

PERCEPTION OF THE USE OF LMS/i-LEARN PORTAL AND TELEGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the perception of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students regarding the use of the Telegram mobile application and the UiTM Learning Management System (LMS) known as the i-Learn Portal for the purpose of discussion and dissemination of audio files for the Listen-Interact-Reflect-Act/Answer (LIRA) assignment tasked for the sample group. It is also served as reminders for assignments, quizzes and tests due dates. In terms of connection and mobility, most of these students have difficulty in accessing and communicating using the webpage, hence not being able to utilise it to its fullest. Telegram is seen as more convenient as the interface is much like other mobile instant messaging systems that facilitate students in responding to their lecturer and to communicate with their peers at any time. The study conducted on the students who took Integrated Language Skills: Listening (ELC120) course found that students preferred to use Telegram compared to the i-Learn Portal. They were found to express their emotions (using emoticons) more freely and could responded better to questions in Telegram. Based on these findings, it is suggested that a combination of both i-Learn Portal and other mobile applications should be made available to better engage students using technology as part of their learning tools.

Keywords: UiTM, LMS, i-Learn Portal, Telegram

INTRODUCTION

E-Learning has long been established as part of tertiary level teaching and learning and has significantly impacted the development of educational technology. The use of computers has evolved as participation of students in virtual discussions are emphasised in producing graduates who are competitive and technologically savvy. Discussions, extra notes and online quizzes are just some of the activities that require students to be connected to the Web. In most courses, it is a supplementary teaching and learning tool. Students are also encouraged to use this tool in their own study time. In UiTM, the e-Learning tools used are i-Learn Portal and i-Class Portal for uploading online quizzes or assignments among other functions, as part of assessment stipulated for certain courses in the university.

Arising from this concept is mobile learning, otherwise known as m-learning where communication between students and instructors is extended in mobile applications using smartphone devices, commonly used among students. Compared to other e-learning tools, mobile learning promotes students' continuous learning through conversation between instructors and students. It has become a growing trend for instructors to use mobile applications to encourage students in their learning process other than through the LMS. Among the popular applications used are Whatsapp and Telegram. The survey and discussion in this study was able to determine the students' preferred learning tool; i-Learn Portal or the Telegram application.

LITERATURE REVIEW

i-Learn Portal

The i-Learn portal was first established in 2005 (Saaid, Shahril Asmar Rashid & Jamaluddin Abd, 2014) and has since been the technological hub for communication between lecturers and students as outlined in UiTM's curriculum. Integrating e-Learning into students' learning process, introduced in the early 90s, has now significantly impacted higher education advancement as most students and educators have been exposed to the use of web as a teaching tool. This study focused on the course ELC120

(Integrated Language Skills: Listening), an English servicing course for UiTM diploma students specifically on the LIRA (Listen-Interact-Reflect-Act/Answer) assessment.

Telegram Application

The number of users for Telegram spiked after the four-hour blackout that affected Whatsapp users in 2014 (Constine, 2014). In many ways, Telegram has advanced and improved their services with more functions to adapt with the changes in smartphone messaging. While advancing and competing with other messaging applications, it is also acknowledged in M-learning because of its multiple functions of downloading files from pictures to audios, videos and even documents (Nunez, 2014). Telegram is also accessible through computers with internet connectivity and based on these unique features, Telegram can be an educational tool that takes m-learning to a more efficient level.

Previous Studies on e-Learning and m-learning

Several studies have focused on the perception and readiness of students in e-learning as well as m-learning. A significant study done by Saaid et al. (2014) reported that the i-Learn Portal does promote effective learning among the students. The study also found the i-Learn Portal to be user-friendly, thus facilitating navigation around it. However, the percentage of usage of the students in this study shows that they access the i-Learn portal mostly from the university system and from the laboratories but not much when they are outside the campus. This is also supported by another study by Srichanyachon (2014) on the perception of students regarding the LMS. The study reported that students have a moderate opinion on LMS usage due to factors such as lack of equipment which affected their learning process.

A study by Jazihan, Ahmad Fauzi and Wong (2012) suggests that students have high personal innovativeness towards m-learning; this indicates that students are ready to accept new technology which is essential in embracing the technology used in m-learning. Therefore, the readiness

of students also plays a significant factor in determining their perception towards using m-learning. Another study by Gikas and Grant (2013) reported that mobile learning allows students and instructors to communicate at all times and this, according to the authors, is seen as “fully productive”.

Based on the studies above, this study also hopes to get students’ feedback based on their experience when using the i-Learn Portal and Telegram. The objectives of this study are to:

1. assess students’ perception of the use of i-Learn Portal and Telegram.
2. explore students’ perception of communication via i-Learn Portal and Telegram.

This study focuses specifically towards an assessment of one English servicing course at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). Therefore, this can be considered an exploratory study which needs to be refined with further studies into this area.

METHOD

For the purpose of this study, the i-Learn Portal and Telegram were used simultaneously in giving instructions, uploading materials and carrying out online activities for the students throughout the semester. Subsequently, a set of questionnaire was distributed among the students at the end of the semester.

Participants

The participants in this study were Diploma in Creative Technology (Arts Management) students of the Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation. 19 participants; 13 females and 6 males, ranging between 19 to 24 participated in this study. The demographics of the participants however, were not analysed for this study.

i-Learn Portal

The instructions were given to the students and materials were uploaded on the i-Learn Portal from time to time throughout the semester by the instructor. Students were required to login to receive the instructions. They also had to retrieve the uploaded materials in order to carry out the activities specified in the instructions. Figures of the instructions given and materials uploaded are as follows:

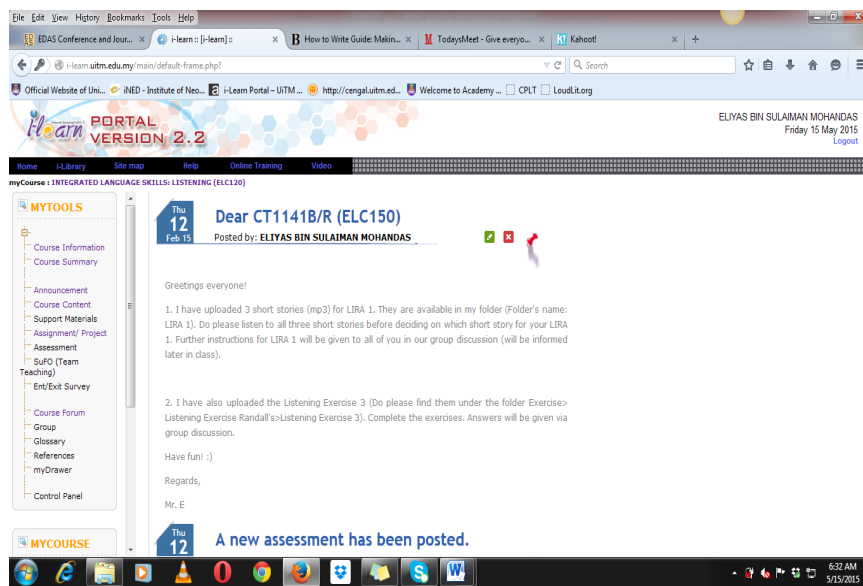


Figure 1: A Screen-Shot of Instruction Given Via i-Learn Portal

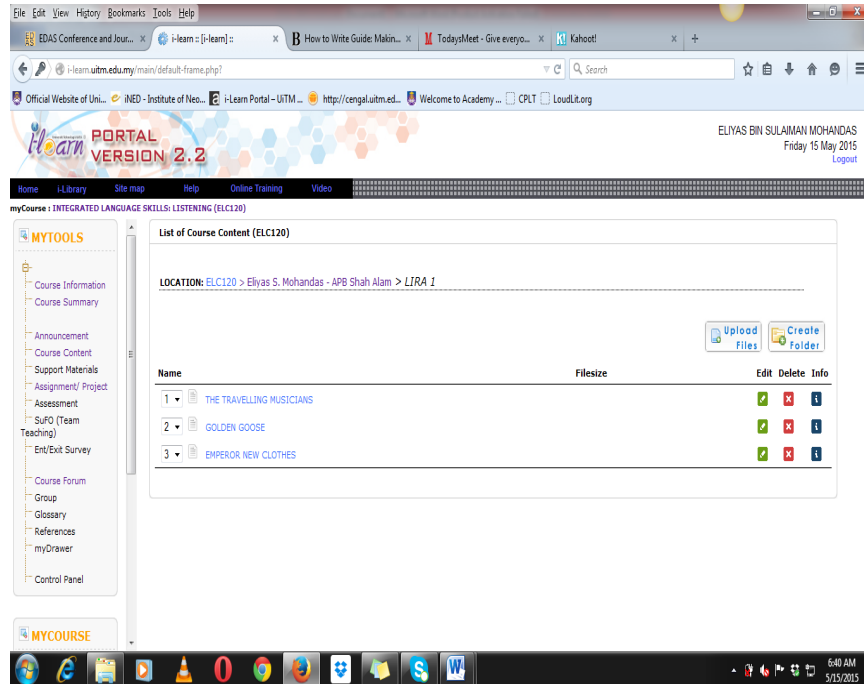


Figure 2: A Screen-Shot of Materials Uploaded Via i-Learn Portal

Telegram

Concurrent with the use of the i-Learn Portal, specific instructions were given and materials were uploaded via Telegram by the instructor to the students. A group chat was established by the instructor to enable him to communicate with the students. Students were asked to download the mobile application and then were added to the group by the instructor. Nonetheless, the distinctive feature of Telegram that allows anyone to add anyone else to the group chat facilitated the establishment of the group chat. The group then was named ELC 120 (1B/R). The group chat was also used as the medium of discussion among the students throughout the semester. Figures of the instructions given and materials uploaded are as follows:

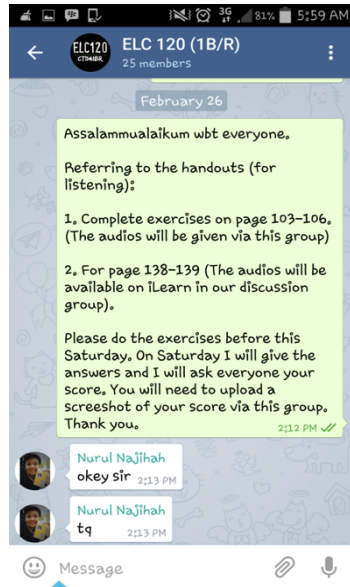


Figure 3: A Screen-Shot of Instruction Given Via Telegram



Figure 4: A Screen-Shot of Materials Uploaded Via Telegram

Questionnaire

Ultimately, a set of questionnaire was designed and distributed to the students at the end of the semester. This questionnaire was aimed at getting students' feedback on the use of i-Learn Portal and Telegram in carrying out learning activities. The questionnaire was divided into two parts; Part A consists of 10 items regarding i-Learn Portal and Part B consists of 10 items regarding Telegram. The items in Part B consists of the same statement where "i-Learn" was replaced with "Telegram". The scale used for the questionnaire is as follows: 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- partially disagree, 4- neutral, 5- partially agree, 6- agree and 7- strongly agree.

Item	Statement
1	I know most of the functions in i-Learn Portal.
2	I always use i-Learn Portal.
3	Using i-Learn Portal is an effective way to learn ELC courses.
4	It is easy to use i-Learn Portal.
5	i-Learn Portal is an effective platform for lecturers and students to communicate virtually.
6	i-Learn Portal is suitable for lecturers to upload notes, lecture materials and quizzes.
7	i-Learn Portal is suitable for students to download notes, lecture materials and quizzes.
8	I always use i-Learn Portal to check notices and announcements.
9	i-Learn Portal is an appropriate method to monitor lecturers' / students' blended learning.
10	I prefer to use i-Learn Portal for the purpose of learning ELC courses.

Figure 5: Items in the Questionnaire for Part A

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Item	i-Learn Portal		Telegram	
	M	SD	M	SD
1	4.16	0.688	4.84	0.834
2	4.58	0.692	4.58	0.507
3	5.47	0.964	5.42	0.961
4	5.00	0.816	6.11	0.875
5	3.89	0.737	6.11	0.994
6	4.53	0.513	4.89	0.809
7	4.53	0.697	4.68	0.885
8	5.32	0.820	6.26	0.733
9	5.21	1.032	5.05	0.848
10	4.89	0.315	5.74	0.806
Total	4.76	0.241	5.37	0.320

Figure 6: Descriptive Statistics for Data Collected from the Questionnaire

Figure 6 above shows the data analysed for both the i-Learn Portal and Telegram items. Items 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 show frequencies that students favoured the Telegram application. The user-friendliness and the availability of Telegram on their smartphones enabled easier access in engaging in ELC120 outside of the classroom. Based on the data, the participants found it easier to communicate with their colleagues and instructor, checking on notices and announcements, as well as downloading notes, lecture materials and quizzes. Being able to repeatedly listen to the audios downloaded through Telegram whilst they are on the move is also an added advantage of using this application. Item 2 shows the same mean; (4.58 ± 0.692) for i-Learn Portal and (4.58 ± 0.507) for Telegram. The active usage of the i-Learn Portal for the participants matched Telegram as both tools provided the same instructions and downloading of the audios for the assessment. The preference of which tool to use depends on the availability of the gadget that is convenient for the students. Items 3 and 9 shows preferences towards the i-Learn Portal with frequencies of (5.47 ± 0.964) and (5.42 ± 0.961) respectively which show students favoured the i-Learn Portal. Participants prefer for the communication between them and the instructors to be conducted through Telegram. However, they still favoured the i-Learn portal for the blended learning process. This is consistent with (Jongpil et al., 2012) in which their findings show students' perception towards i-Learn Portal is more of educational but more interactive and informal when using Telegram.

	Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	M	SD			
Pair 1 LMS-Telegram	-.611	.338	-7.871	18	.000

Figure 7: Paired-samples Test for the Questionnaire Data

Figure 7 shows the paired-samples test done to get an accurate representation of the participants' perception of the use of i-Learn Portal and Telegram. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in students' perceptions of LMS and Telegram ($M = -0.611$, $SD = 0.338$), ($t = -7.871$, $p = 0.000$) which confirms that students prefer Telegram to LMS in the context of this study.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, students' preference for using Telegram for their learning process is significant to the advancement of m-learning particularly to optimise their learning process in using mobile gadgets. Further studies are suggested to confirm the effectiveness of students' learning when using Telegram or other features that can enhance i-Learn, as well as Telegram, to make it more applicable to students' and instructor's needs.

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