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Interactive Arabic E-Learning for Prospective Students Studying in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the indicators required for needs analysis in the development of Arabic language e-learning. Employed quantitative research design with a descriptive approach, the results of this study potentially serve as a foundation for further subsequent Research and Development phases. The data was obtained through observation techniques, survey questionnaires, and a literature review. The obtained data was analysed to determine each indicator's percentage values and categorise them based on these percentages. The results indicate five aspects to develop in the Markaz Arabiyah e-learning: self-learning materials, varied exercise questions and university selection simulations, multimedia, information about registration and scholarships in the Middle East, and e-learning discussion. These findings imply the enhancement of students' learning outcomes, which ultimately prepare them for the university selection exams.

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Keyword

Arabic E-learning; Middle East; Needs Analysis; Prospective Students;

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في المؤشرات المتعلقة بتحليل احتياجات تطوير تعليم اللغة العربية عبر الإنترنت أو التعليم الإلكتروني. تعتبر هذه الدراسة ذات أهمية بالغة، حيث تشكل أساساً للعناصر التي ستم تطويرها خلال مراحل البحث والتطوير القادمة. يعتمد هذا البحث على منهج وصفي باستخدام منهجية كمية. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام تقنيات الملاحظة، الاستبيان، ودراسة الأدبيات. تم تحليل النتائج من خلال حساب نسبة القيمة المئوية لكل مؤشر وتصنيفها وفقاً لهذه النسبة. أسفرت نتائج تحليل الاحتياجات عن تحديد خمسة جوانب يجب تطويرها في تعليم اللغة العربية عبر الإنترنت في مركز العربية باري كديري. هذه الجوانب هي: مواد تعليمية ذاتية، تمارين واختبارات لقبول الجامعة في الشرق الأوسط، توفر الوسائط المتعددة، والمعلومات حول التسجيل والمنح الدراسية في الشرق الأوسط، وسهولة النقاش في التعلم الإلكتروني. مع هذا التطور، ستتحسن نتائج تعلم الطلاب، وسيكونون مستعدين لأداء امتحانات اختيار الجامعة.

تحليل الاحتياجات؛ التعليم الإلكتروني؛ الطلاب؛ الشرق الأوسط

كلمات أساسية

INTRODUCTION

E-learning plays a crucial role in the learning landscape of Society 5.0, serving as a vital element within educational environments following the rapid progress of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Serin, 2022). Many studies on e-learning show that it improves the quality and learning outcomes of learners, and thus potentially be used as an alternative to distance education (Hennig & Nazarkulova, 2019; Shahba et al., 2022). It has become a popular learning platform today (Alenezi, 2020; Razeeth et al., 2019). Previous research on e-learning has caused a paradigm shift from teacher-centred and memory-based education to student-centred education that offers collaborative student activity, builds knowledge independently, and improves critical thinking (Al-Fadhli, 2008). Considering these important benefits, e-learning is an area of evaluation and development in research.

A myriad of studies on e-learning has proven that e-learning models are highly accessible and effectively boost motivation among students, ultimately contributing to improving their academic performance (Tawafak et al., 2019). Accordingly, educators need to carefully consider the content that will be presented through electronic platforms to maintain the quality of the educational process (Prosen et al., 2022). Implementing e-learning with ICT-based learning requires further study on the acceptance and readiness of technology among users (Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2021). Hence, there is a need for a study that develops e-learning products to improve learning quality.

In this present study, the development of e-learning follows Syakur's (2022, pp. 58–59) regarding Arabic language learning at Markaz Arabiyah Pare Kediri, which has successfully used e-learning in both learning evaluations and preparation classes for studies in the Middle East. This school offers the aforementioned school, Minah's class, which is designed as an intensive learning program for prospective students who will continue their studies in the Middle East (Markaz Arabiyah, n.d.). The learning cores, therefore, focus on preparing for university entrance selection exams that entail comprehensive subjects such as *Nahwu*, *Sharaf*, and *Balaghah*.

Based on the preliminary observation, such comprehensive material has caused problems in the form of insufficient learning time in the classroom. Students were also reported to experience learning delays. E-learning has been long suggested to resolve such problems since it provides more flexible learning opportunities, which offers a four-dimensional learning medium that helps students catch up with the material (Aliyah & Hidayanti, 2022). It can be said that e-learning potentially overcome space and time constraints between teachers and students.

The development of ICT-based teaching materials is expected to benefit students, as explained by Fitriani (2020, p. 181), in the form of easy access to material, practice questions, and information for students. It is further expected to support Arabic language learning with four language skills at once and encourage students to learn independently.

Concurrently, Needs Analysis is an initial step taken to lay the foundations for the development of e-learning for Arabic language learning (Maydiantoro, 2021). Needs Analysis serves a fundamental role in Research and Development (R&D) because it helps ensure the developed products will meet the desired needs and objectives. With Needs Analysis, research will have a clear focus, quality product development results, increased user acceptance, and reduced risk of failure. This will help increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the research.

Needs Analysis is primarily used to gather information before designing a product or project (Shofa et al., 2020). The study of Needs Analysis is used to obtain broader input on the content, design, and development of a product or project (Helaluddin, 2018). Conversely, e-learning will not positively impact Arabic language teaching if its preparation does not pay attention to students' learning needs (Salim & Jardani, 2020). Therefore, with the Needs Analysis, the product is not developed with a perfunctory approach, but based on scientific studies that can be accounted for.

Several studies have been conducted regarding the development of e-learning in Arabic language learning. A study in Indonesian Islamic Junior High School has shown that the teaching of Arabic language learning has used e-learning named Lectora Inspire app to specifically improve students' Arabic reading skills (Wijoyo, 2016). Mutmainnah (2019) has also developed Arabic e-learning with the Moodle application as a Learning Media for eighth graders. At the Senior High School Level, Wahyuningsih (2022) and Ruwaida (2019) have developed e-learning as Arabic learning media. Sari (2017) has also developed Arabic teaching materials through web-based e-learning applications using a tutor. At the university level, Setiawan (2020) has successfully developed website-based e-learning in IAIN Manado's Arabic education study program.

The explanation above has summarised that e-learning for Arabic language learning has been largely developed in formal schools, universities, and the general public. What differentiates this present study from the previous research is the particular focus and implementation on the development of e-learning in the Arabic language using a specified platform. The platform is specially designed for Indonesian students who will enrol in Middle Eastern universities by focusing on the first stage, namely Needs Analysis. The results of this study imply a novelty in the literature of online Arabic language teaching platforms to advance study preparation for prospective students aiming for Middle Eastern universities.

METHOD

This present study employed a descriptive method with a quantitative approach. It aims to create a picture or description of a situation objectively supported by data in the form of numbers or numerals (Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021). This present study was carried out to describe a symptom, event, and incident that occurs factually, systematically, and accurately (Endrekson, 2022). Quantitative descriptive research describes variables as they are, and is supported by data in numbers resulting from measurements or observations (Arikunto, 2006). It is not intended to test hypotheses, but only to describe the content of a variable or a specific situation of a phenomenon that occurs in research. Hence, the nature of such research is independent (Jaya, 2020).

This present study involved all students in the preparatory class for studies in the Middle East by studying in the Markaz Arabiyah Arabic language course institution. The study took place in the 58th batch of the class during August-September, totalling 16 students leaving no sample selection in this study. Hence, this present study includes census research as the sampling technique includes all population members (Sugiyono, 2013). This technique was chosen because the population was small and less than 30 students. The preliminary observation also shows that the preparation class in this period was intended for students who wanted to continue studying in the Middle East and Turkey. This was different from the previous batches where the class was divided based on the destination country or the chosen campus.

The demographic profile of the research subjects is as follows:

Table 1. Participants demographic information

Categories	Gender	Participants
Student	Male	12
	Female	4
Teacher	Female	2
Total		18

The data was collected using observation, questionnaire, and literature study techniques. Observations were conducted using non-participant techniques because researchers only acted to observe without participating in activities performed by the group being researched (Williams, 2008). Observations were made by noting the conditions of Arabic language learning at Markaz Arabiyah institutions directly and through videos. The questionnaire used is a closed questionnaire that limits the answer choice for participants and they are not allowed to develop their answers (Sugeng, 2022). The literature study was

conducted by analysing the results of previous research related to Arabic e-learning and Arabic language learning at Markaz Arabiya.

Last, data analysis was carried out by measuring students' responses to the questionnaire, which consisted of four answer choices with the following assessment categories:

Table 2. Response Questionnaire Rating Scale

Category	Score
Strongly Agree (SS)	4
Agree (S)	3
Disagree (TS)	2
Strongly Disagree (STS)	1

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This present study focuses on understanding the Needs Analysis and design of the development of Markaz Arabiyah e-learning. This process is pivotal for the learning process in Minhah classes that prepare for higher studies in the Middle East. As argued previously, the emergence of e-learning potentially creates student-centred learning. Along with its development, it is thus important to identify student problems and consider their needs (Kew & Tasir, 2022). This is an area of development reserved by this present study to maximise platform development.

Needs Analysis is a vital process in product development. Besides initial identification, Needs Analysis focusing on students is beneficial for teachers to create efficient learning materials that are aligned with students' preferences (Kew & Tasir, 2022). This notion lends strong support to this present study that aims to develop ICT-based learning materials on Arabic language learning.

Our findings elaborate on two crucial aspects in the development of Arabic language teaching using e-learning. First, we investigate the Needs Analysis results to provide fundamental values for further development. Second, we attempt to conceptualise an e-learning platform based on the Needs Analysis.

Analysis of Student Needs in Using E-learning

Based on the questionnaire responses, the assessment needed for e-learning development is divided into four categories, namely, highly required, required, less required, and not required. Our result summarises the information in the form of percentages, which are interpreted as the following table (Sukmanto, 2020):

Table 3. Interpretation of Need's Criteria

No.	Assessment Percentage	Interpretation
1	80-100 %	Highly required
2	60-79 %	Required
3	40-59 %	Less required
4	0-39 %	Not required

Among the dimensions in the questionnaire asks about the e-learning usage guide. One of the indicators is the existence of e-learning usage instructions. This is based on the problems observed during observation, such as students' confusion due to the absence of manual books or instructions for using e-learning. So far, Markaz Arabiyah only socialises the use of e-learning verbally at the first meeting. The results show that as many as 68.75% of respondents strongly agreed, and 31.25% agreed with these usage instructions, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Percentage of Need's for E-Learning Usage Guidelines

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	68,75%	92%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	31,25%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

The second dimension of the questionnaire is learning material. Previous research, which is also informed by observations, shows that e-learning is only used as a medium for learning evaluation (Syakur et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to develop independent learning materials that can be accessed flexibly by students (Aldulaimi et al., 2021). In this present study, the need for material development was high with 98%, with 93.75% of respondents strongly agreeing and 6.25% choosing to agree. The following table displays the complete results:

Table 5. Percentage of Self-study Materials Need's in E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	93,75%	98%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	6,25%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

The third indicator surveyed in the Needs Analysis for e-learning development is the need for multimedia learning materials. Multimedia refers to the material in the forms of video or audio that provide a genuine picture of the use of Arabic for students. Similar to the previous dimensions, this indicator is also included as Highly Required with a percentage value of 93%. In detail, 75% of respondents strongly agreed and 25% agreed as shown in the following table 6:

Table 6. Percentage of Multimedia Material Need's in E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	75%	93%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	25%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

The fourth indicator was the need for students to access practice questions to prepare them to pass the university entrance exams. This indicator is particularly essential because it aligns with the students' main goal in attending the preparation classes. They aimed to get access to practice questions to better prepare them for the recruitment of prospective students. Our survey also found that this indicator falls into the criteria Highly Required with a high percentage of 98%. As many as 93.75% of respondents strongly agreed with the development, even though exercises are currently available in e-learning. The remaining 6.25% of respondents chose to agree as summarised in table 7:

Table 7. Percentage of Needs for Exercises in E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	93,75%	98%	Highly Required
2	Agree (S)	6,25%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Next, the fifth indicator is closely related to the previous indicator as it concerns students' needs for university selection exam simulation. As important as students' consideration, the responses got a high percentage value of 96%. In detail, as many as 87.5% of respondents strongly agreed with the exam simulation on e-learning with the remaining 12.5% also agreed. The r results are as follows:

Table 8. Percentage of Needs for University Selection Test Simulation in E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of each criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	87,5%	96%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	12,5%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Students were also asked about their needs in accessing information regarding their chosen university. The information needed is about registration, departments and majors, and academic activities. This indicator is specifically included in the criteria that are highly needed by students with a percentage value of 96%, with details of 87.5% of respondents strongly agreeing to this and 12.5% of respondents agreeing to the development. The results are depicted as follows:

Table 9. Percentage of Information Needs about Universities in the Middle East

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of each criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	87,5%	96%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	12,5%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

The seventh indicator is the discussion component in e-learning. Discussion in the digital realm can establish peer discussions, open two-way communication with teachers, or confirm the uploaded materials. Concurrently, this indicator obtained a high percentage value of 90%, with 62.5% of respondents strongly agreeing, and 37.5% agreeing. The survey results are shown as follows:

Table 10. Percentage of Discussion Needs in E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	62,5%	90%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	37,5%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Besides the first elaborated questionnaire, another questionnaire was distributed asking about unmanifested matters in e-learning, that are needed to improve classroom learning quality. There are three indicators asked in the

survey, namely improving learning outcomes, strengthening classroom learning, and the need for flexible e-learning.

Based on the students' responses, the three indicators are highly needed by students, with improving learning outcomes at 96%, strengthening classroom learning at 93%, and the need for flexible e-learning at 100%. The complete survey results are as follows:

Table 11. Percentage of Improving Student Learning Outcomes

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	87,5%	96%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	12,5%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Table 12. Percentage of Supporting Classroom Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of Each Criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	75%	93%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	25%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Table 13. Percentage of Flexible and Non-Lagging E-Learning

No	Alternative Answer	Percentage of each criterion	Accumulated Percentage Value	Criteria
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	100%	100%	Highly required
2	Agree (S)	0%		
3	Disagree (TS)	0%		
4	Strongly Disagree (STS)	0%		

Developing Arabic language materials is inevitable in learning needs, and thus, important. This is especially because of a lack of Arabic teaching materials based on tourism anthropology, showing a dire need to enhance oral Arabic language skills in the tourism industry (Hasaniyah et al., 2023). The increasing need for learning, such as vocabulary expansion, also implies that the teaching materials must be developed accordingly to improve vocabulary, leading to

applications like Arabic-Kafa. These phenomena indicate that the development of teaching materials is indeed necessary.

Overall, the survey on the Needs Analysis shows that e-learning at Markaz Arabiyah highly requires quality improvement. In this case, the future development must focus on five main aspects, namely, the availability of comprehensive materials; varied exercise questions and university selection simulations; multimedia; information about registration and scholarships in Middle Eastern universities; and discussion in e-learning. These dimensions are expected to enhance students' learning experience, and better prepare them to sit the university selection exams. Such e-learning development, tailored to students' needs, truly supports classroom learning. It is pivotal to students' needs for additional learning materials outside the classroom that can be accessed flexibly and quickly.

Further, carefully crafted material content in e-learning development based on the Needs Analysis potentially facilitates students' Arabic language learning. This concurs with Ritonga et al. (2021) who state that e-learning will only be meaningful for students if the learning materials are clear and well-designed. Zubaidah et al. (2021) added that Arabic language learning is highly possible as long as students can access comprehensive materials available on the Internet. This idea contests the notion that allowing students to browse and find materials on their own is a bad idea, as it will only create more bias and confusion. Students need teachers' support in the forms of e-learning materials based on their needs. E-learning, in this case, creates comprehensive knowledge by demanding active and independent roles from students (Solimando, 2022).

The primary focus of material development in e-learning also serves as an effort to support additional conventional classroom learning materials. In Arabic language teaching, teachers must design materials before lesson delivery so that the learning process runs smoothly, and students receive new information related to the discussion topics (Aldrup et al., 2018). However, the materials that should be mastered for university entrance exams are comprehensive, making it difficult for teachers to cover all the teaching materials they have prepared. In this case, e-learning makes teacher presence optional, thus comprehensive materials can be effectively delivered.

Second, e-learning development focuses on providing comprehensive and varied questions. This resulted from the analysis linked to the goals of students participating in this program. Ghani et al. (2021) lend strong support to this finding where the initial step in development is to determine the learning objectives. Furthermore, the learning objectives themselves can be implemented by carrying out research related to the students' needs. This is a gap in the literature that this study has addressed through the elaborating demands for

exercise questions. Specifically, students who aim to prepare for entrance exams in the Middle Eastern university have sought regular and sufficient exercises in this program.

Third, the development of instructional multimedia is essential in building quality e-learning. The concept of multimedia in teaching and learning involves computer programs with learning materials presented in integrated formats, such as video and audio, video, text, and motion to improve the quality of learning (Elawadi et al., 2019). In this case, Arabic is foreign to Indonesian students. It is difficult and calls for engaging and high-quality learning apps to support Arabic language learning (Hannah et al., 2019). Multimedia offers solutions to realise e-learning that helps students understand lessons more comprehensively. For example, students with difficulty understanding textual materials will be assisted with additional explanatory videos. Meanwhile, students who cannot effectively play videos can learn through textual lessons. For audio learners, multimedia supports listening skills as well as learning modes for some students. Of course, these modes are integrated holistically into e-learning where it is easily accessible by learners.

Next, e-learning development should focus on information about registration and scholarships at Middle Eastern universities. For developing countries, information on international scholarships is important and increases students' motivation to learn (Kun Dai Yating Hu & Oladipo, 2023). In Indonesia, especially, students tend to show higher motivation when they receive valid scholarship information, which can guide their learning process. They will be aware of registration and scholarship timelines, allowing them to prepare accordingly. Therefore, they will be more focused on learning and making good use of their time to learn Arabic.

Finally, e-learning development should include interactive communication features such as chat and group discussions, aimed at supporting active learning. In this regard, Shaalan and Al-Jubouri (2022) have explained that e-learning has proven to make students actively participate in class by comprehensively reading the lesson content, idea explorations, constructing and asking questions, and the submission of these questions electronically. Such development potentially produces similar results to previous studies, such as enhancing student active learning and participation.

Design Arabic E-learning for Prospective Students Studying in the Middle East

The development and innovation of ICT-based teaching material, especially in Arabic language learning, must be carefully crafted to prepare students for selection tests to Middle Eastern universities, and language preparation. The

product development in the form of an online learning platform will use a Learning Management System (LMS) as the most popular platform in e-learning (Aysha Asra & Kariapper, 2022). Based on the results of this study, the development should focus on the following:

E-learning Instructions for Use/ Manuals

Instructions for operating the e-learning will be provided in two forms, namely, video tutorials and guidebooks. These manuals are presented in PDF form, which can be accessed and downloaded by all e-learning users.

Independent Learning Materials

The learning materials will include *nahwu*, *sharaf*, *balaghah*, and language skills for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The material will be presented in slides or modules concurrent with learning videos.

Practice Questions

The e-learning content is in the form of exercises, conveying exams on the taught materials. The exercises will be divided into daily and weekly exercises following the examination activities at Markaz Arabiyah Pare, Kediri.

University Selection Test Simulation

Some examples of Al-Azhar selection questions in 2021 will be used as try-out materials and monthly exams.

Information about Universities in the Middle East

An important information display for students explains the Middle East selection pathway with links to the Ministry of Religious Affairs portal on Al-Azhar selection, the PUSIBA portal, and the portal of Indonesian student organizations in Egypt.

Discussion

Communication access is a tool to facilitate two-way communication among students, or between students and teachers.

The following is an overview of the e-learning design that will be developed based on our Needs Analysis. The design is completed with Figma and presented as an initial description only.



Figure 1. E-Learning Design



Figure 2. E-Learning Program Design

The e-learning design above utilizes the Figma application. In the e-learning we designed, one subject, such as Nahwu, will be classified into a separate class. There is no combination of materials in one class. Each student must first obtain permission from the teacher or administrator to access the class. Separating one subject into one class aims to focus students on learning and understanding the material well because combining the subjects into one class will create distractions in students' learning. Later, in one course or organized material, learning instructions will guide students in learning with e-learning, learning materials, videos, and exercises.

The platform used in e-learning is Moodle. As an e-learning platform, Moodle has advantages such as flexibility in usage, good security guarantees, and various features. Additionally, Moodle is available in more than 120 languages, allowing users to build support sites in various languages. With these advantages, Moodle becomes the best choice for developing the e-learning platform that will be undertaken and fit users' needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The development of Markaz Arabiyah e-learning is essential. E-learning development is one way to meet the needs of Arabic language teaching innovation to create student-focused learning that enhances students' active roles and independence. The initial step during the development is to determine aspects to be developed and consider the learning objectives. This process is called Needs Analysis in development research.

Needs Analysis is a vital process in product development. Besides identifying what needs to be developed, Needs Analysis focusing on students is beneficial for teachers to compose efficient learning materials that align with students' preferences. Our study found five fundamental aspects for development based on the survey results, reflecting students' needs with all percentage values above 90%. These five aspects entail the availability of comprehensive materials in e-learning; varied exercise questions and university selection simulations; multimedia; information about registration and scholarships in the Middle East; and ease of discussion in e-learning.

Hence, the innovative design should cover User Instructions for E-learning, Self-learning Materials, Exercise Questions and University Selection Exam Simulations, Information on Registration and Scholarships at Universities in the Middle East, and Discussion.

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