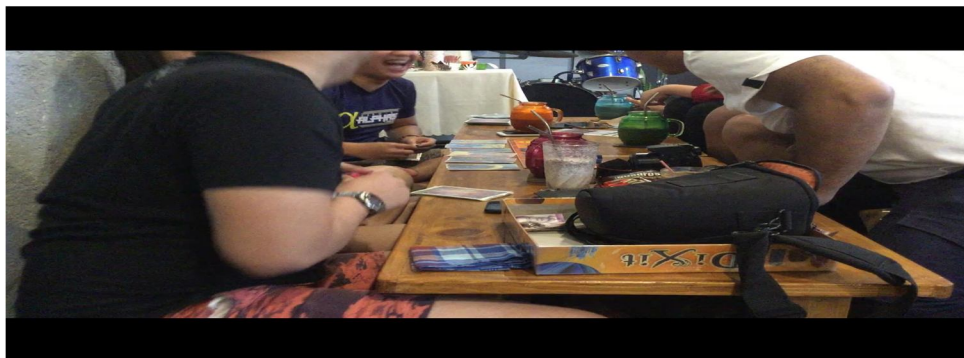
Number of Players: 6

Gender: Two Female, Four Male

Age Range: 20 - 25

Duration of Teaching the Rules: 10 minutes

Duration of Games: 44:46

*Illustration 1.3**Group #3*

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation
1	High	Mid	Mid	Low
2	High	Mid	Mid	Low
3	High	High	Mid	Low
4	High	High	High	Mid
5	High	High	High	Mid
6	High	High	High	High
7	High	High	High	High
8	High	High	High	High
9	High	High	High	High

Group #4

Number of Players: 6

Gender: Four Females, Two Male

Age Range: 18 - 25

Duration of Teaching the Rules: 7 minutes

Duration of Games: 43:56



Illustration 1.4
Group #4

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid
3	High	High	Mid	Mid
4	High	High	High	Mid
5	High	High	High	Mid
6	High	High	High	High
7	High	High	High	High
8	High	High	High	High
9	High	High	High	High

Player Pink

Gender: Male

Age: 20+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1 Active	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	0
2	High	High	High	Mid	3
3	High	High	High	Mid	4
4	High	High	High	High	4
5	High	High	High	High	6
6	High	High	High	High	10
7 Active	High	High	High	High	15
8	High	High	High	High	15
9	High	High	High	High	16

Player Yellow
 Gender: Female
 Age: 23+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Low	2
2 Active	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
3	High	High	High	Mid	5
4	High	High	High	High	5
5	High	High	High	High	7
6	High	High	High	High	7
7	High	High	High	High	7
8 Active	High	High	High	High	10
9	High	High	High	High	11

Player Blue
 Gender: Female
 Age: 23+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
3 Active	High	High	High	Mid	2
4	High	High	High	High	5
5	High	High	High	High	8
6	High	High	High	High	12
7	High	High	High	High	17
8	High	High	High	High	18
9 Active	High	High	High	High	18

Player Green
 Gender: Female
 Age: 20+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	High	Mid	Mid	2
2	High	High	Mid	Mid	5
3	High	High	High	High	10
4 Active	High	High	High	High	13
5	High	High	High	High	15

6	High	High	High	High	17
7	High	High	High	High	23
8	High	High	High	High	26
9	High	High	High	High	29

Player Red
 Gender: Female
 Age: 25+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	5
3	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	6
4	High	High	High	Mid	8
5 Active	High	High	High	High	8
6	High	High	High	High	9
7	High	High	High	High	9
8	High	High	High	High	12
9	High	High	High	High	15

Player White
 Gender: Male
 Age: 25+

Turn Number	Participation	Observation	Evaluation	Adaptation	Score
1	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
2	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
3	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	2
4	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	5
5 Active	High	High	High	High	7
6	High	High	High	High	10
7	High	High	High	High	13
8	High	High	High	High	16
9	High	High	High	High	16

Every group has a different set of players with wide range of age. The cafe caters to anyone, without age limit, as long as the customers are willing to learn new games inside the cafe.

Using four descriptive characteristics of effective group communication (passive - observant type), the groups only differ in duration of teaching, game itself, and members. It is observed that the greater the number of players, the longer the game will be.

Teaching the game is quite simple. The mechanics are easy to follow. But the common problem or source of confusion is the scoring system. The group needs assistance from game master to clarify rules in scoring. But for group communication, everyone can be seen participating as the game starts. Since Dixit offers imagery, randomness in card makes them think of applying the scoring of the game. Competitiveness of every player promotes observation, evaluation, and adaptation of the game. It can be seen that at every turn, each player improves their game and scores. It is a clear indicator of adapting to the rules and mechanics of the game.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite differences in age and gender, the participants show improvement in group communication during the game. Thus, we conclude, that playing Dixit can a.) Improve group communication, b.) Make the process as natural and fun, and c.) Regardless of age and gender, Dixit can optimize the relationship and dynamics of group communication.

The micro-culture inside the cafe is also evident in every group that participated in the study. Group #1 is church goers, adults who needs to relax while playing board games and drink coffee at the same time. Group #2 is a dad with twin daughters taking a break from work. The other member relationship is classmate of the twins from senior high. Group #3 is college students who are graduating in the current semester from their schools and decided to meet at the cafe. Group #4 is relatives of the owner of the cafe who regularly pays a visit to the place.

Each group shows unique conversations and topics. Behind the game are small talks and conversations. But the group recognizes the goal in a specific period of time, by accomplishing the game and strengthening the relationships among the members of the group.

Group communication skills as one of the many skills, can be acquired by playing modern board games. As there are too many titles available in the market, each title can offer new experiences and skills needed to play the game. The main goal of playing board game is more on leisure and entertainment, but with deeper appreciation and further studies, it can be considered as supplementary or main tool in promoting specific skills in communication, management, and others.

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