

Perceived Usefulness of KALAM

Ali, Z., Ismail, R., Abu Bakar, A.H., Muhammad, N.N., Ahmad Azmey, F.L.

Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Kuantan, Malaysia

Abstract: The use of educational technology immersed rapidly in higher institutions. Learning Management System (LMS) is one the most popular educational technology system used in learning process. This study sought to identify the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM and to determine the significant differences between genders with respect to their perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning. Data from online questionnaires were collected from 90 respondents who took English course. This study used descriptive and inferential (t-test) statistics to analysis the data. Hence, the findings proved that students' perception on the usefulness of KALAM in language learning was positive. Several implications of these findings were also discussed.

Keywords: gender, KALAM, language learning, Learning Management Systems, perceived usefulness, technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current education system keep changing, influenced by the trends of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is becoming more advance over time (Johnson, Becker, Estrada & Freeman, 2014). The new developments in information technologies have opened-up fresh perspective in teaching and learning. This ICT enables the educators to offer its quality content to respective learners in a structured, flexible, interactive, blended and open way. ICT and online learning eventually can improve the quality of higher education through innovative methods. The discussion below provides more in-depth information on relevant issues to this topic.

Online learning

Online learning has attracted many educators and learners to use additional learning opportunities and alternatives to make the learning process becoming more interactive. Levy and Ramin (2012) mentioned that online learners are responsible for initiating, planning, and conducting their own studies. They also stated that the failure to study regularly leads to poor academic achievement, and procrastination seems to be the vital problems in online learning. In online learning, students need to be more responsible for their studies due to the autonomous nature of the learning environment (You & Kang, 2014). Amongst of the main characteristics of online learning are the flexibility and accessibility of the sources, as well as focusing on the students' interactivity and their enhancement in learning process. Lopes (2014) stated that the development of the online courses in website have helped in providing the content for students to be accessed anytime and anywhere in the world. This approach is even faster than the other conventional methods distance education which namely Learning Management System (LMS).

Learning Management System (LMS)

Joo, Lim and Kim (2011) specified that LMS was initiated in the late 90s, and with the future for the LMS may sound promising, research remains scarce about the LMS learners' perception, experiences and satisfaction, their learning outcomes, as well as their teachers' motivation and training for using the system. The main objective of LMS is to centralize and simplify administration and management of teaching and learning through e-learning. This system covers the entire process of distance learning, possessing interface and student teachers, tutors, to administrators and the administrative part (Lopes, 2014). In this sense, LMS helps the instructors and learners to plan their learning processes and work together through the exchange of knowledge and information.

LMS is information system running on a server, offering various tools like document publishing, assessment modules, wiki, and many others, thus, making LMS in online or distance learning is very common in higher education (Navimipour & Zareie, 2015). It is one of the recommended e-learning platform which provides the services that assist learners and

instructors in managing their courses, particularly by creating, importing and exporting learning objects. In addition, Schoonenboom (2014) investigated that some tools are used more than others, as little is known about the instructional use of the LMS. The set of the available tools in the LMS represent all these services that help in managing the teaching process and the interaction between users such as the access control services, synchronous and asynchronous tools of communication and user administration services (Mohammed, Chkouri & Nejjari, 2018).

The use of LMS in learning and teaching

Within the LMS, educational material is processed, stored and disseminated; teaching and learning related administration and communication is supported well. Obviously, the integration of LMS into language learning and teaching practices has been increased especially in higher education sectors. The way this LMS presents its knowledge is crucial in education process in terms of flexibility, easiness, and usefulness. In this respect, knowledge could be classified into informative and communicative knowledge (Abu Shawar & Al-Sadi, 2010). Informative knowledge is including teaching modules such as module calendar, lecture notes, assignments, meanwhile, communicative knowledge is concerned with facilitating communication between different parties as exchange opinions in discussion forums, chat rooms, messages between students to students, student to tutor, or tutor to tutor communication.

At present, the use of LMS has become common in most institutions, and LMS provides new opportunities to monitor students' learning participation and progress (You, 2015). One of the learning platform namely LMS has a considerable potential in the construction of knowledge and competence development. Thanks to the different services offered by these e-learning platforms, individuals can access and use interactively the multiple sources of information available to them everywhere, at all times. They can also compose customized training programs and thus, develop their abilities to the highest level of their potential according to their needs. According to Mohammed (2018), the main pedagogical functions that may be assigned to the LMS as computer applications for learning are including presenting information, providing exercises, real teaching, providing a space of exploration and providing a space of exchange between learners and instructors. Generally, some institutions develop their own LMS, others adopt an open-source LMS or bought a commercial one, and KALAM is the one used by UMPians.

What is KALAM?

The LMS used by UMP as the main online learning platform to be utilised maximally is known as Knowledge & Learning Management System (or known as KALAM). The aim of this platform is to cater for the new approach in learning that dominates the current life styles especially among younger generation. In addition, KALAM is connected with UMP's Integrated Academic System. The accessibilities to KALAM by UMP's students and lecturers is concurrent with the course online registration and lecturer's teaching assignment. Throughout the semester, the lecturers could always update and upload any learning materials and information on the course for their students reference. Those materials could be shared and accessible by all the users who registered that particular course.

Student and lecturer may access KALAM's features since at the beginning of a semester. Based on the information provided in Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) official portal, KALAM can be divided into four (4) main features which are course information, learning materials, learning activities and course assessments (<http://www.ump.edu.my/en/KALAM-e-learning>, 2018). These features fulfill the need of blended learning which was one of the online learning mode. With the current trend of The Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), currently KALAM is accessible through any web browser and mobile application via Moodle.

In relation to the issues discussed above, the objectives of this study are to identify the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning and to determine the differences between male and female students with respect to their perceived usefulness in using KALAM. Therefore, this research intended to answer this two research questions which are:

- a) What are the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning?
- b) Is there a statistically significant difference between males and females with respect to their perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning?

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper attempts to identify the students' perceived usefulness of using an online platform in language learning and determine the gender differences in their perceived usefulness of using the platform. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire-based survey is conducted.

Sampling of the study

In total, 90 respondents were involved in this study. The respondents consisted of all engineering students from a technological university in a district of Pahang. Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents were male (75.6%) and 24.4% were female. 47.8% of the respondents were from 22-23 years old range, 33.3% were from 19-21-year age group and the rest were around 24-25 years old (18.9%). They were all enrolling in different English course levels.

TABLE I: Demographic profile of the learners

| Variables | Frequency |
|--|------------|
| Faculty | |
| FKM | 48 (53.3%) |
| FKP | 12 (13.3%) |
| FKEE | 26 (28.9%) |
| FTEK | 4 (4.4%) |
| Age | |
| 19-21 | 30 (33.3%) |
| 22-23 | 43 (47.8%) |
| 24-25 | 17 (18.9%) |
| Gender | |
| Male | 68 (75.6%) |
| Female | 22 (24.4%) |
| Ethnicity | |
| Malay | 66 (73.3%) |
| Chinese | 16 (17.8%) |
| Indian | 4 (4.4%) |
| Others | 4 (4.4%) |
| Current registered English course | |
| UHL2400 | 5 (5.6%) |
| UHL2412 | 38 (42.2%) |
| UHL2422 | 10 (11.1%) |
| UHL2432 | 23 (25.6%) |
| Not Stated | 14 (15.6%) |

Research Instrument

This study employs quantitative design in that a questionnaire is designed and employed to investigate students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM for learning. The questionnaire consists of two sections and 17 questions. The first section elicits information on respondents' demographic background such as gender, age group and ethnicity. The second part of the questionnaire asks the respondents to rate how strongly they agree with each statement and uses a 5-point Likert scale. The questions are designed to gauge the students' perceptions on the usefulness of KALAM. The researchers utilise SPSS software to analyse the questionnaire items.

Reliability of research instrument

Table 1 shows demographic profile of 90 respondents used in this study. These respondents needed to complete the online questionnaires and it contained of 2 sections which are Section A (Demographic background with 5 items), and Section B (Usefulness of KALAM with 12 items)

Reliability analysis was conducted by using SPSS to determine whether the questionnaire employed in the study was reliable or not. The Cronbach's Alpha value of .96 was generated, thus denoting that the questionnaire was highly reliable. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), it is recommended that a maximum alpha value of 0.90 should be obtained to reflect the reliability of the questionnaire items.

Validity of research instruments

To evaluate the questionnaire content validity, the items in the questionnaire were reviewed by experts from higher institution who contributed in improving the validity of the questionnaire items.

Data Collection Procedures

To investigate the participants' perceptions on the use of KALAM in language learning, they were provided with a link and required to complete the questionnaire through Google Form. The responses were then downloaded into excel form and exported to SPSS 23 to be analysed.

Data Analysis Procedures

The questionnaire results were analysed using the SPSS 23 software. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data and also to respond to the research question: What are the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning? Additionally, inferential (t-test) statistics were conducted to compare the perceived usefulness scores of using KALAM in language learning between genders.

III. RESULTS

The results of the study were reported based on the research questions formulated at the beginning of this study. Earlier, two (2) research questions are posted in that the study gauges students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM for language learning. Also it identifies male and female perceived usefulness of using KALAM for learning English. The findings to the research questions are discussed in the preceding discussion.

Research Question 1: What are the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning?

The results for students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning are displayed in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning (Q1-Q5)

| Statements | | KALAM is a useful platform to learn English | The use of KALAM outweighs the disadvantages of not using it | The idea of using KALAM is good as it helps me in my learning of English | The use of KALAM is effective for learning purposes especially English | With the use of KALAM, I can access a full library of materials |
|----------------|-------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Percentage (%) | Strongly disagree | 5.6 | 3.3 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 5.6 |
| | Disagree | 11.1 | 11.1 | 16.7 | 15.6 | 12.2 |
| | Neutral | 34.4 | 50.0 | 37.8 | 40.0 | 30.0 |
| | Agree | 36.7 | 26.7 | 30.0 | 27.8 | 35.6 |
| | Strongly agree | 12.2 | 8.9 | 11.1 | 12.2 | 16.7 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 2 displays the first five statements in the questionnaire related to students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning, particularly English. For the first statement, 'KALAM is a useful platform to learn English', 48.9% agreed with it while 34.4% remained neutral and only a small percentage (16.7%) of respondents disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, half of the total number of respondents (50%) neither agree nor disagree with the second statement 'The use of KALAM outweighs the disadvantages of not using it', 35.6% agreed and only 14.4% disagreed. For statement number 3, 'The idea of using KALAM is good as it helps me in my learning of English', majority (41.1%) of the respondents agreed with it while only 21.1% of the respondents disagreed and 37.8% gave neutral responses. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents agreed with the fourth statement 'The use of KALAM is effective for learning purposes especially English' and the same percentage was recorded for those who were neutral about it. Last but not least, majority (52.3%) agreed with the fifth statement 'With the use of KALAM, I can access a full library of materials', while 30% of the respondents gave neutral responses and only 17.8% disagreed with it.

TABLE 3: Students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning (Q6-Q10)

| Statements | | KALAM is useful as I can download relevant materials as often as I like | KALAM is useful as I can monitor my learning performances | KALAM is useful as it makes me becomes competitive | KALAM motivates me to improve my performance in learning English | KALAM is able to support my learning of English |
|----------------|-------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Percentage (%) | Strongly disagree | 5.6 | 4.4 | 5.6 | 4.4 | 6.7 |
| | Disagree | 7.8 | 12.2 | 12.2 | 14.4 | 11.1 |
| | Neutral | 23.3 | 30.0 | 44.4 | 42.2 | 40.0 |
| | Agree | 38.9 | 42.2 | 27.8 | 31.1 | 32.2 |
| | Strongly agree | 24.4 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 7.8 | 10.0 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 3 illustrates another five statements on students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in English language learning. For statement number 6, 'KALAM is useful as I can download relevant materials as often as I like', majority (63.3%) of the respondents agreed with it while only a small percentage (13.4%) disagreed and 23.3% were neutral about the statement. Similarly, more than a half (53.3%) of the respondents agreed with the statement number 7 'KALAM is useful as I can monitor my learning performances' and only 16.6% showed disagreement while the remaining 30% gave neutral responses. As for the statement number 8, 'KALAM is useful as it makes me becomes competitive', the percentage for neutral responses was higher (44.4%) compared to those who showed agreement with the statement (37.8%) and only 17.8% of the respondents disagreed with it. Likewise, the highest percentage (42.2%) was recorded for neutral responses for statement number 9, 'KALAM motivates me to improve my performance in learning English', followed by 38.9% of those who showed agreement and the remaining 18.8% of the respondents who disagreed with the statement. Finally, for the last statement 'KALAM is able to support my learning of English', most respondents (42.2%) agreed with the statement while 40% of them were neutral about it and only 17.8% showed disagreement.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant difference between males and females with respect to their perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning?

The descriptive analysis in Table 4 shows the mean scores of perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning between males and females.

TABLE 4: Descriptive Statistics for Mean Scores of Perceived Usefulness

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-----------------|--------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Mean_Usefulness | Male | 68 | 3.33 | .86 | .11 |
| | Female | 22 | 3.45 | .91 | .19 |

Meanwhile, Table 5 displays the results of independent samples t-tests to compare the perceived usefulness scores of using KALAM in language learning between genders. There was no significant difference in scores for both genders, males ($M=3.33$, $SD=.86$) and females ($M=3.45$, $SD=.91$); $t(-.52) = .71$, $.61$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 5: Results of independent samples t-test for Mean Scores of Perceived Usefulness

| | | Levene's Test for t-test for Equality of Means Equality of Variances | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------|-------|-----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Mean_Usefulness | Equal variances assumed | .14 | .71 | -.52 | 88 | .61 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -.50 | 33.99 | .62 |

IV. ANALYSIS

The first objective of this study investigates the students' perceived usefulness of using KALAM in language learning. Our results strongly suggest that the respondents perceived KALAM positively for its use in language learning. It was found that more than 50% of the statements had a combined percentage of agree and strongly agree that was higher than the percentage of neutral and disagree. Students showed most positive results for statement 6 which was "KALAM is useful as I can download relevant materials as often as I like". This statement is considered extremely relevant to the students as KALAM does allow them to download the materials at their own convenience, hence allowing the learning process to occur continuously. Similarly, KALAM allows access to a full library of materials and students can also monitor their learning performances, which students mostly agreed that these are useful for the language learning process. The results corroborate with the findings by Hamat et al. (2013) in which their study evaluated an LMS platform for productive language skills and found that the platform had helped the students improve their writing and also enhanced their understanding of certain topics.

Furthermore, it was found apparent that there was significant data for the "neutral" response by the students. In other words, a reportable number of students answered that they neither agree nor disagree with the statements. The neutral response owned a higher percentage than "disagree and strongly disagree", 35% on average but remained lower than "agree and strongly agree" for most statements. Such findings might be the result of students' fatigue or other physical factors that hinders the thought process. Other than that, it may also be speculated as the respondents not having an opinion on the statement (a nonresponse) or that their opinion is moderate in intensity. This is in the lines of earlier literature by Schuman and Presser, 1996 (as cited in Lam and Allen, 2010) who provided the aforementioned reasons in their publication on interpreting the neutral response and its other forms. Lam and Allen (2010) studied the extent to which respondents used the "neutral" option and recommended that a "don't know" option is to be provided at the end of the scale.

The second objective of the study was to determine the differences between male and female students with respect to their perceived usefulness in using KALAM. Our findings revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in relation to their perceived usefulness of KALAM in language learning. The finding is consistent with findings by Jamil (2017) who studied the perceived usefulness and attitude of students from four universities in Iraq

towards LMS and detailed her data according to gender; 60% male and 40% female. Her analysis resulted in the conclusion that there was no notable difference in perception between genders. However, given the imbalance in number between the female and male respondents in the current research.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of the present research is to examine the use of KALAM as LMS in UMP for the learning of language. This study has found that the LMS facilitates students in their course of learning. Sadly, however, the evident found in the study is not sufficient to prove that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females' students in their perceived usefulness of using KALAM for the purpose of learning language. Nevertheless, the current data highlight the importance of using LMS at tertiary level education as Susanto, Chen and Almunawar (2018) argue that its use reflects the learning needs of a particular academic institution - in particular it would help ease students' learning process. The current study adds to the growing body of research that indicates the usefulness of LMS to improve teaching and learning (Alahmari, & Kyei-Blankson, 2018). Such is true since KALAM in its nature is a Web-based technology that is used by language practitioners in UMP to distribute teaching and learning content. Moreover, it facilitates e-learning in the university. Even so, this study is limited by the absence of employing semi-structured interviews as the research instrument may gauge more comprehensive and rich understanding on students perceived usefulness of KALAM. Consequently, the study should be repeated using the research instrument so that potential researchers may explore the use of KALAM as LMS for e-learning initiative. Also, the use of the research instrument enables prospective researchers to diverge the areas they want to study for the purpose of collecting more detail responses (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008).

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