

## Online Language Learning Strategies in Institutes of Higher Learning (IPT) Malaysia Post Covid-19

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**Abstract**—The Covid-19 pandemic that spreaded around the world in March 2020 has changed the nation's education landscape. Standard Operating Procedures that demand presence at respective residences have made online learning one of the best platforms that replace face-to-face learning in educational institutions across the country. Thus, this study aims to propose an effective online language learning strategy to be a reference for educators and students to master language skills using post-Covid19 educational technology. This research employs quantitative methods cross sectional studies supported by qualitative data. The research instruments is questionnaires. A total of 280 respondents consisting of university students in the Arabic field at Malaysian universities answered the questionnaire. The results showed that the respondents know how to learn through online learning with a mean rate of 4.24 and the respondents agreed that the instructions given during online learning should be clear with a highest mean rate of 4.46. Among the online learning strategies used by students are always sharing opinions during online learning, responding using chat rooms to engage in discussions and making notes to improve understanding. Respondents are also satisfied with online learning platforms such as google meet, Webex and zoom.

**Keywords**—online learning, learning strategies, Arabic language

### 1 Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 to be at pandemic stage on 11 March 2020. The statistics on June 2020 showed a total of 9,129,146 infections in 123 countries (WHO, 24 June 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the human life landscape today (Mokhtar, 2020). With this Movement Control Order (MCO), everyone who does not have a specific role in the main service is required to stay at home, reduce movement, and reduce contact (contact).

During that time, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has issued guidelines for the implementation of teaching and learning (PdP) during the MCO beginning April 1, 2020, which includes online learning using Google Classroom, to ensure that students

dropout from their education (Kementerian Pendidikan M. , 2020). Several universities have also begun to offer online lectures and courses. For example, at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), online learning began on April 13, 2020, to ensure that students, particularly those who need to graduate, are not left behind in their studies.

During the development of the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 for Preschool and Post-Secondary Education, the goal was to place Malaysia among the top three among countries with the best education system in the world. Since 2013, the PPPM Annual Report has shown that various initiatives have been implemented to achieve this goal, particularly in the area of pre- and in-service teacher training (PPPM Report, 2019). The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has also placed the need for information and communication technology in education as Shift 7: Utilizing ICT to improve the quality of learning in Malaysia (PPPM Document 2013-2025). The MOE, which was then led by the YAB Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, believed that ICT would help strengthen the teaching and learning process in all schools in the country. Students should have access to a wider range of, engaging, and interactive content through well -equipped equipment. Importantly, these ICT facilities will be integrated into students' daily lives in schools, without the gap between urban and rural areas (Ismail, 2020).

Changes in the use of technological materials advance the field of education and effectively increase the rate of achievement of learning outcomes. Traditionally, more chalk, blackboard, and lecture methods have been used in teaching and learning. However, technological advancements now allow students to study anywhere, at any time, without relying solely on books or lectures. Technological developments have contributed to changes and improvements in learning methods through the application of appropriate learning theories (Junaidi, 2010).

Therefore, the selection of educational technology and online learning platforms is very important to ensure that the objectives of learning and teaching can be achieved. However, the main limitation that teachers face when conducting computer-assisted teaching is that teachers are less skilled in using computers for teaching and students are less interested in learning (Yahya. O, 2007). There are constraints in online education such as Internet access problems, the absence of smart digital devices as well as the attitudes of students and students themselves (Harian, 2020)

According to Kok Boon Shiong's study (Shiong, 2016), online learning constraints include learning sessions that cannot involve all students, difficult to get student response, time constraints for handling teaching and learning sessions and time constraints for students to answer exercises after teaching and learning sessions.

According to a survey report on Online Distance Learning or online learning released on 20 May 2020 by the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic & International Division of UiTM, 31.1 % of students chose negative emojis that indicate anxiety during tense situations related to the learning situation. A total of 36,062 UiTM students from all campuses and branches in Malaysia participated in the study. Students also complain about having too many assignments to complete each week. According to the study's findings, there are six major issues that comprise online learning: an un-conducive learning environment, overload assignments, internet connection problems,

teaching platforms and instruments used by lecturers, fear and anxiety emotions, and a lack of skills in handling online learning among students and lecturers.

Thus, educators require strategies for planning and implementing online learning, particularly for selecting platforms and tools that can be used optimally. Furthermore, a comprehensive guide should be consulted in order to master online learning management skills and achieve learning outcomes. As a result, this study is very important in presenting an effective strategy for students and teachers to generate online learning that can provide a long-term national education drive after Covid-19.

## **2 Literature review**

The seventh shift in Malaysia's Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 is to use ICT to improve learning quality in Malaysia. Students in schools will have access to high-quality teaching regardless of their location or skill level (Kementerian Pendidikan M. , 2013). According to Lundin (Lundin, 2014), online learning uses a variety of electronic media and has advantages such as providing widespread access to educational materials and encouraging interaction among students, peers, and teachers. Furthermore, online learning can improve technological knowledge and skills while also encouraging self-learning.

Online learning provides a flexible learning opportunity in terms of learning access and learning modes. According to Kok Boon Shiong (Shiong, 2016), this learning system is mandatory for all students enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching Distance Learning Mode Program. Researchers conducted a study to learn about users' perceptions of the Online Learning System. The instruments used were questionnaires, interviews and observations through system logs. From the analysis of the data findings, it was found that the students were very satisfied with the lecturer's motivation strategy. Lecturers are also very satisfied with their motivational strategies towards students. Consumer patterns show that all three units are declining slightly, but they are still active in online learning. Researchers also propose that user patterns be studied in depth in order to develop a better online learning system.

Online learning is one of the learning mediums that needs to be innovated in terms of how information is presented to students. Irwan Mahazir (Mahazir, 2017) found that creating online learning videos for Machine Technology courses increased the interest of Technical and Vocational Education (PTV) students in the R&D process. The purpose of this research is to create a product, which is the creation of learning videos based on the PTV model. The learning object development methodology involves the Planning, Implementation and evaluation phases. This research is based on product development and evaluation based on expert validation. This study was designed to evaluate video development using expert validation. This learning object evaluation instrument was designed to evaluate multimedia elements such as text, audio, animation, graphics, and teaching and learning content. The study's findings indicate that the overall presentation of the learning video on the website (wix.com) is suitable and interesting for the R&D for Machine Technology course.

Faizatul Hafilah conducted a survey of students' perceptions of blended learning at the Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah Polytechnic (POLIMAS) using the Curriculum Information Document Online System (CIDOS). The emphasis is on knowledge, acceptance, and factors that influence students' use of blended learning. Researchers have also identified problems that may exist in traditional learning methods. A total of 250 POLIMAS students were selected as respondents. Questionnaires were used as an instrument of this study to find out some items related to students' level of knowledge of blended learning, students' acceptance of blended learning, factors influencing students' use of blended learning, and finally the problems faced by students in conventional learning. According to the study's findings, most students understand and accept the concept of blended learning. Students are also aware of the advantages of blended learning over traditional methods. The effort and enthusiasm demonstrated in learning the method are commendable. This indicates that students have a positive perception of blended learning (Hafilah, 2017).

Ummu Salma's study made Frog-VLE, an online application, as a research material to determine teachers' levels of knowledge and understanding of online learning technology. The use of VLE Frog educational technology is regarded as an educational innovation. In fact, it is a new thing to both teachers and students. Multimedia materials are used in the VLE Frog application to support learning and the ability to tailor course content to a wide range of interests, students, and abilities. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of knowledge of teachers in the use of VLE Frog for teaching and learning. A total of ten teachers from Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Binjai in Meru, Klang Valley, participated in this study. The findings of this study show that teachers' knowledge and understanding of the use of the VLE Frog application has increased as a result of action research based on observations and questionnaires conducted by researchers. However, to further achieve the Ministry of Education's intention to make VLE Frog a transformation in education in the new millennium, advanced courses related to VLE Frog technology are necessary for all educators to further improve their understanding and skills (Mohiddin, 2014).

Ahmad Zaki study (Amiruddin, 2017) presented a teaching and learning activity used to directly improve students' speaking skills through the use of an online multimedia and animation application called GoAnimate.Com. This topic's presentation includes a brief introduction to the application, its functions, and use, a description of activities carried out in the PdP Arabic course at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) using the application, and some examples of animated videos created by students for the activity (provided video link and screenshots). In the conclusion of this topic, the points obtained as a result of observations made during the PdP activities are also listed. The topic presentation provided several of the ideas for further diversifying third language PdP activities in general, which is combined with the use of widely available online technology and applications, in addition to boosting the use of technology in the PdP process, which is a recommendation of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in one of the Critical Agenda Projects (CAPs a Critical Agenda Projects).

Language teaching with computers is one of the teaching methods considered appropriate for today's educational needs. The use of computers in language teaching can

have an impact on both teachers' teaching effectiveness and students' mastery of language skills. Yahya Othman (Yahya. O, 2007) investigated the level and constraints of implementing computer-assisted language teaching. Furthermore, the study investigated the constraints that hinder the use of computers in teaching and learning. The study sample consists of 87 Malay Language teachers from the Hulu Langat district in Selangor. The study's findings revealed that the study sample grasped the concept of computer-assisted language teaching, and the majority of them had taken basic computer courses. Courses on the preparation of multimedia teaching materials, the use of the internet, and the development of websites receive little attention. The effect of teaching Malay language to students in using computers is quite positive, especially for intelligent students. Teachers' main constraint in conducting computer-assisted Malay language teaching is that they are less skilled in operating computers for teaching and students are less interested in learning.

According to all of the literature reviews presented, online learning is becoming a necessity in the context of new norm education. However, there are still limitations to effectively managing online learning. Thus, this study focuses on online language learning strategies as a comprehensive guide for students and lecturers in order to generate long-term education in the country.

### **3 Methodology/Materials**

The purpose of this research is to develop and produce an online language learning strategy that can be used by educators and students to master language skills using post-Covid19 educational technology. This research employs quantitative methods cross sectional studies supported by qualitative data. Quantitative-based cross-sectional designs use data to make statistical inferences about the population of interest or to compare subgroups within a population, while qualitative-based designs focus on interpretive descriptive accounts of a population under observation (Adeoye-Agboola, 2015)

#### **3.1 Construction of research instruments**

Questionnaires were used as research tools by the researchers. The respondents included 280 students from five universities. The specific purpose of this analysis is to identify the constructs that are critical components in the development of online language learning strategy evaluation instruments. The items of questionnaires was adapted from Che Wan's research (Ibrahim, 2014) with some amendments. The items contained 23 questions related to online learning strategies among university students.

The five major constructs of the questions are as follows:

1. Problems and challenges encountered by students after Covid-19 in online language learning.
2. Needs of students and lecturers for online language learning.
3. How to handle online language learning that has been carried out during the MCO period.
4. Online language learning mediums and platforms that have been used.

5. Selected content and materials for online language learning for each language skill.

**Data sampling:** The sample size of this research is determined using Krejcie and Morgan Model. The researchers compiled the information about the total of students in Arabic Bachelor Programmes in 5 universities for session Mac-August 2021:

**Table 1.** The total of students in Arabic Programmes (Bachelor Degree)

Universities	No. of students in Arabic Programme
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)-IRKHS only	358
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	288
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	261
Universiti Malaya (UM)	80
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	75
Total	1062

Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, for a given population of 1000, a sample size of 278 would be needed to represent a cross section of the population.

p: 1062

n: 280

The number of respondents involved in this study is 280. The collected data is analyzed using descriptive statistics based on mean and percentage values. The researcher analyzed the data using the software "Statistical Package for Social Science" or SPSS Version 26. The data that has been analyzed is presented in tabular form followed by an explanation of the findings of the study in a narrative.

The researchers have outlined some strategies for conducting online learning as a complete reference for students and lecturers. This strategy is essential to improving online learning management skills and ensuring optimal learning outcomes.

## 4 Results and findings

The results of this study are presented by using quantitative data. The interpretation of results was done based on a key to understand the average as proposed by Rebecca Oxford (1990). The mean score of 4.5-5.0 is interpreted as to be very high while the mean score between 3.5 and 4.4 is interpreted as high. The mean score of 3.4-2.5 is interpreted as a medium while the mean score between 2.4 and 1.5 is interpreted as low. Finally, the mean score of 1.0-1.4 is interpreted as very low.

The results and findings are presented in three parts. The three parts refer to:

1. Demographic Data of Respondents' Institution
2. The Demographic Data of Respondents' Programme
3. Online learning strategies

#### 4.1 The demographic data of respondents' institution

Table 2 shows an overview of institutions represented by the respondents. The results as shown in Table 2, indicate that Uitm is the most representative in this study (62.9%). Meanwhile, UM only recorded 12 students (4.3%) out of 280 students in total.

**Table 2.** The respondents' institution

Universities	No. of students	Percentage
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)-IRKHS only	29	10.4
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	176	62.9
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	27	9.6
Universiti Malaya (UM)	12	4.3
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	36	12.9
Total	280	100

#### 4.2 The demographic data of respondents' bachelor programme

It is apparent from Table 3 that the Arabic Professional Communication programme reported the highest students (63.9%), followed by Arabic Linguistics & Literature (31.4%) and lastly Teaching Arabic (4.6%).

**Table 3.** The students' bachelor programme

Bachelor programmes	Total	Percentage
Arabic Professional Communication	179	63.9
Arabic Linguistics & Literature	88	31.4
Teaching Arabic	13	4.6
Total	280	100

#### 4.3 Online learning strategies

From Table 4 we can see that the mean score for most of the items was high except for item 3 (The instructions given during online learning should be clear) illustrates very high interpretation of online learning strategies. Item 5 (I get more ideas on how to study well online than studying in a classroom) reported the lowest mean which is 3.39. Meanwhile item 16 (The mental state of students during learning and environmental conditions influence the success of online learning) reported the highest mean which is 4.51. This is a rather remarkable outcome for this study.

57 respondents also stated problems of online learning in the open question part. 23 of them agreed that most of students faced internet problems.

“Online learning is fun, but students' understanding is difficult to identify as well as if there is a problem of lack of internet.”

“Internet problems, limited time problems, communication problems between lecturers and students.”

“I have internet problems if the weather is not good.”

“The problem in my area is that the internet line is a bit weak and the electricity supply is not very strong which makes it difficult for me to concentrate while learning online.”

**Table 4.** Online learning strategies

No	Items	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	I know how to learn through online learning	4.24	High
2	Online learning time should be limited	3.92	High
3	The instructions given during online learning should be clear	4.46	Very high
4	Online learning needs to follow a set schedule	4.21	High
5	I get more ideas on how to study well online than studying in a class-room	3.39	High
6	I expressed my views while pursuing online learning.	3.59	High
7	I came up with ideas and responded online.	3.72	High
8	I use the chatroom space to engage in discussions.	4.09	High
9	I asked the lecturer when he did not understand the lesson.	3.96	High
10	The attitude of the lecturer while conducting the class influenced my comprehension when learning online.	4.41	High
11	I made notes to improve my understanding.	4.27	High
12	I use learning materials (such as online dictionaries) to help me understand lessons.	4.43	High
13	I print out notes then underline or mark important information to help me remember it.	4.05	High
14	I paused between one online learning to another to think about what I had learned.	3.80	High
15	I try to get back focused when I lose focus.	4.15	High
16	The mental state of students during learning and environmental conditions influence the success of online learning	4.51	High
17	I want lecturers to understand my problems when learning online.	4.05	High
18	I want lecturers to motivate me when learning online.	4.24	High
19	I want lecturers to pay attention to me when learning online.	3.87	High
20	The lecturer’s presentation techniques influenced my interest in learning online.	4.40	High
21	I am satisfied with the provision of online learning materials.	4.15	High
22	I am satisfied with teaching aids during online learning such as slides, youtube videos etc.	4.23	High
23	I am satisfied with online learning platforms like google meet, webex, zoom etc.	4.22	High

Other problems that have been stated by respondents are mental stress, demotivation during online learning, family problems and online learning platforms. There are 5 respondents who preferred to use Microsoft Teams than Webex for class sessions.

“I highly recommend that all lecturers use the Teams platform for the online teaching and learning process. This can facilitate students and instructors, especially from the aspect of learning recordings and attendance records.”

“I recommend to all lecturers to use Teams in Microsoft Team for each class as it is complete with all the facilities. Students can get recorded classes very quickly and make it easier for the lecturer to provide a recorded class link to students. Also lecturers can get the attendance of students directly in microsoft teams without asking students to fill out google forms and so on.”

“I recommend that lecturers use the Microsoft Team (MT) to conduct online learning. MT can make it easier for lecturers to record videos while holding classes online and the video can be stored directly in MT without having to upload to google drive. In addition, the use of webex and zoom is heavy and requires a lot of data and a strong internet connection.”

Respondents emphasize time management and learning duration. Many respondents suggested that the time period should be limited to avoid students feeling bored and lacking focus.

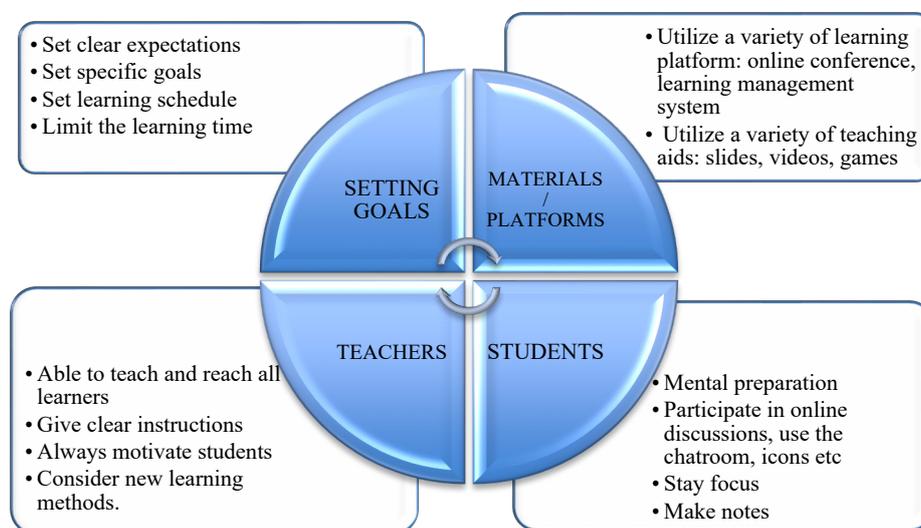
“Online class duration needs to be limited.”

“In order to succeed in online learning, the time period factor for each subject/class should be considered, such as not using a period of time that is too long so that students' can stay focused.”

“Be punctual.”

“Give students a break of 2-3 minutes for a long learning session.”

From the analyzed data and students' responses, the researchers proposed a model of Online Language Learning Strategies in Institutes of Higher Learning (IPT) Malaysia Post Covid-19 as below:



**Fig. 1.** Model of Online Language Learning Strategies in Institutes of Higher Learning (IPT) Malaysia Post Covid-19

The above model is proposed as an online language learning strategies in Institutes of Higher Learning (IPT) Malaysia Post Covid-19. But, before teachers use this online

learning strategies, teachers need to understand that there are two categories of online learning:

1. synchronous (Synchronous)
2. asynchronous (Asynchronous).

**Table 5.** Online learning categories

Online learning category	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Definition	Online distance learning that takes place directly with students in real time.	Online distance learning that takes place through online channels without direct interaction with students.
Learning activity	Conducts live short message discussions and video conferencing for real-time learning	Interact using the learning management system, communicate using email, discussion forums or reading articles

Teachers need to understand the significant differences for these two categories as they both have different effects on an online learning to be conducted. The selection of the right categories will help teachers create effective learning with the right selection of platforms and optimal use of technology.

Every student should have the opportunity to obtain the same information, perform the same interactions, and enjoy the same treatment with other students in the same class in an equally effective and integrated manner, with equal ease of use.

Therefore, all teachers are responsible for conducting an analysis on the accessibility of students in their respective residential areas before deciding on an online learning platform or application for online learning and online assessment. Teachers need to get feedback from students on the following:

1. Internet access,
2. Internet coverage,
3. Laptop / PC availability
4. Art-related material
5. Teachers are encouraged to conduct “experiments” to ensure student accessibility.
6. Options for students with limited access:
7. Low-tech learning strategies for example using WhatsApp or Telegram
8. Soft copy or printed material / pendrive to be sent to students, if necessary, by email or letters.

In ensuring that online learning meets the needs of the course outcomes, all parties need to play a role especially in forming a clear perception and setting specific objectives to be achieved. Learning schedules need to be planned and the duration of online learning is limited to approximately 1-2 hours per session. This is important to ensure that students' focus is not disrupted if the learning period takes too long.

Learning platforms should also be selected in accordance with the internet capacity of students. The use of a learning management system (LMS) can also help students to access learning materials. Teaching aids such as slides, videos and games are very necessary to help students understand learning easily and fun.

The platform should be selected according to the suitability of the content, supporting media and the effect of teaching delivery using the platform. Among the suitable platforms for online learning for the Synchronous category are:

1. Google Meet
2. Microsoft Team
3. Webex
4. YouTube Live Stream
5. Facebook Live video
6. Skype
7. WhatsApp or Telegram features that allow real time interaction
8. Any web conferencing tools

Among the suitable platforms for online learning for the Asynchronous category are:

1. Microsoft PowerPoint
2. Loom screen recorder
3. Screencast-o-matic
4. Adobe Captivate
5. iLearn (or other LMSs)
6. MOOC

Teachers and students need to work together to succeed in online learning. Teachers need to give clear instructions and always motivate students. Teachers need to consider new learning methods as well. Students must be mentally prepared to undergo online learning. The learning environment should be conducive such as chair, desk and specific rooms. To stay focused, students need to always participate in learning sessions. Taking notes is also one of the great strategies for make online learning impactful.

On the other hand, assessment is also important as a medium to find out the level of students' mastery and understanding of learning. Therefore, this phase is very important to ensure that the objectives of the course are achieved upon completion of the learning and teaching sessions. In the conduct of online learning, assessment must be done either in the form of summative or formative, self-assessment or in the form of feedback. The evaluation platform can be varied as in the following example:

1. Google form
2. Google doc
3. Exam.net
4. LMS
5. Quizizz
6. Kahoot

## 5 Conclusion

The result showed that all educators require strategies for planning and implementing online learning, particularly for selecting platforms and tools that can be used optimally. At the same time, students need to give a high commitment to ensure that online learning successfully achieves the learning objectives. Mental preparation, high focus and involvement in learning sessions are key strategies to ensure an effective learning session.

The proposed online language learning strategy covers several important aspects in a learning and teaching session. Setting goals is very important in the first phase to ensure that all parties understand their respective duties and responsibilities to jointly achieve the objectives of learning and teaching. The provision of teaching materials and selected platforms will have an impact on the effectiveness of online learning sessions. If the material chosen is good but the platform is not suitable, then this also disrupts the learning and teaching process. Finally, teachers and students are important individuals in implementing this strategy.

Furthermore, a comprehensive guide should be consulted in order to master online learning management skills and achieve learning outcomes. The online learning strategy is important in presenting an effective strategy for students and teachers to generate online learning that can provide a long-term national education drive post Covid-19. Post Covid-19 education should give new momentum to all educators to improve the quality of our national education.

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