

**ENHANCING ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY:  
UNDERSTANDING GENERATION Y'S NEED IN MALAYSIAN CONTEXT****\*Mohammad Taufiq Abdul Ghani**

Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

*\*taufiq@fbk.upsi.edu.my***Wan Ab Aziz Wan Daud****Ahmad Zaki Amiruddin****Mohd Akasyah Mohamad Yusof**

Centre for Language Studies &amp; Generic Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

**Abstract:** For digital natives, there are numerous platforms for them to refresh their knowledge. One of such platform is the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which offer learning opportunities for learners all over the world. Over the years, public and private Malaysian universities have gradually used MOOCs, particularly to facilitate off-campus open learning. This has opened up more learning opportunities as MOOC is a flexible platform which enables learners and teachers to collaborate as an online teaching community. Based on this importance, this paper examines the need for digital language learning among the young generation and focused on the elements required in designing an MOOC platform for learning Arabic language for tourism purposes. This study involved 61 students from University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) and Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kota Bharu branch (KPTMKB). All of these students are majoring in Tourism. The data were collected through survey questionnaires and the data were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistical software. This paper focuses on the needs analysis of Arabic learners and it is hoped that the findings of this research paper will present an effective way to develop an MOOC platform for learning Arabic language for tourism.

**Keywords:** *Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Need Analysis, Language Learning, Online Learning, Arabic Language.*

**INTRODUCTION**

MOOCs are deemed as a beneficial technology in the field of education. MOOCs are advantageous due to their massiveness, openness and connectivity. Moreover, they are inclusive and allows a large number of people to access information that would otherwise be difficult to access due to the constraints of time, space, economy or geography. The use of MOOCs is seen as a powerful tool to empower learners as they enable learning to be delivered virtually online and enables learning to be delivered to learners even when they could not physically attend a class or a lesson. Consequently, a substantial interest has been generated in response to its progressive growth. In this regard, MOOCs are particularly useful and applicable in the context of tertiary education. (Mozoue, 2014) As it integrates conventional and modern learning practices (Wan Daud et al., 2018).

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 has demonstrated the government's strong support towards online, or virtual learning through MOOCs. According to the blueprint, learning technologies could significantly contribute towards optimizing student learning outcomes and providing better access to higher education. The blueprint has encouraged the use of varying forms set of educational approach and highlights the importance of lifelong learning programs. The blueprints also highlighted the government's intention to change the format of the undergraduate courses into more based on MOOCs by pushing for the use of blended learning in 70% of the programs offered in universities.

Despite its popularity, MOOC is still a very novel development and educators had only started to adapt and use it since 2012. MOOCs allow learners to be part of in interactive user forums. These forums help create a collaborative community comprising of learners and teachers. The first generation of MOOCs highlights use of open-sourced contents and flexibility in their structure, goals and contents which could promote the reuse of diverse resources. On the other hand, in recent years, there are many MOOCs that started to offer paid subscription where in addition to free open source materials, these portals offer paid course materials that are exclusive to registered users.

Another important feature of MOOCs is their openness where there is no formal qualification needed to join the virtual community they established or access the information shared. Furthermore, some renowned learning institutions from all over the world like Yale, Stanford and Cambridge have begun to offer courses through MOOCs. These institutions have also used the MOOCs platform to share teaching and learning materials. In this regard, the advent of MOOCs enable learning contents and materials to be accessed through smartphones, laptops and tablets which provide a fun, interactive learning experience and students can learn anytime and anywhere without being bounded by the constraints of time and space.

Based on the discussion above, generation Y's needs and preferences in using MOOCs for learning Arabic language for tourism purpose is explored. It is believed that MOOCs are highly beneficial for learners and that it is imperative for course designers to come up with appropriate course contents that fit the needs of the learners and the instructors and the failure to fulfill their needs might demotivate them from learning Arabic language. Thus, this study used an iterative ADDIE instructional design to develop Arabic course materials through MOOC. In this regard, this paper will only report the first stage of ADDIE model development and focused on the needs of generation Y learners.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Nadwah (1988) mentioned that needs analysis outlines the difference between learning a language for general purposes and for specific purposes. In the context of learning, needs analysis comprises of identifying the needs of learners involved in a course. For instance, undertaking a need analysis before designing courses like Arabic for specific purpose module and courseware to ensure the achievement of learning objectives. In this light, needs analysis enables course instructors to choose the appropriate pedagogy and course contents that are more related to the specific purpose. (Nadwah et. al., 2008; Wan & Taufiq, 2016).

Past studies have advocated the importance of needs analysis in the process of teaching languages for specific purpose (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Brown, 1995; Jordan, 1997; Daud N. H., 1998; Dudeley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Nadwah et. al., 2008; Wan & Taufiq, 2016). Consequently, in the context of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), the word "needs" is often equated with "wants", hence, 'needs' often reflects learners' desire (McDonough, 1984). Meanwhile, according to McDonough (1984) "needs" reflect the "demand of others", specifically stakeholders such as teachers, practitioners, designers and administrators; Chambers (1988) described "needs" as the prerequisite in the process to identify priorities and "analysis" refer to what needs to be identified, and the ways to identify them. On the similar vein, Richards et al. (2010) described needs analysis as ways to determine the language needs of a group of learners and uses both subjectives and objective information to set priorities to fulfill the needs.

Harding (2007) posited that rather than being a one-off activity, needs analysis should be an progressive process that is grounded on the targeted context, learning environment and other factors that affect learners. In this regard, learners' want is the primary input that must be considered as it is the determiner of learners' drive to learn and whether the course is effective (McDonough, 1984; Nunan, 1988). Consequently, the failure to fulfill learners' needs and want could stop them from learning and wane their interest. In this light, learners' drive to learn during the course is influenced by whether their needs are being considered during material development (Abudhahir et. al, 2014).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) classified need analysis into three (3) significant aspects, which are necessities, lack, and wants. The first aspect is Necessities which are related to "what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation" (Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A., 1987). In the context of this research, the students involved are students of hospitality and tourism who are required to communicate with Arab tourists by providing information, responding to their questions and complaints, and at times, attract tourists by engaging with persuasive conversation.

Meanwhile, the second aspect is lack or limitation, where learners' can be determined by matching their current knowledge or ability with the skills they require during a target situation. In this regard, the gap between the two aspects is known learner's lack (Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A., 1987). Pre-course placement test is one way to determine this gap, however, a majority of practitioners do not implement such tests as they face time constraints (Jackie, 2006). The third aspect is wants; according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), learners could determine what they "want" based on their "lack" as they have a clear idea of the "necessities" of the target situation. However, at times, how a learner view necessities and lacks might contradict the view of other parties including teachers and course designers. In this light, for this study, designers should focused on on learners' want to design an application that is effective to teach Arabic for specific purpose.

In all, in the context of “need analysis”, it is posited that individuals learn foreign language for different reasons and have different aims. Consequently, we believe that need analysis comprises of “compiling information both on the individual or groups of individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it when they have learn it”

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study comprises of two parts; first, the development of MOOC by applying the iterative ADDIE instructional design framework. Meanwhile, the second part discusses data collection procedure and the analysis of Arabic language learners need through MOOC.

### *MOOC Development Using the Iterative ADDIE Instructional Design Framework*

The iterative ADDIE design framework was applied to develop the MOOC. The MOOC development comprises of five stages - Analysis, Design, Development, Implement and Evaluation. In this light, each stage was iterated based on the feedback, suggestions and opinions provided by users, developers and subject matter experts. The last iteration was conducted at the evaluation stage when the perceived learning requirements are fulfilled. The iterative ADDIE framework is presented in the figure below



Figure 1: Iterative ADDIE Instructional Design Framework

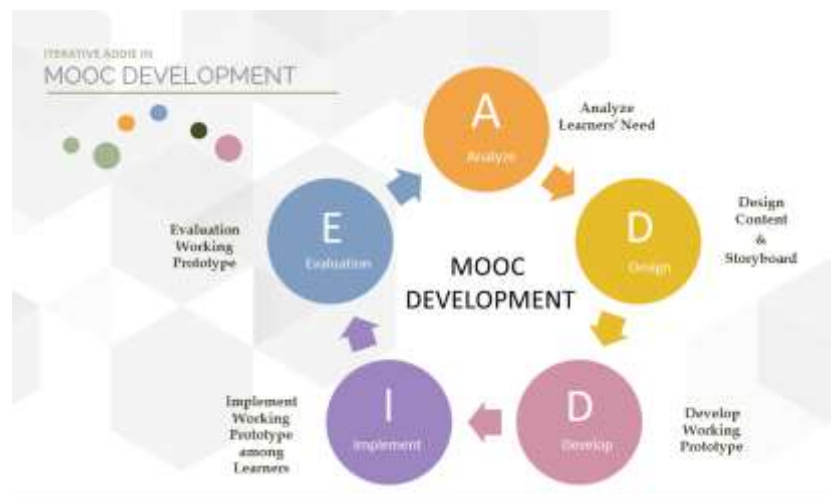


Figure 2: The Iteration of ADDIE Instructional Design Framework in MOOC Development

The first stage is a need analysis which was done in order to probe on the preferences and needs of the learners. Here, the learners involved are tourism students from two institutions. The next stage is the design stage. In the design stage, the learning contents, tasks, assessments in the MOOC were designed based on the findings of the need analysis. The third stage is the development stage where the storyboard and flowchart were developed. Subsequently, all the outputs

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from design stage were uploaded into working prototype. The last two stages are the implementation and evaluation stages. In these stages, the review and feedbacks of the subject matter experts were obtained on the learning contents, tasks, assessments and the technical aspects of the MOOC. After the evaluation of the first iteration was done, the second iteration was conducted where experts' feedbacks were taken into account to improve the MOOC. In this light, the design and development stages are improved until the final MOOC was completed. Subsequently, the final prototype of the MOOC was used with real learners, and at the end of the course, the learners will evaluate the effectiveness of the MOOC.

### *Data Collection and Analysis of Generation Y's Need*

In this paper, generation Y is distinguished from other cohorts based on systematic differences in their needs and preferences. Here, the needs of Generation Y Arabic language learners through MOOCs were determined through a set of need analysis questionnaire which were distributed to 41 UMK tourism students and 20 KPTMKB tourism students. There are three parts in the questionnaire; Part A consists of questions on the learners' demography, part B elicits the learners' need and part C probes on learners' suggestions for improvement. This study employed descriptive quantitative analysis and the IBM SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the data. Basically, respondents' demographic information was presented in percentage and tables of frequencies. For answering part B, the mean score were compared the range of 1 to 5 to determine the level of agreement among learners. The level of agreement can be categorized into five categories, namely strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree and strongly agree. While part c is open ended questions presented learners' suggestions in learning Arabic language via MOOC.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study is aimed to analyze the learners' need and preference in learning the Arabic language for tourism purposes through the MOOC platform. The data for this study were collected through the descriptive quantitative data collection procedure. This study's findings are put into three sections- learners' demographic information, learners' needs and preference and learners' suggestion. The findings are as follows:

Table 1  
*Demographic Background*

Items		(N)	(%)
Age	18-19	17	27.9
	20-21	6	9.8
	22-23	37	60.7
	24-25	1	1.6
Gender	Male	17	28
	Female	44	72
Level of Study	Diploma	20	33
	Degree	41	67
Device Ownership	Laptop	6	9.8
	iPad	8	13.1
	Smartphone	47	77
Internet Accessibility	WiFi	38	62.3
	Broadband	16	26.2
	Hotspot	3	4.9
Reason for having devices	Others	4	6.6
	Communication	30	49.2
	Education	22	36.1
Knowledge on MOOC	Entertainment	4	6.6
	Business	5	8.2
Having MOOC account	Yes	53	86.9
	No	8	13.1
Experience using MOOC for language learning	Yes	55	90.2
	No	6	9.8
Agreement on using MOOC in language learning	Yes	36	59
	No	25	41
	Yes	54	88.5
	No	7	11.5

Table 1 presents the demographic background of the generation Y learners. Most of the respondents are female aged between 22 to 23; a majority 67% of the students are degree students and while the remaining respondents are diploma students. Meanwhile, 77% of the respondents use smartphone and 62.3% of the respondents use WiFi to access the internet. The findings also showed that 49.2% of generation Y respondents use their devices for communication and 36.1% use their devices for education. This shows that Generation Y uses smartphone and relies on campus WiFi to communicate by using Whatsapp or making video calls. Moreover, the respondents use their devices for education purposes and use them for web based learning, mobile learning and accessing MOOC. In this light, generation Y learners have the opportunities to access mobile learning, e-learning and distance learning due to the abundance of affordable smartphones and tech device in the market. Furthermore, the higher specification of devices in the market has made it easier for learners to use the devices to fulfill their academic, social and economical needs such as communicating, accessing MOOC, watching videos and conducting online business transactions. The findings also found that a majority of the respondents are aware of the presence of MOOC and they have registered for at least one MOOC account. Moreover, 59% of the respondents have used MOOC for language learning and 88.5% are open to using MOOC to learn Arabic.

Table 2

*Learner's Need and Preference*

Items	(N)	Mean	Score
Simple Greeting	61	3.70	Very high
Tourism Terminology	61	3.70	Very high
Basic Conversation	61	3.68	Very high
Basic Arabic Culture	61	3.54	Very high
Basic Sentence	61	3.62	Very high
Basic Grammar	61	3.59	Very high
Listening Comprehension	61	3.62	Very high
Reading	61	3.72	Very high
Speaking	61	3.57	Very high
Writing	61	3.57	Very high
Main Interface	61	3.42	Very high
Text	61	3.54	Very high
Picture	61	3.65	Very high
Exercises	61	3.57	Very high
Game	61	3.62	Very high
Vocabulary	61	3.63	Very high
Video	61	3.63	Very high

Table 2 presents the needs and preferences of the generation Y respondents. According to them, the most important language components they need to learn are simple greeting with the mean score of 3.70, tourism terminology (3.70) and basic conversation (3.68). The respondents also believe that they need to improve the four basic language skills. Furthermore, as the respondents are generation Y who are considered as digital natives, they highly prefer the use of multimedia elements such pictures, hypertexts and videos in their lessons.

Table 3

*Learner's Suggestion*

Main Category	Sub-category
Hotspot terminology	1. List of hotspot in Malaysia
	2. List of Malaysian favorite food
	3. List of historical places
	4. List of public transports
	5. List of foreign affairs
Phrases	1. Greetings
	2. Introduction
	3. Asking, requesting and ordering
Arabic grammar	1. Nouns, verbs and particles
	2. Simple sentences
Basic conversation	1. Hospital
	2. Airport
	3. Embassy

Other topics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Immigration</li> <li>5. Taxi/cab</li> <li>6. Hotel</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communication skill</li> <li>2. Hotel and hospitality</li> <li>3. Mall</li> <li>4. Food and beverages</li> </ol>
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Table 3 summarizes the suggestions put forward by the respondent on how to improve learning Arabic language for tourism purpose through MOOC platform. Their suggestions were divided into several main categories which were further broken down into several sub-categories. The most common suggestion is for designers to include a list of Arabic key words and terminologies that can be used in tourism hotspots in Malaysia such as food outlets, historical sites, public transport, airports and other tourism attractions. The respondents also suggested that instructors focus on teaching common phrases to greet people, introduce something, as well as for asking, requesting and ordering. They also believe that by modelling basic conversation at hotspot places such as hospital, airport, embassy and hotel can help them to acquire more language skills.

## DISCUSSION

For generation Y, smartphones act as the main device used for their everyday activities including communicating, learning, entertainment and for business, retail and banking transaction. Over the years, the advent of ICT technology has led to the invention of new smartphones which are more powerful and affordable. These devices have made it possible for people, particularly the generation Y to access mobile/e-learning and to have the opportunity to learn from a distance where they can access course materials without having to be present in class.

In this regard, generation Y is the first generation that has grown up fully in this digital era and they are considered as digital natives era. In this regard, how generation Y uses technology and devices would create a picture on the evolution of how young people communicate, socialize, create and learn in this digital era (Helsper, E. & Eynon, R., 2009). Studies have reported that generation Y has a different thinking and information processing approach than the those from older generation (Prensky, 2001). As shown in this study, generation Y learners are more inclined to learn using interactive element presented through MOOCs. Thus, learning materials and MOOCs should include different multimedia elements such as picture, video, animation and augmented reality. Moreover, generation Y demands real-time information and prefers to multi-task and get involved in parallel process. At the same time, they are more attracted to graphics rather than text, prefer random access such as hypertext and prefer to play virtual games over “serious” work. In this regard, it was argued that the present education practices have failed in acknowledging that compared to the older generation, generation Y has different preferences, and ways of processing and using information (Helsper, E. & Eynon, R., 2009). Thus, there is a need to transform the current education pedagogy to fulfill the needs of generation Y learners and teachers need to use a more interactive pedagogy and communicate in a way that appeal to the generation Y’ (Prensky, 2001a).

According to the respondents, as they are learning Arabic for tourism purposes, there are some course contents that need to be emphasized such as tourism terminology, vocabulary and communication skills (Daud & Pisal, 2014; Gan, 2012). They also called for courses to help strengthen the core language skills as the lack of basic language skills might hinder them from communicating effectively in Arabic and they might not be able to interact with tourists. In this regard, they expressed concerns over the fact that the course is only focused Arabic grammar. Hence, there is a need for course designer to determine the most information and skills needed by these learners to fulfill the course requirement as well as developing course contents that are attractive and motivating for the learners.

The respondents also suggested that for beginner learners, it will be useful to have a list of arabic vocabulary along with models of accurate pronunciation of common words. This is to encourage learner to pronounce words correctly to prevent miscommunication. Moreover, learning the correct pronunciation could prepare learners to learn both skill speaking and writing skills. In this regard, learning portals in MOOCs could include audio clips that elicit the accurate pronunciation of arabic alphabets as well as including the vocalisation system or diacritics of common Arabic words and phrases. Besides that, according to the respondents, focus should be given in providing a list of important vocabulary related to tourism and models of basic conversation that occur in tourist hot spots. Models of basic conversations will help learners to practice and familiarize themselves on how to communicate with Arab tourists. It will also be useful if they learn phrases that can be used to request, ask, help, and order. They also suggest that a glossary is provided for each lesson or chapter. Consequently, these will be help the learners to more prepared in serving Arab

tourists when they venture into the working world as tourist guide, receptionist, immigration officer, and others. Therefore, course designers should consider these needs and suggestions.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reported the results from the need analysis stage conducted as part of designing a MOOC using the ADDIE iterative framework for learners of Arabic for tourism purposes. In this light, fulfilling the needs and wants of Generation Y learners is imperative as this aspect influences their motivation to learn Arabic. Moreover, the poor design of the materials and the learning platform could demotivate learners from learning Arabic. There is a need for course designer to put some effort and time in designing interactive, engaging and innovative course contents through the MOOC platform to sustain learners' interest in learning Arabic for tourism purpose. Thus, the MOOC to be designed and used should combine different multimedia elements and the latest technology. It should also be open access and accessible to students as well as other parties that are interested to learn. This study has shown the importance of smartphones in the lives of generation Y. In this regard, it is believed that smartphone is a catalyst for the increased use of mobile learning and MOOCs. Based on the discussion above, it is about time for the teaching committee to embrace the use of smartphones in class and expand the use of smartphones as a learning tool as it can be used by learners to access information anytime and anywhere.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank who have participated and give full cooperation in this need analysis study especially UMK and KPTMKB students.

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