Chapter 22
Formative Evaluation of an Arabic Online Vocabulary Learning Games Prototype: Lessons from a Malaysian Higher Learning Institution Experience

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ABSTRACT
The use of digital game-based learning is a new trend of instructional practices in different fields of knowledge. The research and studies related to this field are increasingly attracting the researchers all over the world to further explore the various aspects of educational games models, the design and development of games itself, the evaluation insights and many more. This chapter describes an experience of the formative evaluation of an online game among Arabic language learners at the elementary level in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative research approaches were utilized to investigate the usability, practicality and effectiveness of this games prototype in the real settings. This chapter also described the process and phases of evaluation throughout the responses from participants which vary from experts in instructional design (ID), subject matter experts (SME), lecturers and learners as the actual users.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of digital game-based learning with the potential of high-tech equipments is a new trend of instruction and enables the learners to immerse in a novel experience. The history of transition from traditional games to digital games began from the infants’ phase of human life by playing and sucking their fingers, physical games such as leapfrog and piggyback fight, equipment or tool-based games or called as toys, and paper-based games such as crosswords and Sudoku. Later it was realized that these games were not just for fun but they could also ease the tensed atmosphere and develop skills among players. This is the origin of the idea of game-based learning evolution i.e. by combining play and learn concepts. (Hsu, Sheng-Hui, et. al.; 2008) Game-based learning (GBL) is a new model of e-learning, which has its potential in teaching and learning (Prensky, 2001; Squire, 2005, et. al). The term GBL describes the teaching and learning process by using computer games similar to other terms such as digital game-based learning (Prensky, 2001) and edutainment & ‘serious games’ (Tsai et. al, 2008). Somehow, ‘serious games’ differ from edutainment games. ‘Serious games’ are more advanced in design, uses latest hardware and software and rules of simulation (Michael & Chen, 2006). This chapter will describe the formative evaluation of an online Arabic vocabulary games learning prototype, using the methods of the design and development research (Richey & Klein, 2007) and ADDIE model of instructional design (College Station, 2001; Dick & Carey, 1999) with the overview of other related ID model such as FID2GE model (Akilli, 2004). The mentioned method was employed to produce an online Arabic vocabulary games prototype for elementary learners in Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). This study employed a major qualitative research method together with a descriptive quantitative method to investigate and collect the data from related participants based on purposive sampling which was determined by certain criterions in order to obtain the results and findings. It concluded that this evaluation has confirmed to a certain extent the usability, practicality and effectiveness of this games prototype to enhance vocabulary learning among learners with the implications and recommendations to improve theories and practices for the future study and research.

BACKGROUND

The increasing usage of online games in other field of knowledge, research and studies inspired the initial idea to design and develop an online game for Arabic language learners specifically the pre-