STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ARABIC ONLINE LEARNING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP IN IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The challenges in facing the Education 4.0 revolution demand various platforms to be utilized in teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning. To improve the proficiency of Arabic language; thus, Learning Management System (LMS) is used as a virtual learning platform in improving the proficiency of the Arabic language for students to acquire knowledge with the help of technology while honing their skills using various media. The most crucial part of the use of technology in regard to self-efficacy is the end-user perceptions by the perceived ease of use, usefulness, and satisfaction. Therefore, the importance of online learning of the Arabic language has prompted this study to investigate the relationship between students' perception of the Arabic language online learning and its improvement in communication skills. A set of quantitative questionnaires was constructed to acquire the data, and the data were analyzed descriptively to obtain the mean score. The result of this study showed that students had responded positively towards the use of online learning to learn Arabic in improving communication skills, with a moderate mean score of 3.48. This study encourages Arabic online learning as a supporting tool for teaching and learning as well as contributes to the increase in the interest of students to master Arabic communication skills.

Keyword: LMS, Arabic language, Perception, Communication Skill

I.0 INTRODUCTION

The trend of utilizing e-Learning is rather impressive, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Malaysia, online learning courses are provided for on-and off-campus students in higher education institutions. Based on a report (Shahzad et al., 2020), over the projected period of 2016-2023, the online education market is predicted to increase at a rate of 16.4% per year. Since universities in Malaysia employed their Learning Management System (LMS), educators and students are generally familiar with the services provided by LMS, namely study schedules, documentation, assessments, performance management (Cavus, A. et al., 2009), and restricted admission control for authorised people. It also has a wide range of learning content and offers diverse communication tools (Aldiab et al., 2019). Even so, other online platforms are undeniably useful to facilitate the stuents' learning process. The extensive use of online learning in universities in Malaysia has resulted in many studies being conducted in various aspects, including its acceptance factors, such as by (Yeop et al., 2019 & Ghavifekr, 2017), and satisfaction by (Al-Rahmi et al., 2015 & Al-Rahmi et al., 2018). Comprehending the situation, universities attempted to maximize the Arabic language online learning by encouraging lecturers and students to use online learning to improve the quality of knowledge delivery and acceptance, (Yahya et al., 2016) besides varying the teaching and learning methods more efficiently and effectively (Aminy, 2015). Thus, this study was conducted to acquire the perception of the students of the Arabic language course on online learning and its relationship in the improvement of communication skills among students.

2.0 THE USE OF 'ONLINE LEARNING' FOR ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

The profession of an educator is not easy as it seems. It is challenging, especially in the era of high technology demand. To achieve a quality product of education, Tanjung (2018) explained the quality of learning is when the teacher succeeds in indoctrinating strong-minded in the learning process that underlies the curriculum (official), which produces students who are highly independent that on what the teacher does in the classroom (actual). Therefore, an educator needs to be creative whether in attitude, desire to improvise, and implement various learning approaches or methods by which this attitude able to assist students to develop their through the power knowledge of the phenomenon and objectivity. Furthermore, he/she needs to continue practicing to be confident in thinking and performing while showing a good attitude and encourage students' interest and achievement (Tanjung, 2018). Besides, characteristics also play a vital role in the learning environment. Muhammad (2018) proposed that an educator must be friendly and accommodating, use appropriate and effective pedagogical methods in their teaching, apply the simplest teaching method and break down the Arabic language barriers among the students, and allow themselves to be seen by their students as counsellors, confidants, and most importantly, trustworthy.

Potential shortcomings of educational programs need to be characterized by a number of indicators to enable further improvement actions to be carried out when they are encountered. Among the performance improvements that educators training, involve are through planning, and mentoring (Yaumi et al., 2018). From the education technology perspective, performance management occurs when educational technology relates to the study and ethical practice of inventing, implementing, and managing appropriate technological processes

and resources to facilitate learning and improve performance (Yaumi, 2014). Thus, an assessment of the system should be carried out to determine the effect of its use as stressed by Khan (2017), an online learning assessment based on the e-learning framework, which includes its assessment, and the assessment of environmental learning to create a meaningful virtual learning environment.

Utilizing online learning to boost LMS for Arabic learning demands a lot of perception studies to be carried out. This statement is supported by Bervell & Umar (2017), who said that the system accessibility influences the LMS satisfaction; thus, influences the LMS usage. As a result, many surveys were conducted on the perception of students using online learning for Arabic language learning. Several factors affected the use of several teaching tools such as animation and various types of applications. For instance, the results of data analysis of surveys from a group of Arabic course students, Che Hat et al. (2013) found that students responded very positively in learning Arabic via animation. In fact, the study supports animation as an additional practical method for teaching Arabic as it engages students and emphasizes the vital skills in language acquisition, such as listening and speaking. Besides, the perception of students also influenced the use of several Arabic learning applications namely Quizlet.com (Yahya et al., 2016), E-BBQ (Hanafi et al., 2019) and Quizizz (Mei et al., 2018). These three studies had applied quantitative methods involving Arabic course students. The outcomes of the surveys showed that Ouizlet attracted students to master the e-BBQ Arabic vocabulary, application improved the reading ability, while the students were found more active and focused on topics when answering the provided questions using Quizizz, a game-based learning application. Quizizz was even considered as an online teaching method and assessment tool in the Arabic class.

Through the acquisition of student perspective, the implications of LMS pedagogy for Arabic language learning were actively carried out in several aspects, such as learning strategies through several studies, by Aziz et al. (2016), Tanjung (2018), Fithriyah et al. (2019), Supriyadi & Julia (2019), and Husain et al. (2017). In due course, deepening students' views based on their experiences using of online learning for Arabic learning through social studies is necessary so that online teaching methods and the effectiveness of the system can be improved from time to time besides maintaining a meaningful e-learning environment.

3.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Arabic language learning courses for academic institutions in Malaysia should not be limited to classroom learning only. Past studies substantiated that Arabic language proficiency through online learning is proven to be achievable in certain aspects of skills. The need to conduct a survey study of the online learning system through the students' perception is to improve the system as well as assist their learning process. Accordingly, students' achievement in Arabic language skills, especially in communication skills, can be expanded as emphasized by Fithrivah et al. (2019) that students face the challenges of globalization that require the adoption of the Arabic language as a teaching and learning medium with the adaptability of knowledge discipline.

In addition, the problem of language proficiency in learning Arabic concerns educators who demand survey studies to be conducted, such as the students' perception of Arabic course on reading skills (Salic, 2017) and communication skills (Ahmed & Ibrahim, 2019). It is due to poor mastery and lack of Arabic vocabulary namely inaccurate usage of vocabulary in communication, omit the vocabulary that should be used in the sentence structure, and unnecessary use of vocabulary in speech; thus, impacting student communication (Yaakub, Che at, & Pa., 2012). Furthermore, these issues put stress on the students where it caused them to feel depressed, scared, and angry in the case of mistakes during communication (Ashinida, 2012). It also causes a loss of motivation, and students feel difficult to learn this language (Mei et al., 2018).

Thus, in line with the development of technology and government encouragement, the facilities for language learning have become easier with the presence of various online learning platforms as learning tools. This situation supports the statement by (Yahya et al., 2016), which emphasized that the mastery of the Arabic language should be streamlined over time so that new students in the language field do not miss out. Concern on the factors of perception and skills, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between perception of online learning and its influence on communication skills among students.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research design applied in this study is a descriptive method or theory-based design (Jovancic, 2020), which is to investigate the perception of students on Arabic online learning and its relationship with the improvement of communication skills. This study was conducted at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, involving students from the Faculty of Major Language Studies. Approximately, sixty (60) students from all years of study were involved. Next, the data collection was conducted by employing the quantitative method. The data were acquired by utilizing a questionnaire instrument adopted from several previous studies related to students' perception of Arabic language courses on media learning (Che Hat et al., 2013), and communication skills (Yahya et al., 2016) and (Azizan et al., 2014). The form consists of three sections with a five-level of Likert Scale for each question to describe the respondents' level of consent to online learning of the Arabic language. The Likert Scale is detailed as "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Not Sure", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". The obtained data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, which included descriptive statistics namely mean, average, and percentage. Table 1 shows the interpretation of the range, as according to Rudzi (2003) which is categorized into three levels.

Table 1: Interpretation Range				
Mean Score	Score Mean ranking			
1.00 - 2.33	Low			

2.34 - 3.67	Moderate
3.68 - 5.00	High

5.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this Section 1, ten items were used to review the students' perception of the use of online learning in Arabic. Table 2 displays the respondent's perception analysis on the usage of online learning as a BBM tool with a mean average value of 3.24.

Table 2: Students	' Perception of Online	Learning for Arabic	Language Learning
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No	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	Provide better learning outcome	2%	17%	27%	48%	6%	3.40
2	improve your speaking skills	2%	19%	25%	52%	2%	3.21
3	Help you remember what you are taught	3%	16%	29%	52%	0%	3.33
4	Helps you understand lessons quickly	3%	17%	41%	37%	2%	3.30
5	Helps you pay attention while studying.	6%	32%	29%	33%	0%	3.16
6	Bring fun to the students.	2%	14%	33%	48%	3%	2.89
7	Make you more passionate while follow the learning.	3%	27%	22%	44%	3%	3.37
8	Creating a more cheerful learning environment.	2%	27%	37%	32%	3%	3.17
9	Helps you apply what you learn in your daily life	3%	13%	24%	54%	6%	3.08

In Part 1 of the questionnaire, the highest mean score result was achieved by Item 1 (mean=3.40) in which most students agreed that the use of online learning for Arabic learning could provide better learning outcomes. As tabulated in Table 2, about 30 students (48%) selected agree and 4 students (6%) chose Strongly agree, while 17 students (27%) opted Not sure, and 11 students (17%) responded Disagree with this statement. Item 7 has the second-highest mean score of 3.37, which states that online learning makes students more enthusiastic to learn. Accordingly, 28 students (44%) answered Agree, and 17 students (27%) selected Disagree, and the total number of students who responded Strongly disagree and Strongly agree each, was 2 students (3%).

Next, Item 6 shows the lowest mean score (mean= 2.89), which is the usage of Arabic online learning brings fun to the students. In this item, 30 students (48%), 2 students (3%), and 21 students (33%) chose Agree, Strongly Agree, and Not sure respectively with the statements. In conclusion, the analysis of questionnaire data in Part 1 on the perception of students on the use of Arabic online learning is moderate. However, Item 9 that states online learning helps students apply what they learned in their daily life, recorded the highest percentage of students who

responded Agreed to, which is 54% (34 students) with the second-lowest mean score of 3.08.

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No	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	
1	Does the use of Online Learning improve vocabulary skills in Arabic teaching and learning when you use it?	2%	11%	40%	43%	5%	3.38	
2	Are you interested with online learning methods?	5%	27%	35%	32%	2%	2.98	
3	Does this method interesting and suitable for memorizing/mastering vocabulary?	2%	19%	40%	38%	2%	3.19	
4	Does Online Learning make it easier for you to memorize vocabulary rather than manual methods?	3%	24%	49%	22%	2%	2.95	
5	Is this method suitable for teaching and learning Arabic language to facilitate the self- learning process?	2%	19%	37%	37%	6%	3.27	
5	methods? Is this method suitable for teaching and learning Arabic language to facilitate the self-	2%	19%	37%	37%	6%		

Table 3: Vocabulary Perception

Table 3 tabulated the result of data analysed from the second part of the questionnaire, focuses on students' perception towards the ability to improve vocabulary skills. Five (5) items were included. The results of the data analysis found that Item 1, which states that the online learning method improved vocabulary proficiency in Arabic teaching and learning, had obtained the highest mean score of 3.38 with 43% (27 students) opted Agree and 3 students (5%) selected Strongly agree. However, 25 students (40%) chose Not sure on whether online learning can improve vocabulary proficiency skills as compared to 7 students (11%), who chose Disagree and 1 student (2%) opted Strongly disagree with the statement of the item.

The statement related to students' interest in using Arabic online learning to learn the Arabic language, its analysis disclosed that the majority of students, 22 students (35%) were hesitant, while 20 students (32%) opted Agree, and a student (2%) chose Strongly agree with Item 2. However, 17 students (27%) selected Not agree, while 3 students (5%) responded Strongly disagree with the statement.

As for Item 4, the study discovered that 31 students opted Not sure that the method of learning Arabic through online learning made it easier for students to memorize vocabulary compared to traditional methods, with the highest percentage of uncertainty at 49%. A total of 14 students chose Agree, (22%), and one student (2%) opted Strongly agree, while a total of 15 students (24%) responded Disagree, and 2

students (3%) chose Strongly disagree with the statement.

Item 5 is the final item. The results revealed that the number of students who chose Agree shared the same number with Not sure shared which is 23 students (37%), while a total of 12 students (19%) responded Disagree and a student chose Strongly disagree with the statement of Item 5. However, only 4 students (6%) selected Strongly agree with Item 5 that online learning is appropriately applied in the teaching and learning of the Arabic language to facilitate the self-learning process.

No	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Min
1	My lecturer asked students to pronounce Arabic words learned according to the correct Makhraj	-	-	5%	65%	30%	4.25
2	My lecturer asked the student to repeat the Arabic word several times without looking at the book	-	5%	27%	60%	8%	3.71
3	My lecturer asked students to speak Arabic verses they learned	-	-	-	78%	22%	4.22
4	My lecturer asked students to conduct conversations in Arabic with friends without looking at books	2%	2%	19%	62%	16%	3.89
5	My lecturers make sure students understand what is spoken in Arabic	-	-	8%	70%	22%	4.14
6	My lecturer asked students to say orally pictures displayed in Arabic	2%	-	21%	63%	14%	3.89
7	My lecturer asked students to pronounce the sentences in Arabic according to the correct tone and intonation.	-	-	6%	71%	22%	4.16
8	My lecturers offer opportunities for students to speak Arabic.	-	-	-	67%	33%	4.33
9	My lecturers do not make much correction in Arabic speech	21%	44%	19%	13%	3%	2.33
10	My lecturer speaks Arabic sentences that are easy to follow than difficult sentences	21%	44%	19%	13%	3%	4.00

Table 4 shows the results of the data analysed from the third part of the survey questions. These questions differ from the second part of the questionnaire as the third part focuses on the method of teaching perspective. Based on Table 4, the result indicates that the highest mean score obtained is by Item 8 at 4.33. From the mean score, 42 students (67%) opted Agreed, and 21 students (33%) Strongly agree with Item 8 that lecturers give opportunities for students to speak Arabic, while no students selected Not sure, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

Next, Item 4 and item 6 have the same mean value of 3.89. In Item 4, a total of 39 students (62%) chose Agree and 10 students (16%) selected Strongly agree that lecturers asked students to have conversations in Arabic with friends without looking at books, while 12 students (19%) opted Not sure. Based on the analysis in Item 6, 40 students (63%) chose Agree and 9 students (14%) opted Strongly agree that during online learning, lecturers asked students to verbalize the pictures displayed in Arabic. However, 13 students (21%) were found to be unsure of the matter. All items are at a high mean score level except Item 9, which is at a low score of 2.33. The analysis of Item 9 relates to lecturers who did not render enough corrections of the students' Arabic speech, where only 2 students (3%) chose Strongly agree, and 8 students (13%) ticked Agree, 28 students (44%) selected Disagree, and 13 students (21%) opted Strongly Disagree with the statement, while 12 students (19%) responded Not sure.

Overall, this study reveals that students' perception towards the usage of the Arabic online learning platform in learning the Arabic language is at a moderate level based on the mean score obtained. Several justifications have been identified as the ground for students using the online learning platform to learn Arabic, i.e., this method provides better learning outcomes, students are more enthusiastic in learning, it helps them understand the lesson quicker, and can easily remember the lessons taught; finally, it motivates them to continue learning. Students' perception in Part 1 corresponds to the increase in students' vocabulary mastery. Based on the average mean score, which is at the moderate level for items in Part 2, several reasons have been identified to prove the effectiveness of Arabic online learning to master the Arabic vocabulary without knowing the applications or websites they use in teaching and learning activities. Most students agree that online learning can improve their proficiency of the Arabic vocabulary as it is interesting, suitable for memorizing vocabulary, and applicable in teaching and learning. However, few students doubted the method, whether memorizing vocabulary is easier via online learning or traditional learning. In terms of teaching, lecturers have taught very well through online

learning when almost all items in Part 3 are at a high level. This outcome proves the teaching techniques of lecturers also play a significant role during the teaching and learning process through online learning as it is effective in improving the communication skills of Arabic language course students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study discovered that using online learning for Arabic language learning is strongly substantiated as a support medium for Arabic teaching and learning. It is proven to assist students master the Arabic vocabulary effectively as well as influence Arabic communication skills better. Undoubtedly, this study establishes that communication skills can be mastered more effectively when lecturers apply basic language-based teaching techniques, namely listening, writing, speaking, and reading skills during the online teaching and learning process. Finally, future studies are proposed to identify the latest software and Arabic online learning platforms used by lecturers in teaching and by students in self-learning, as well as its relationship in improving Arabic language communication skills, especially for students of the Arabic language course.

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