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INSTRUCTIONAL FEEDBACK ANALYSIS OF AN ONLINE VIRTUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING PLATFORM THROUGH EZ-ARABIC AMONG MALAYSIAN TEACHERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The use of online educational courseware serves as an important teaching and learning aid among digital generation. It is increasingly becoming the focus of researchers in designing and developing new and up-to-date educational aids that cater to the learning needs of 21st century learners as well as keeping in-line with the transformation of latest technologies. This paper aims to analyze instructional feedback of an online virtual language learning platform through EZ-Arabic among Malaysian teachers of primary schools. It is a virtual Arabic virtual learning platform which is specifically designed for primary school's learners in Malaysia. The respondents were purposively selected from 118 primary school teachers by using an adapted survey related to this study via an online virtual learning platform from 11 Jun until 22 October 2016. This interactive Arabic virtual learning tool prototype enables teachers and students access to additional Arabic language learning aids that complement traditional learning methods. It facilitates Arabic learning enhancement through a compendium and a variety of open-sources of learning tools such as e-book of Arabic text books, educational games, audio-video learning aids, online translator, online chat-box for discussion, link of Arabic keyboard for typing purpose, and links of various websites in learning Arabic for children. General findings indicate that teachers show a very good preference of using virtual language learning platform in teaching Arabic by using computer programmes with mixed competency levels and usages of ICT skills. Moreover, the respondents show promising expectation in using mobile learning. The implication of this study is to help educational stakeholders to better understand issues related to teaching and learning implementation of e-learning in their institutions.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes in the related literature of virtual learning practices in teaching and learning among educators, as it concludes the strengths and weaknesses of current situation, and what has to be done in improving the shortcomings especially among Malaysian primary school teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of virtual learning environment (VLE) as a learning support aid is an essential instructional technology in this new era of 21st century teaching and learning. It has been widely used in various educational schools and higher learning institutions as well as universities all over the world. The platform is used either in an

online synchronous or asynchronous mode due to the learning objectives and VLE's platform characteristics. A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) - sometimes known as a Learning Management System (LMS) and it is an online classroom; a digital space where employers or education providers can host e-learning courses that they'd like their staff or students to complete (Bateman, 2012). The Frog Virtual learning environment (VLE) is a cloud-based learning environment that emulates the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. It not only supports e-learning activities such as presenting information, managing course materials, and running assessments but it also provides a rich media environment with numerous graphics, video, animation, sound, and hyperlinks (Berns et al., 2013). In Malaysia, twenty-five initiatives have been identified under the first wave of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025). One of them includes providing 1BestariNet and software for schools. 1BestariNet is a project led by the Ministry of Education (2013) to provide access to a cloud based Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) known as the FROG VLE (adopted from the United Kingdom) and high-speed connectivity by June 2014 to all the 10,000 fully-aided government schools (Cheok et al., 2017).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Malaysia, FROG VLE is a learning management system which the Malaysian government has adopted for all its 10,000 government aided schools nationwide. This ambitious programme which connects all the schools within a single online platform though has caused the country a substantial amount of money, but has not been reciprocated with the same amount of enthusiasm by its teachers (Cheok and Wong, 2016). In addition, the digitization of textbook in Malaysian schools has been among the national agenda in enabling teaching and learning through a virtual learning environment (VLE) platform (The Star, 2014). This e-learning platform is given to the Malaysian teachers' access in 2013 as an online learning space. However, initial evidence has shown poor adoption of the e-learning whereby more than half of the teachers do not find the FROG VLE easy to use, and others found it not useful in their subjects taught. This shows that the potential of FROG VLE potential has not been sufficiently made known to the teachers and there was no follow-up to the one-day exposure training (Cheok et al., 2017). In another study, a finding from the correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant correlation between the teachers' basic knowledge of ICT and the Frog VLE course attended (Kaur and Hussein, 2014).

Hence, this paper aims to analyze instructional feedback of another online virtual language learning platform which is different from VLE Frog known as EZ-Arabic. The study was conducted among 118 respondents of educators who participated in an online virtual learning platform via Google Form organised by Faculty of Languages and Communication, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) from 11 Jun until 22 October 2018. The design and development of this VLE platform are initially modeled on the methods and approaches of design and development research by Richey and Klein (2007) or formerly known as developmental research (Richey et al., 2004). This prototype is designed and developed based on adapted 'design principles' adapted from a study of an online Arabic vocabulary learning games prototype (Sabri, 2011) by adapting instructional design model of rapid prototyping by Tripp and Bichelmeyer (1990). The design, development and qualitative evaluation of this VLE platform known as EZ Arabic is explained by Sabri (2011) and Firdaus et al. (2015). In addition, the EZ-Arabic is initially designed as a virtual learning platform and a tool for learning Arabic especially for children learners of Standard 1 to Standard 6 from Malaysian primary schools. It is proposed as an alternative supplementing reference for the traditional textbook as initiated by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in its workshop in transforming the hard copy textbook into digital versions (Azman, 2012).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

This paper aims to explore the objectives and questions as shown below:
1. What is pedagogical feedback of an online virtual language learning platform through EZ-Arabic among Malaysian teachers of secondary schools?

2. What are teacher's preference of using virtual language learning platform in teaching Arabic?

3. What are teacher's suggestions of using virtual language learning platform among learners of primary school in learning Arabic?

4. METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to analyze instructional feedback of an online virtual language learning platform through EZ-Arabic among Malaysian teachers of primary schools. It is a virtual Arabic learning platform which is specifically designed for primary school's learners in Malaysia. The study was conducted among 118 respondents of educators who participated in an online virtual learning platform organised by Faculty of Languages and Communication, University of Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) from 11 Jun until 22 October 2018. This adapted survey (Ismail *et al.*, 2012; Eltayeb and Hegazi, 2014) is using 5 Likert Scale from SD (strongly disagree) to SA (strongly agree) to answer RQ 1: pedagogical feedback of an online virtual language learning platform through EZ-Arabic (Table 8. and 9.), teacher's preference of using virtual language learning platform in teaching Arabic (Table 10., 11. and 12.) and teacher's suggestions (Table 13.).

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results and findings of this study are tabulated as shown below:

A) Demography
i) Gender

Table-1. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	33
Female	79	67

Source: Survey Results of this Study

ii) Age

Table-2. Age Category

Category of Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 − 30	49	42
31 − 40	65	55
41 - 50	4	3
51 − 60	0	0

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 1. shows that the majority of respondents are female (67%), while the rests are male (33%). In addition, Table 2. shows the age category among respondents from 20 − 30 (42%), 31 − 40 (55%) and 41 − 50 (3%). It indicates that the majority of respondents are in range of ages between 20 to 40 which can be considered as youth.

iii) Occupation

Table-3. Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school teacher	115	97
Secondary school teacher	1	1
University student	1	1
Other	1	1

Source: Survey Results of this Study

iv) Teaching Experience

Table-4. Teaching Experience

Category	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 5 years	73	62
6 – 10 years	38	32
11 -15 years	6	5
16 – 20 years	0	0
21- 25 years	0	0
26 – 30 years	0	0
No experience	1	1

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 3. shows that big majority of respondents who participated in this survey are primary school teachers (97%), while there were also others parties took part in this online survey. Based on Table 4., most of respondents are having teaching experience between 1 to 10 years (94%), and only 5% of them have 11-15 years of teaching experience.

v) Teaching Expertise

Table-5. Teaching Expertise

Category of Age	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic Language	96	81
Islamic Studies	19	16
Others	2	1
No experience	1	1

Source: Survey Results of this Study

v) Educational Qualifications

Table-6. Educational Qualifications

Category	Frequency	Percentage
PhD	0	0
Master	7	6
Bachelor	102	86
Diploma	9	8

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 5 shows that most of respondents have teaching expertise in Arabic language (81%) and Islamic studies (16%), while others have no related background to this survey. Based on Table 6, most of respondents have various educational qualifications of Masters (6%), Bachelor (86%) and Diploma (8%). This shows that majority of them has higher educational background and experience.

Table 7. shows that majority of teachers are coming from the state of Johor (25%), followed by Sarawak (14%), Sabah (13%) and Selangor (11%). Others states such as Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur/Putrajaya, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang and Terengganu are indicating similar percentage between 2% to 7% only.

vi) Location of Schools

Table-7. Location of Schools based on states

States	Frequency	Percentage
Johor	30	25%
Kedah	8	7%
Kelantan	6	5%
Kuala Lumpur / Putrajaya	5	4%
Melaka	5	4%
Negeri Sembilan	2	2%
Pahang	2	2%
Perak	2	2%
Perlis	3	3%
Pulau Pinang	4	3%
Sabah	15	13%
Sarawak	17	14%
Selangor	13	11%
Terengganu	6	5%

Source: Survey Results of this Study

B) Survey on Competency Level in Using ICT

Table-8. Competency Level in Using ICT

Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
I'm good at using Microsoft Word.	0	0	0	48 (40.7%)	53 (44.9%)
I'm good at using Microsoft Power Point.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	26 (22%)	56 (47.5%)	34 (28.8%)
I'm good at using Microsoft Power Excel.	0	0	44 (37.3%)	47 (39.8%)	0
I'm good at using software to create video.	11 (9.3%)	20 (16.9%)	57 (48.3%)	25 (21.2%)	5 (4.2%)
I'm good at using software to create flash files.	16 (13.6%)	35 (29.7%)	54 (45.8%)	10 (8.5%)	3 (2.5%)
I can develop my own website.	31 (26.3%)	44 (37.3%)	29 (24.6%)	10 (8.5%)	4 (3.4%)
I'm not using Microsoft Office application.	78 (66.1%)	19 (16.1%)	16 (13.6%)	4 (3.4%)	1 (0.8%)

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 8. shows most of respondents have good and competency level in using MS Word, MS PowerPoint and MS Excel between 39.8% to 85.6%. While big numbers of them have low competency in advanced ICT skills such as creating video, flash files and developing website. However, majority of them is familiar in using Microsoft Office application (82.7%).

C) Frequency Level of Using Multimedia in Teaching and Learning

Table-9. Frequency Level of Using Multimedia in Teaching and Learning

Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
I'm searching for instructional materials in Arabic from Internet.	3 (2.6%)	3 (2.6%)	40 (34.2%)	41 (35%)	30 (25.6%)
I'm using for instructional materials in Arabic from the websites.	14 (11.9%)	12 (10.2%)	48 (40.7%)	35 (29.7%)	9 (7.6%)
I find it is easy to get instructional materials in Arabic from the websites	14 (12%)	15 (12.8%)	49 (41.9%)	26 (22.2%)	13 (11.1%)
I'm using school facilities in teaching by using multimedia in teaching and learning process.	3 (2.5%)	10 (8.5%)	63 (53.4%)	26 (22%)	16 (13.6%)

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 9. shows that majority of respondents are searching for instructional materials in Arabic from Internet (71 respondents), but less number of them is using for instructional materials in Arabic from the websites (44 respondents). In addition, only 33.3% of them find it is easy to get instructional materials in Arabic from the websites and 35.6% of respondents are using school facilities in teaching by using multimedia in teaching and learning process. This may be the indicator that the teachers have good preference in using instructional materials in Arabic from Internet, but they need extra training and exposure for using online materials in teaching Arabic.

D) Electronic Teaching and Learning (E-T&L)

Table-10. Electronic Teaching and Learning (E-T&L)

Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
I like to use computer programme that has instructional icon/animation/avatar.	0	0	0	52 (44.1%)	34 (28.8%)
I like to use computer programme that show practical application in real life.	3 (2.6%)	1 (0.9%)	18 (15.4%)	64 (54.7%)	31 (26.5%)
I like to use computer programme that allow me to complete the task within unlimited time.	0	0	24 (20.3%)	50 (42.4%)	39 (33.1%)
I like to use computer programme that has motivational words for learning.	1 (0.9%)	5 (4.3%)	14 (12.1%)	49 (42.2%)	47 (40.5%)
I like to use computer programme that has chatting room and email for sharing information.	1 (0.9%)	9 (7.6%)	16 (13.6%)	50 (42.4%)	42 (35.6%)

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 10. shows that most of the teachers have the preference of using virtual language learning platform in teaching Arabic in using computer programmes with various features such as instructional icon/animation/avatar (100%), showing practical application in real life (95 respondents – 81.2%), unlimited time to complete the task (89 respondents – 75.5%), motivational words for learning (96 respondents – 82.7%) and chatting room and email for sharing information (92 respondents – 78%). This results show that the teachers are having very good preference of using virtual language learning platform in teaching Arabic by using computer.

E) Interface Design and Interactivity

Table-11. Interface Design and Interactivity

Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
I like to use computer programme that harmonious background and colours.	2 (1.7%)	7 (5.9%)	24 (20.3%)	36 (30.5%)	49 (41.5%)
I like to use computer programme that has bright colours of background.	10 (8.5%)	14 (11.9%)	36 (30.5%)	43 (36.4%)	15 (12.7%)
I like to use computer programme that has dark colours of background.	24 (20.3%)	26 (22%)	49 (41.5%)	11 (11.3%)	8 (6.8%)
I like to use computer programme that has simple and clear words.	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	9 (7.6%)	33 (28%)	72 (61%)
I like to use computer programme with audio explanation in describing a concept.	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	11 (9.3%)	39 (33.1%)	64 (54.2%)
I like to use computer programme that provide direct note taking in the device.	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.4%)	13 (11.2%)	52 (44.8%)	46 (39.7%)
I like to use computer programme which provide me more time to learn a lesson.	0	4 (3.4%)	13 (11.2%)	50 (42.4%)	51 (43.2%)
I like to use computer programme that does not force me to answer all questions.	0	5 (4.2%)	22 (18.6%)	52 (44.1%)	39 (33.1%)
I like to use computer programme that has previous lesson taught.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.6%)	13 (11.1%)	47 (40.2%)	54 (46.2%)
I like to use computer programme that lessons in structured module and sequence.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	8 (6.8%)	44 (37.3%)	64 (54.2%)

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 11. shows the preference of interface design and interactivity of computer programme used by respondents such as background and colours, simple and clear instructions, audio support in describing a lesson, direct note taking availability, flexible and free learning time, prior lesson support and structured module and lesson. Most of respondents are preferring background and colours and rejecting dark background and colours in a computer programme. Other results are similar in terms of simple and clear instructions (89%), audio support in describing a lesson (87.3%). direct note taking availability (84.5%), flexible and free learning time (85.6%), prior lesson support (86.4%) and structured module and lesson (91.5%).

F) Mobile Learning

Table-12. Mobile Learning

Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Mobile learning is important.	0	0	0	46 (39%)	62 (52.5%)
Instructional materials should be placed in mobile learning.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	8 (6.8%)	50 (42.4%)	57 (48.3%)
Instructional materials should be placed in mobile form.	0	0	0	54 (45.8%)	56 (47.5%)

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 12. shows that there is a promising expectation in using mobile learning among respondents in using EZ Arabic. Majority of respondents agree that mobile learning is important (100%), and instructional materials should be placed in mobile learning (90.7%).

G) Other comments and suggestions

Table-13. Other comments and suggestions

Theme	Sub-Theme and Details
a) Instructional support	• Clear instruction • Audio support • Special support for disabilities • More songs and animations
b) Additional learning materials	• E-dictionary • Audio instruction in Arabic • Include more learning materials • Interactive notes in Arabic grammars • Include extra downloadable exercises
c) Integration of various multimedia platforms	• Using Youtube, Powtoon, Facebook etc. • Integration with VLE Frog platform

Source: Survey Results of this Study

Table 13. shows other comments and suggestions by the respondents in terms of teacher's suggestions of using virtual language learning platform among learners of primary school in learning Arabic. In general, the teachers are suggesting extra and various features for upgrading the VLE learning platform of EZ Arabic.

6. DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.1. Competency in Using ICT in Teaching and Learning Process

The majority respondents of primary school teachers have various levels of competency in using ICT in teaching and learning process. However, they show high preferences towards using computer programmes for

educational purposes. The problem of low this competency ICT skill can be solved by conducting extra training and exposure for using online materials in teaching Arabic.

6.2. Affected Factors of Using ICT in Teaching and Learning Process

There are various affected factors of using ICT in teaching and learning process. The factors can be concluded into teachers' preference, their ICT skills and features of computer programmes. It can be understood that in order to improve the use of computer in teaching and learning process among teachers, the schools should motive them accordingly and then conducting proper and continuous training for teachers and also provide user friendly computer programme that is suitable for most of the teachers.

6.3. Potential Use of Mobile Learning

This study also shows a promising expectation in using mobile learning among teachers in although they have various levels of competency in using ICT in teaching and learning process. It can be an indicator to upgrade the VLE platform of EZ Arabic into mobile learning and application in the future. Hence, the use of mobile in learning will allow learners to study not only in the classroom but everywhere at any time they want to especially in collaborative learning outside classroom in the future (Normah *et al.*, 2017).

7. CONCLUSION

This paper presents an analyze of instructional feedback of an online virtual language learning platform through EZ-Arabic among Malaysian teachers of primary schools. The results and finding are significant for the teachers and schools to determine ICT policy, training and programmes for educational purposes in more effective way. The study also helps educational stakeholders to better understand issues related to teaching and learning implementation of e-learning in their institutions.

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