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I-RoLE 2023

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' CONCERNS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MASTERLY!

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ABSTRACT:

Knowledge of grammatical rules is one of the important skills in the English language that needs to be mastered by students in order to score well in their studies. Additionally, the English language would be needed in many situations as the majority of colleges and companies contain a diverse range of cultures, religions, and learning styles, so the ability to engage effectively in diverse groups is one of the fundamental talents (Hashim & Leitner, 2014). Even though the English language is taught at all levels of education in Malaysia, it is found that Malaysian students are still quite left behind in their grammatical knowledge of the language. Thus, this study addresses these concerns by collecting feedback from the users regarding an e-exercise book entitled 'MASTERLY!' This exercise book consists of different levels of difficulty that test the users' understanding in mastering the basic grammatical rules of English. An online survey questionnaire was used to collect the data from a total of 45 students from SMK Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Selangor, Malaysia. The researchers intend to further develop the e-exercise book and market it based on the feedback collected. According to the post-questionnaire survey, part of the feedback regarding the e-exercise book was that the notes section needed to address more details of the topic and that the exercises were too simple.

Keywords: E-book; English language; grammar; students

1. INTRODUCTION

MASTERLY! is an exercise book in the form of an e-book that focuses on simple grammar, specifically the prepositions of English. Malaysian high school students still do not know the exact use of simple grammar by rules as most of them only use grammar based on how they think 'it sounds good and right this way'; they never actually know whether the one they have been using is right or wrong. For a long time, the general public and academics were unaware of Malaysia's English-language literature since it is not supported by the government, unlike Singapore. However, it attracted a researcher's attention, and was given new life (Nimura, 2016). Therefore, MASTERLY! tends to focus on basic grammar, in this case, parts of speech: and prepositions, as a starting point before moving on to more complex grammatical principles and other subsequent phases. Wahyuni and Safitri (2021) stated that students may find it challenging to write clearly without strong grammar skills. Hence why mastering basic grammar is important. Even if grammatical rules were not previously considered vital, more people should consider learning them. The study of grammar is now being given the importance it deserves in the language curriculum after people today concur that grammar is too important to disregard and that learners' language growth will be significantly affected without a solid grasp of grammar (Richards and Renandya, 2002 as cited in Nazari et al., 2022). This book consists of



different levels of difficulty and is organized into games with the use of prepositions and not bore them at the same time, as the normal exercises have been learned in the school syllabus. At the start of the book, a few pages of notes and explanations on prepositions were provided. The notes were made to be concise and easy to understand for beginners or people who still do not fully understand prepositions the right way. The first level of the exercises: easy, focuses on their understanding of prepositions usage, while the second level: intermediate, focuses on their memorization of the correct usage, and the third and last level: hard, mainly tests both their understanding and memorization skills of prepositions. Thus, MASTERLY! was developed to make students interested in studying the usage of simple grammar and doing fun exercises to keep them from feeling bored.

1.1. Project's Objective / Purpose

The study aims to investigate the areas of concern raised by the respondents on how the MASTERLY! e-exercise book should be improved before it is further developed for marketing purposes and to help students who are unfamiliar with grammatical rules properly understand its usage clearly and eventually master them.

1.2. Entrepreneurial Opportunities

As this e-book is targeted at students who are trying to improve their grammar (specifically in regards to the English prepositions, it is feasible for the researchers to consider marketing it at any online selling platforms. According to the researchers' observations of the existing products, the PDF format of e-book can be purchased on various applications like Shopee, Telegram, and WhatsApp. The buying and selling method would not be as complicated as it would not consume that much energy; customers can make any purchases through their mobile devices and pay through online banking gateways, and the product can be received in a matter of minutes. In contrast, if customers prefer the physical format of the book, they might need to physically print it out complete the practice there—this would incur more cost. Therefore, after considering the recommendations and feedback from the respondents, the researchers would set a price range between RM3-RM5 per copy of the e-book and this price is deemed appropriate considering the contents, quality, and target consumers (which are students and parents).

2. METHODOLOGY

This procedures of creating this grammar e-exercise book is shown in Figure 1. It depicts the entire procedures used to develop the e-exercise book. Before developing the e-exercise book started, a questionnaire was distributed to a few high school students aged 13-15 to help identify the needs for contents. The results will be reviewed in the 'Results and Discussion' section below. From the results, the researchers began looking for suitable content for the book and did some research on the topic chosen before starting to develop the e-book. The researchers completed the exercise book and distributed it to the same students afterward. Finally, a questionnaire was developed and some feedback was collected to measure the users' satisfaction with the book.

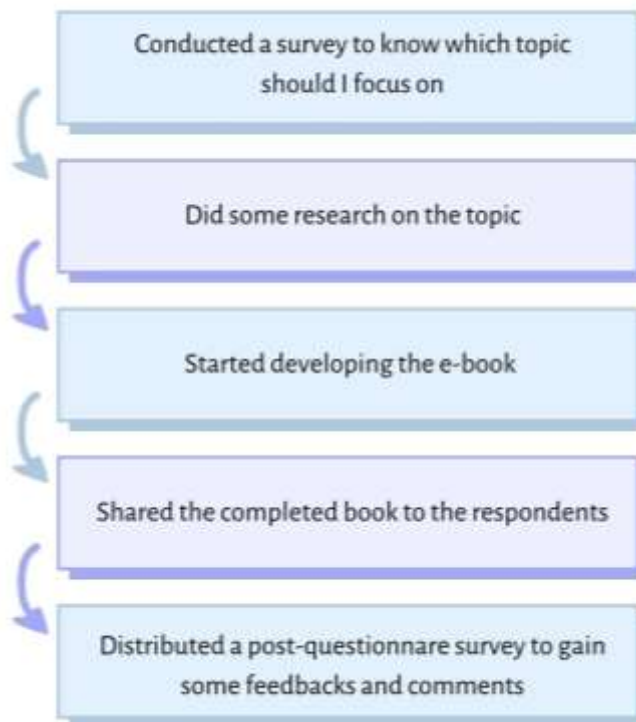


Figure 1: Flowchart of MASTERLY!

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 45 students from SMK Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Selangor, Malaysia between the ages of 15 and 17 were given a pre-questionnaire to help them determine their level of grammar proficiency and find relevant materials for the grammar e-exercise book.

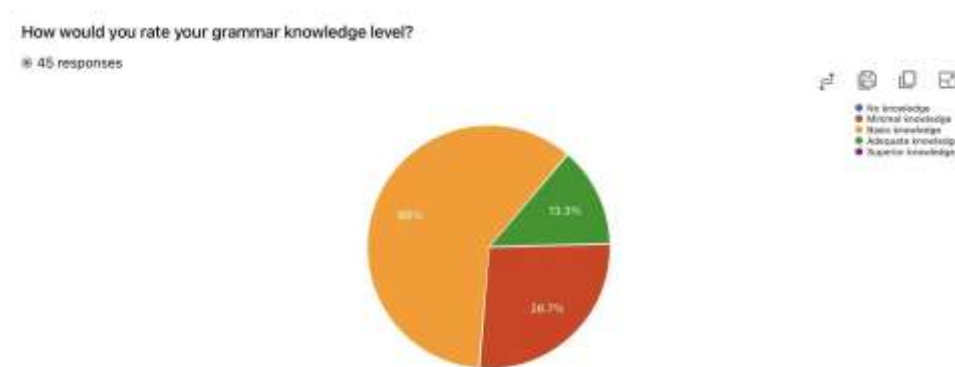


Figure 2: Students' grammar knowledge level

Figure 2 shows that 60% of the respondents rated their grammar knowledge level as 'basic knowledge,' while 26.7% of them rated their grammar knowledge level as 'minimal knowledge,' and 13.3% of them rated their grammar knowledge level as 'adequate knowledge'. However, none of them rated their grammar knowledge level as 'no knowledge' or 'superior knowledge'.

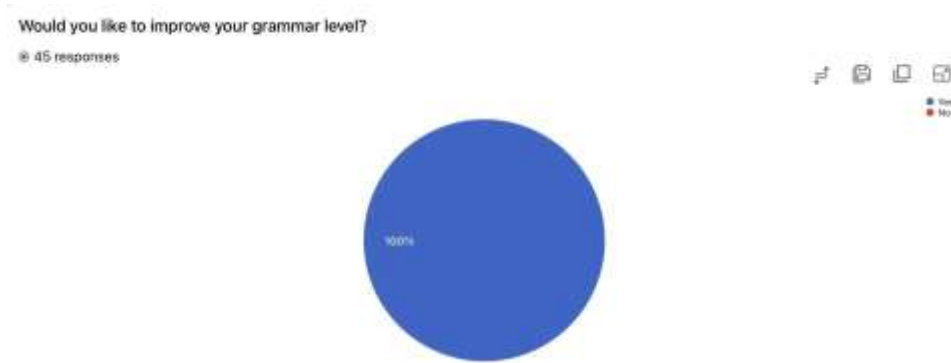


Figure 3: Students’ interest in improving their grammar knowledge level

Figure 3 shows that 100% of the respondents are interested in improving their grammar knowledge level.

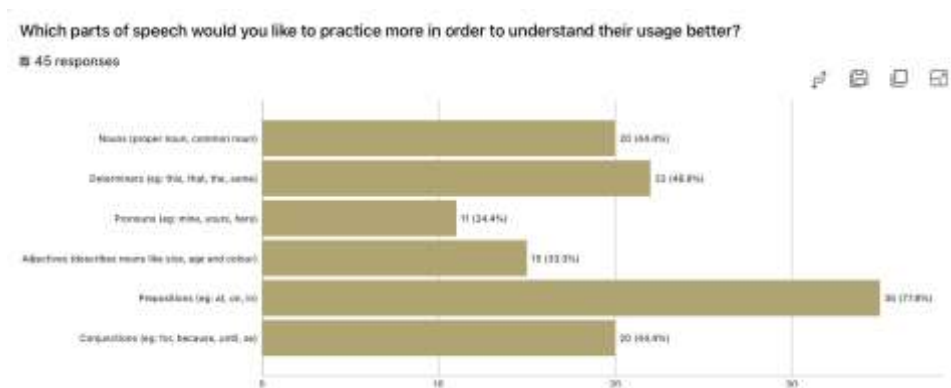


Figure 4: Students chose the part of speech that they would like to practice more

Figure 4 shows that 77.8% of the respondents chose prepositions as a part of speech that they would like to practice to understand their usage better. The percentage of respondents that chose prepositions is undeniably higher than the other topics.

After analysing the pre-questionnaire answers, the most-rated topic was studied to find suitable content before it was included in the exercise book. The e-exercise book was developed right after the suitable contents were found and filtered; the completion of the e-book took eight weeks. In order to gain some feedback and recommendations on any areas that could be improved in the e-exercise book, a post-questionnaire was distributed to the students who attempted to do the exercise book.

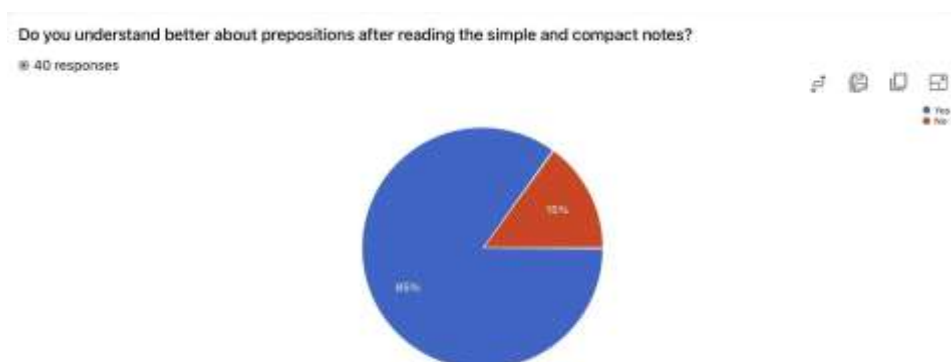


Figure 5: Students’ evaluation of their understanding after reading the notes

Figure 5 shows that 85% of the respondents agreed that they understand better about the usage of prepositions after reading the simple and compact notes provided in the e-exercise book. Instead, 15% of the respondents did not agree.

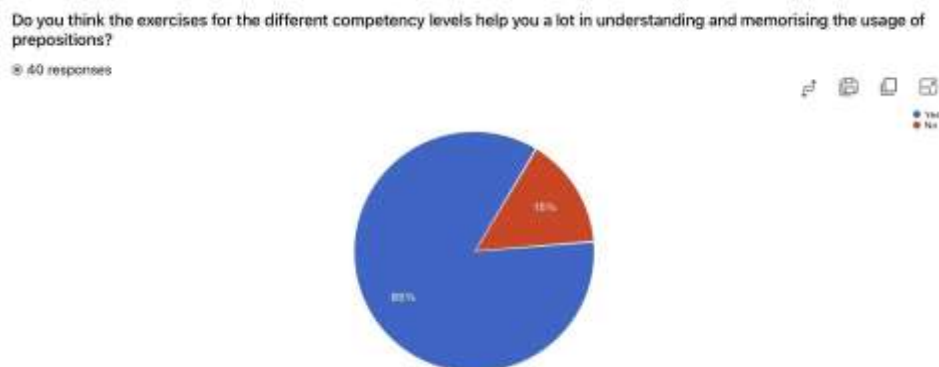


Figure 6: Students' opinions on the different competency levels exercises

Figure 6 shows that also 85% of the respondents agreed that the different competency levels helped them a lot in understanding and memorizing the usage of prepositions. Despite that, 15% of the respondents did not agree.

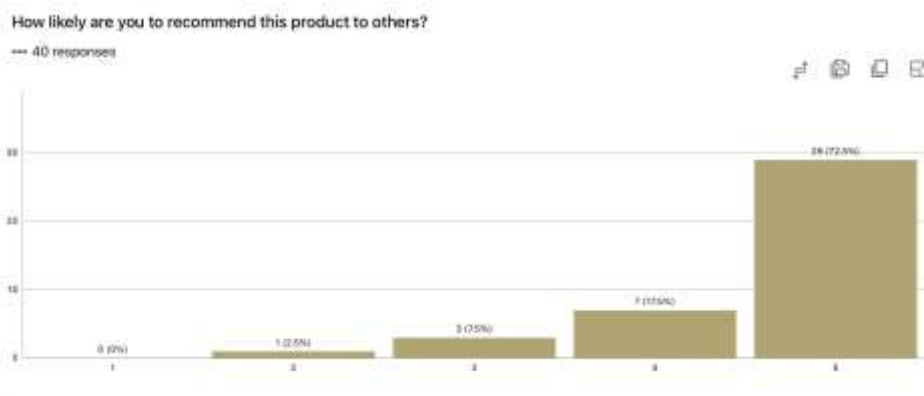


Figure 7: Students rating on how likely they are to recommend this product to others

Figure 7 shows that the majority of the respondents, a total of 90%, voted on the highest and second highest scale in agreeing that they highly recommend the e-exercise book to others.

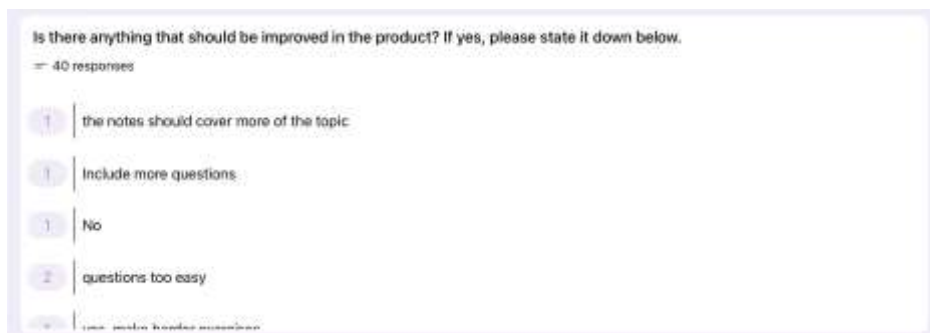


Figure 8: Students' comment on how the product could be improved

Figure 8 shows only a part of the comments received from the students regarding the improvement of the product. In total, most of the respondents suggested that the details provided in the notes should be varied and include more questions in the exercise book.

In conclusion, the respondents are mostly satisfied with the product created despite the improvements mentioned above.

4. CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the findings, this product received positive feedback from users and positively contributed to their learning experience. According to Mart (2013), we can determine that learning grammar will enable students to understand and apply grammatical rules more efficiently as well as become more conscious of the parts of speech like verbs and nouns. This is why MASTERLY! Focuses on basic grammatical rules, which is to give a kick start to the learners before studying the in-depths of grammar. However, based on the feedback received, there is still room for improvement in this product to strengthen its effectiveness. One of the planned improvements is to increase the detail in the notes provided to enhance users' understanding. Another suggestion would be to increase the difficulty level of the exercise to the 'hard' level. All in all, this project is a success in order to reach the objective that was made despite the comments received from the users. Future research could further make an e-exercise book that practices other basic grammatical rules such as; nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.

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