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Development of Teaching Materials and Utilization of Web 2.0 in Japanese Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The Japanese language is among the international languages which are highly demanded in the education system in Malaysia, all the more so since the Look East Policy Program was launched in July 1981 by the 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Japanese language course has been offered at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) as early as 1975. The course uses the textbook *Minna no Nihongo* and *Introduction to the Hiragana and Katakana Japanese Writing*. However, the exclusive dependence on both textbooks has created a passive and teacher-centred learning environment. In line with the present development of information and communication technology, it is felt that an innovation in terms of Japanese language pedagogy should be carried out to balance the needs of the Internet (I is always capitalised) generation. The Net and digital generation is a social generation that actively communicates, cooperates, and connects using technology in the virtual realm. One of the technologies that can be utilised is by using Web 2.0 applications. Therefore, an eclectic method of intervention is needed by integrating and practising Web 2.0 elements to realise an educational environment and system that is even more conducive, modern and futuristic. This study focused on students taking the Japanese language course SKVA2723 at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics in UKM from February to December 2012 for 2 semesters. A total of one teacher and 55 students were involved in this study. The applications of Web 2.0 such as JING, Screencast.com, YouTube, OnlineNihongo website, and Wordpress were utilised in the teaching and learning of Japanese language. The period of learning for the Japanese language subject was four hours for fourteen weeks per semester. Through questionnaires, observations and tests conducted, the findings showed that the group of students who were exposed to the 2.0 applications showed more motivation, enthusiasm, excitement and higher scores compared to the group that was not exposed to the applications. The implication from this study is that the use of Jing can be applied to more complex kanji orthography, particularly those that require more than 10 strokes. It is hoped that applications such as Screencast.com, YouTube and Wordpress can inspire new ideas, encourage student-centred learning and can be shared with Japanese language and foreign language courses from other universities and other institutions.

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Keywords: Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning, Web 2.0, Japanese language, Action Research

1. Introduction

In the age of globalization, the need to learn foreign languages has become crucial in order to produce graduates who are clever at playing their roles in facing multicultural or intercultural competency environments. The Japanese language is among the international languages that is highly demanded in the education system in Malaysia, all the more so since the Look East Policy Program was launched in July 1981 by the 4th Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (Maserah & Hieda & Normalis 2010; Normalis & Hieda & Nezu 2012). In line with the development of information technology and communication at the present time, an innovation in terms of Japanese language pedagogy should be carried out to balance the needs of the Internet generation. The Net and digital generation is a social generation that actively communicates, cooperates and connects through the use of technology in the virtual realm. One of the technologies that can be utilized is by using Web 2.0 applications. Research on teaching and

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learning that is based on Web 2.0 is being actively carried out around the world (Anzai 2012; Aoki & Molnar 2010). Nevertheless, in Malaysia, research on Web 2.0 applications in the teaching of Japanese language is still minimal. Therefore, this role should be taken up by the Japanese language instructors in providing the physical requirements to fulfil learning in learning environments that change according to the changing times. There are several early initiatives in the use of Web 2.0 in the teaching and learning of Japanese language such as the one carried out by Normalis et al. (2012). Nevertheless, its usage is limited to the application of culture and grammar based on the existing website, namely Erin No Chousen: Nihongo ga Dekimasu! (www.erin.ne.jp/). Previous studies also suggest that the use of Web 2.0 in teaching and learning can increase students’ motivation and creativity that can in turn generate the culture of independent learning and open up more opportunities for the students to explore and gain knowledge from the virtual realm (Oakley, 2012). Moreover, the use of Web 2.0 applications can encourage student centred learning (Skocko, 2012) in accordance with current educational needs. Accordingly, an intervention of the eclectic method is needed by integrating and practicing Web 2.0 elements to realize an education environment and system that is even more conducive, modern and futuristic.

2. Statement of the problem

Among the problems faced by students is the lack of interest to participate actively in learning. Foreign language learning that is conventional in nature and solely based on textbooks and is teacher-centred simply make the students lose interest and focus and often become passive, thus making the learning characteristically a one way and boring process (Ashinida 2012). Therefore, in order to overcome this problem, Web 2.0 application intervention is utilized in developing teaching materials such as Jing, Screencast.com, YouTube and Wordpress. These Web 2.0 applications are seen as capable of making the learning more active and this readily available platform in the virtual realm allows students to refer to and review their learning at any time.

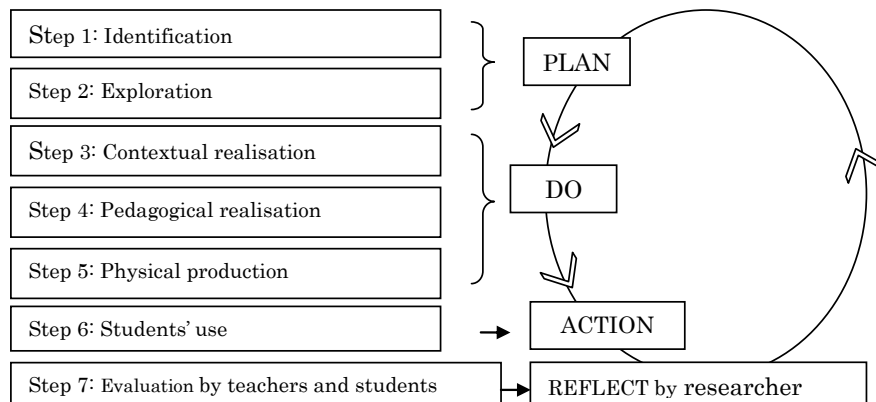
3. Research objectives

In line with the development of science and technology, the objectives of utilising Web 2.0 in this action research are as follows:

- i) Identify whether the use of Web 2.0 applications is more effective in teaching Japanese language compared to the traditional method of using the textbook only.
- ii) Carry out observations on students who used Jing and YouTube applications.
- ii) Obtain feedback from the students who utilized the Screen.cast.com and Wordpress applications through questionnaires and their feedback in class.

Research methodology

Action research can be defined as research that is conducted by the teacher by using the data collected in the classroom and analysed to solve the teaching and learning problem (Mikami 2010). The research methodology used in this study is based on the material development plan chart suggested by Jolly and Bolitho (1998) in formulating a new and effective teaching material. The material design steps with action plan’s view have been proposed by Aznur Aisyah et al. (2013). The process is shown in Figure 1.



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