THE CRITERIA OF LANGUAGE LEARNING WEBSITE

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THE CRITERIA OF LANGUAGE LEARNING WEBSITES

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A report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
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APRIL 2008
I declare that this report entitled "The Criteria of Language Learning Website" is the result of my own research except as cited in the reference. The report had not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature : 
Name : NORaida BINTI DAUT
Date : 1 MAY 2008
“For the treasures of my soul…

My Mom and Dad…

Daut Daman & Ainah Salleh

My brothers and sisters…

Norhayati, Sharir, Aizuddin & Nuratiqah

For the glow of Wisdom, and shower of Love,

For the drizzle of Guidance, and warm ray of Hope…

…this goes to you…”
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“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

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Lastly to those names which have not been mentioned, this goes out to you all as well. Thank you for being there for me.
ABSTRACT

This research attempts to investigate the important elements in language learning websites based on the preference of future English as Second Language (ESL) teachers. Apart from that, other purposes of this study are to investigate the purpose of accessing the websites as well as additional elements that can contribute in improving language learning websites. Subjects are taken from final year undergraduates taking Teaching English as a Second Language as their major. A set of questionnaires was used to collect data and the data were analyzed using quantitative and descriptive analysis. Evaluation was based on frequencies and averages. The findings of this study show that the Internet is one of the most popular sources for learning a language, and websites that introduce language learning are found to be very useful and had been accessed frequently. Users accessed the websites mainly to search for language notes, activities and materials. The elements contributing to the importance of language learning websites are the language of the text as well as users’ control. This study can be used to improve existing language learning websites or to be referred as a guide for future website development.
ABSTRAK

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2-D  2 Dimensional
CALL  Computer Assisted Language Learning
ESL  English as a Second Language
HTML  Hypertext Markup Language
ICT  Information and Communication Technology
TESL  Teaching English as a Second Language
WBE  Web-Based Education
WBL  Web-Based Learning
1.0 Introduction

There are millions of websites found on the Internet and the amount increases by day. The number makes it possible for users to have more freedom in choosing whichever sites that are beneficial to them. If a particular website does not satisfy their needs, they will leave and look elsewhere (Nielsen, 2000). Thus it is important that websites provide usability as well as other design criteria for it to attract users to use them (Shneiderman & Plaisant 2005, Nielsen 2000).

Before designing a website, designers must determine what type of website they are composing. Different websites hold different purposes such as providing information, promoting business, education and so on. Having realized these different purposes, designers will then know the needs of the target users. Each user has their own different perspective on what kind of website that is interesting and beneficial to them. Therefore, developing websites that respond to the needs of the users are critical for all site developers (Price, 1997)
The website elements that consider the users’ desires can be divided into two categories. The first is on the site itself. This includes the navigation system, capability for texts to be read and time needed for a webpage to appear (Nielson, 2000). The second category focuses on the target users. Users from different background have different interests and needs. Thus the elements include the age of the users, cultural and personality differences as well as international diversity (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2005). Websites that do not consider these elements or criteria have higher chances of being desolated by the users.

Therefore in order to make the website works well for users, website designs should be evaluated for their role in providing short learning times, rapid tasks performance, low error rates, ease of maintenance, and high user satisfaction (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2005). Web designers should consider both users as well as the website for it to be effective for its target users.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Internet supports student’s learning by eliminating the barriers to access information. With the Internet and a good teacher, students can locate information and communicate with others, allowing them to connect with relevant real-world resources (Serim, 1996). Online learning activities such as reading club, newsletter and blog, serve the purpose of stimulating learners’ learning motivation (Kuo, 2006). Therefore online activities do not only make lessons more interesting but also help student explore new environment and settings.

Nowadays, there are many language learning websites that provide simple to advanced level of language for learners to choose. These language learning websites include online tutorials, exercises, games and so on. There are even online
dictionaries for learners to refer to. As for teachers, some of these websites even provide lesson plans, materials and sample of activities for them to implement in classrooms. Thus we could see that language learning websites have their own purpose to serve for different users.

The current education system supports the use of computer and the Internet in classroom setting. For example, the Malaysian Board of Education implemented Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subject in Form Four and Five curriculum specifications as a way for the students to get updated with the latest technology. The Internet and websites are now welcomed to be used in classrooms. For language learning, selecting suitable websites to be browsed through by students is added into the teacher’s list of duties. Teachers must select websites that support their students’ needs. Therefore, the creation of the language learning website itself is the fundamental and most important part especially to avoid unnecessary problems in selecting the websites.

Thus, in order to make a language learning website effective to be used as a source of teaching and learning, it is important that the designers know the necessary elements in designing the websites. These elements or criteria should be put into great consideration in order to increase the interest and motivation of the learners to learn language independently through the internet. Due to this, a study should be conducted to find the elements applied as well as the target users’ preference of language learning websites.

1.2 Statement of Problem

A teaching profession is faced with a multiplicity of demands (Wood, 2006). A teacher does not only teach, but serves as a mentor, facilitator or guide to their
students. Thus a teacher is expected to know matter from common to complex. In relation to this, teachers should be able to answer which language learning website is effective enough to be used by students.

Since teachers devote half of their life being with their students, they are the ones more likely to know their students better in terms of background, language proficiency, and style of learning. However, with thousands, perhaps millions of language learning websites that are now found on the Internet, it is almost impossible for the teachers to select which fits well with their students needs. Lynch (2002) stated that many educational institutions and corporations have approached the development process as a reaction to perceived competition for students, instead of as a project to enhance student learning. This goes the same for developing language learning websites. Lynch also stated that Web-based education had increased in courses and study opportunities; however the consequences of absence of strategic planning can be seen afterwards such as refusal to teach online and protests over receiving insufficient feedback.

With the statement above, it can be seen that the planning language learning website development should be improved with the collaboration of teachers. In order for the teachers to grasp and implement Web-based learning to the fullest, their suggestions on what should be in a language learning website are important. Thus this research is dedicated to find out English as Second Language teachers’ propositions of the crucial elements needed in language learning websites. This research will answer three different questions: What are the elements of language learning websites? What are the uses of language learning websites to TESL trainees? and What are the elements that attract their attention?
1.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:
1. To determine the elements of language learning websites
2. To investigate the reasons for TESL trainees accessing language learning websites
3. To identify the elements of the language learning website that attract the attention of TESL trainees

1.4 Research Question

This study will provide answers to the following questions:
1. What are the elements of language learning websites?
2. What are the uses of language learning websites to TESL trainees?
3. What are the elements of language learning websites that attract the attention of TESL trainees?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study could be used by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in identifying the types of language learning websites that can benefit most when implementing them in classrooms. Elements that are introduced will help the teachers find websites that suit their teaching methods and needs. Thus teachers will not have to waste time surfing through websites that could not provide the necessary needs to them and the students.