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# Proposed Theoretical Framework used For Modelling Blended Personalized Arabic Language Learning

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### ABSTRACT

Bataineh (2017) developed and evaluated a learning model to personalized Arabic as a foreign language through blended learning for Malaysian students in Al al-Bayt University. In the development processes the researcher designed and developed theoretical framework used in modelling blended personalized Arabic language learning for Malaysian students at Al al-Bayt University. The reviewed literature directed the development of the theoretical framework. Bataineh study integrated learning theories into aspects of language learning through integrating the Social Constructivism Theory into the design and implementation of the model through social language learning strategies in order to meet the ultimate goal of personalized learning in blended learning environments. The theoretical framework has two parts: personalized learning framework and blended learning framework. The main focus of this article is to present the theoretical framework used in modelling personalized Arabic as a foreign language learning (BPALL) for Malaysian students at Al al-Bayt University. The theoretical framework of blended learning is based on various social media and platforms which are adaptable to almost any learning strategy that employs a constructivist philosophy. The theoretical framework of blended learning model includes five key constructs: Superior Structure, Content, Delivery, Service and Outcomes. Moreover, the theoretical framework of personalized learning model is based on varying the learning environments in terms of four constructs: pace, content, method, and objective.

### INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework, named Blended Personalized Arabic Language Learning framework (BPALL), was designed and further developed based on the relevant literature, particularly the blended e-Training system (HiTs) model (Din, 2010; Din *et al.*, 2011; Din *et al.*, 2012; Din *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the personalized learning is based on the (U.S. Department of Education 2010, U.S. Office of Educational Technology, 2010, Miliband, 2006, Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2012; Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2013, Felder and Silverman, 1988; 2002). Facebook was used as the method to deliver the Arabic language learning courses. After some formative evaluations were conducted and various improvements were made, a revised framework was used to design and deliver blended personalized Arabic language learning courses in the academic year 2014/2015. The design of the course took into consideration that it would be implemented by using a social network, which would mainly be Facebook.

In this study, the Arabic as a foreign language courses used a blended combination of face-to-face, self-learning and computer-mediated communication to ensure that the learners had the opportunity to actively interpret their experience using internal, cognitive operations via the practice of reflective exercises embedded

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into their Facebook groups' timeline. Task analysis was conducted to identify the most needed types of course content on which to focus. The findings were presented to a group of experts. Then, based on the findings of the content task analysis, a range of blended content was designed with different forms of multimedia elements and links to external websites and resources; for example, text-based material, audio, lesson objectives, slideshows, graphics, images, videos, demonstrations, and slides with multimedia and animations.

Three main instructional media were developed: a Facebook groups portal, which used resources such as news items, articles, features, short literary and narrative texts, polls, and advertisements; (ii) a new Arabic as a foreign language course handbook, which was used as an additional aid and focused more on the details of how to complete the training task and assignments via the Facebook groups portal; and (iii) a range of resources based on Al al-Bayt University series of textbooks for teaching Arabic as a foreign language originally designed by the Al al-Bayt University Language Center. The series are in the Arabic language and were also used in the actual implementation.

### **Blended Learning Framework:**

The theoretical framework of blended learning is adaptation of the HiTs (Din, 2010; Din *et al.*, 2011; Din *et al.*, 2012; Din *et al.*, 2013; Din *et al.*, 2015). The HiTs model is a problem-oriented project-based blended e-learning model designed for higher institution learning and training which can also be adapted to school-based learning. The HiTs model focuses on blended learning using various social media and platforms which are adaptable to almost any learning strategy that employs a constructivist philosophy. The HiTs model includes five key constructs: Superior Structure, Content, Delivery, Service and Outcomes (Din, 2010). Thus the HiT model is used in this study as a method for learning the Arabic language and throughout this study is referred to as the blended learning or blended learning model.

In this study, based on the task analysis, blended content was ensured by using technology in the course that was relevant to the learners' needs and expectations, providing relevant reading materials for the course, linking theory and practice, knowledge applicable in real life, and covering all Arabic language as a foreign language skill. The proposed method for learning delivery consists of (i) conventional face-to-face learning, (ii) various resources that were designed and developed based on Al al-Bayt University series of textbooks for teaching Arabic as a foreign language (note that the series is published in the Arabic language and was used in the actual implementation), (iii) a newly developed Arabic as a foreign language course handbook, and (iv) computer-mediated communication tools such as the Arabic as a foreign language groups on Facebook and the Arabic as a foreign language page on Facebook.

This study used Facebook as a method for learning delivery. Facebook allows students to express themselves beyond physical features and labels, share experiences, discuss interests, influence one another, make and develop relationships with individuals of similar interests, rapidly share and exchange rich information, and practice Arabic language skills. Facebook as a method for learning delivery was used with an emphasis on the four major language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Also Arabic was used as the medium of instruction, where students interacted with their instructors, tutors, and colleagues in Arabic, and were provided with authentic texts and audio/visual materials that had not been modified or abridged for non-native audiences. Moreover, there was interactive presentation of Arabic in live, communicative contexts with an emphasis on frequent student participation. Facebook as a method for learning delivery was used for studying Arabic grammar in practical texts and natural contexts to demonstrate the relevance and functionality of grammatical structures in everyday language.

In this study the service was provided by the Arabic as foreign language instructors of the University Language Center, who together with the researcher acted as facilitators. The technical and administrative staff members were also readily available. The blended service was ensured by (i) a well-prepared instructor who could help learners determine their learning needs, (ii) using reflection activities such as face-to-face instruction and online resources, (iii) responding to comments and suggestions within a reasonable amount of time, and (v) providing online support for social interaction to elaborate concepts and help students to easily build their language skills. The target outcome was to help Malaysian learners realize more skills in Arabic as a foreign language that they can develop, use, and apply throughout their life.

The structure for the blended learning in this study was provided by (i) adapting learner needs for specific content, media, and learning styles to guide the development and delivery of learning activities that met the course learning objectives at the same time as meeting the learners' objectives; (ii) motivating learners through the use of interactive technology, engaging learners in the learning experience, offering a positive and interactive learning environment, and providing opportunities for support and self-reflection; (iii) provision of a collaborative learning environment through the Facebook groups; (iv) designing a curriculum according to program goals and appropriate pedagogical strategies for blended learning environments and providing access to online resources and support for exploratory learning to enhance learners' learning; and (v) regular evaluation through providing opportunities for self-evaluation (Din, 2010; Din *et al.*, 2011; Din *et al.*, 2012; Din *et al.*, 2013; Din *et al.*, 2015).

**Personalized Learning Framework:**

In this study the theoretical framework of personalized learning, was an expansion of (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, U.S. Office of Educational Technology, 2010, Miliband, 2006, Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2012; Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2013, Felder and Silverman, 1988; 2002) approaches mainly (Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2012; Al-Mashakbh *et al.*, 2013), which was modified by adding a learner's objectives category based on (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, U.S. Office of Educational Technology, 2010, Miliband, 2006, Felder and Silverman, 1988; 2002). Personalized learning provides learners opportunities to learn in ways that suit their skill levels and individual learning styles learning "anytime, anywhere or any place" (Bray, 2011; United States Department of Education, 2010). U.S Department of Education. (2010) stated that:

*Personalization refers to instruction that is paced to learning needs [i.e. individualized], tailored to learning preferences [i.e. differentiated], and tailored to the specific interests of different learners. In an environment that is fully personalized, the learning objectives and content as well as the method and pace may all vary.*

U.S. Office of Educational Technology (2010) added that:

*Personalized learning refers to instruction in which the pace of learning and the instructional approach are optimized for the needs of each learner. Learning objectives, instructional approaches, and instructional content (and its sequencing) all may vary based on learner needs. In addition, learning activities are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated.*

The personalized learning model includes four key constructs: pace, content, method, and objective. Personalization of Arabic language learning can be done through varying the learning environments in terms of these four constructs. Each learner's pace was determined through his/her score in the Arabic placement test (APT) and his/her learning style preference. At the beginning of the language program, each learner completed an APT. This test was designed to measure whether the student had elementary, intermediate or advanced proficiency in the Arabic language. This test was used to assign the learner to one of the four language levels elementary, lower intermediate, upper intermediate or advanced Instruction for each language level was based on each learner's weaknesses and strengths in the Arabic language. As for learning style preference, each learner had to complete an index of learning style (ILS) questionnaire. Thus in each language level the distribution of learning style preferences was known to the instructor. The instructor then endeavoured to balance the activities of instruction to cover all the learning style dimensions for each language level.

Multiple types of resources and activities such as questions, exercises, examples, and projects to cover each pace were designed in order to personalize the method of learning. The methods for level I included enunciation and pronunciation of sounds to learn letters, translation techniques, and asking questions. The methods for level II include relational/communication techniques and discussion. The methods for level III included practicing listening skills and individual and group exercises. Finally, the methods for level IV included brainstorming, lectures (oral presentations by students) and games.

As for the content, the use of good-quality instructional materials is particularly important in personalized learning. This means designing, planning, and organizing instructional content to meet each language skill level in order to allow the learner to learn the respective content in an effective and efficient way. Accordingly, the content was designed and presented asynchronously through the Facebook group in different forms and included different types of multimedia elements and links to external websites and resources for each language skill level; for example, text-based material, audio, lesson objectives, slideshows, graphics, images, videos, demonstrations, and slides with multimedia and animations.

The last factor of personalized learning is the objective. As mentioned above, each student is unique, so it follows that each student has his/her own learning objective based on his/her needs and interests as well as the social environment he/she experiences. Thus, in order to personalize the objective to meet the needs of learners, curriculum topics were presented as learning goals to enable learners to learn according to their learning styles. According to Gouli *et al.* (2006), the learning goals and the learners' interaction with the content are the building blocks of the personalized learning environment. Accordingly, personalization of the objectives was achieved through planning the lecture time so that it would cover each objective, designing a variety of content areas to meet learners' needs, aligning learning objectives with the delivered materials that covered learners' needs, and offering access to a wide range of resources through using the Facebook group asynchronously for each language skill level.

**Conclusion:**

In this study, the Arabic as a foreign language courses used a blended combination of face-to-face, self-learning and computer-mediated communication to ensure that the learners had the opportunity to actively interpret their experience using internal, cognitive operations via the practice of reflective exercises embedded into their Facebook groups' timeline. The theoretical framework of blended learning is based on various social media and platforms which are adaptable to almost any learning strategy that employs a constructivist philosophy. The theoretical framework of blended learning model includes five key constructs: Superior

Structure, Content, Delivery, Service and Outcomes. Moreover, the theoretical framework of personalized learning model is based on varying the learning environments in terms of four constructs: pace, content, method, and objective. To conclude the proposed theoretical framework was used to develop a reliable and valid module for the personalized learning of Arabic as a foreign language by using blended learning and utilizing the flexibility of the blended learning to personalize Arabic language learning for Malaysian students in Al al-Bayt University through addressing three issues: (i) personalization of learning environments, (ii) flexible delivery method, and (iii) socialized learning environments.

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