

ADAPTIVE LEARNING MODEL FOR LEARNING COMPUTATIONAL  
THINKING THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ROBOTIC

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy

School of Computing  
Faculty of Engineering  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

DECEMBER 2021

## **DEDICATION**

Bismillah. This thesis is dedicated to ayah and ma, who are responsible for convincing me to pursue my study and fight for my ambition. Their endless support and encouragement have accompanied me throughout my master journey. Besides them, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my only supervisor since my bachelor's degree, Prof. Dr. Dayang Norhayati Abang Jawawi, for countless hours spent in sharing understanding and knowledge in research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful.*

First and foremost, all praise to The Almighty, all praise to Allah for granting me high patience and strength to complete my master study journey of almost two years of effort and tears. I should thank many people that have made this journey such a truly priceless experience. In preparing this thesis, I was in contact in many people, researchers, academicians, teachers, and students. They have contributed towards my understanding and thoughts.

My sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Dayang Norhayati Abang Jawawi and my co-supervisor, TS. Dr. Rohayanti Hassan, for their informative supervision, guidance, valuable comments, motivation, and countless hours of time spent in sharing anything related to my study. I am so satisfied to have gained immense knowledge from them. I must not forget my close friends that also should be recognized for their great support, El, Irsyad, Meryl, Ain, Kak Yong, Zainab, Mirza, Aimi, and many more. Finally, I am grateful to all my family members.

*“My dearest dad, mum, family, and friends”* This is for all of you.

## **ABSTRACT**

Computational thinking (CT) has been promoted worldwide by educational systems and is an essential skill for technological citizens. In delivering CT, various kinds of educational tools were developed by researchers to support the learning. One of the attractive tools in providing the CT is educational robotic (ER). However, delivering CT to students through ER has many challenges. There is a lack of studies presenting the general view on the integration of ER and CT as both subjects have big scope in terms of teaching and learning. Thus, this study designed a conceptual data model to represent the relationship between CT and ER. In addition to the complexity in determining the suitability of both subjects for students' learning, students also have differences in their personal traits, resulting in different learning styles and thinking styles. Therefore, this study aimed to enhance an adaptive learning (AL) model for students, which is based on the students' learning style and knowledge level. The enhanced AL model comprised three sub-models: domain model, student model, and adaptation model. Two case studies were selected, which are learning advance of CT and the introductory of computational thinking through educational robotic (CTER). At the end of the study, it can be observed that the enhanced AL model produced positive results in performance and perception for various student categories. In learning advanced CT, both groups of students exhibited a positive perception of using the AL model. Nevertheless, the group of students who applied the enhanced AL model outperformed the other group in term of performance. Additionally, in learning CTER, it can be observed that students had a good perception in using enhanced AL model, while the group of students who either applied AL model or did not in learning CTER introduction had a good result towards the learning performance. In conclusion, this study showed that the enhanced AL model could improve learning performance, especially for learning advanced CT and can be used for learning CTER.

## ABSTRAK

Pemikiran komputasional (CT) telah diperkenalkan di seluruh dunia melalui sistem pendidikan dan merupakan kemahiran penting bagi warga teknologi. Dalam menyampaikan CT, pelbagai jenis alat bantuan pendidikan telah dibangunkan oleh para penyelidik untuk menyokong pembelajaran. Salah satu alat bantuan yang menarik dalam menyampaikan CT adalah pendidikan robotik (ER). Walau bagaimanapun, menyampaikan CT kepada pelajar melalui ER mempunyai banyak cabaran. Terdapat kekurangan kajian yang mengemukakan pandangan umum tentang integrasi ER dan CT kerana kedua-dua subjek ini mempunyai skop yang besar dari segi pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Oleh itu, kajian ini mereka bentuk model data konseptual untuk mewakili hubungan antara CT dan ER. Di samping kerumitan dalam menentukan kesesuaian kedua-dua subjek untuk pembelajaran pelajar, pelajar juga mempunyai perbezaan sifat peribadi mereka yang menyebabkan gaya pembelajaran dan pemikiran berbeza. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menambah baik model pembelajaran adaptif (AL) untuk pelajar berdasarkan gaya pembelajaran dan tahap pengetahuan pelajar. Model AL yang ditambah baik mempunyai tiga sub model: model domain, model pelajar dan model adaptasi. Dua bentuk kajian kes telah dipilih iaitu pembelajaran CT lanjutan dan pembelajaran pengenalan pemikiran komputasional melalui pendidikan robotik (CTER). Pada akhir kajian, dapat diperhatikan bahawa model AL yang telah ditambah baik menghasilkan keputusan yang positif dalam prestasi dan persepsi untuk pelbagai kategori pelajar. Dalam pembelajaran CT lanjutan, kedua-dua kumpulan pelajar menunjukkan persepsi yang positif terhadap penggunaan model AL. Namun begitu, kumpulan pelajar yang menggunakan model AL yang telah ditambah baik mengatasi kumpulan lain dari segi prestasi. Di samping itu, dalam pembelajaran CTER, dapat diperhatikan bahawa pelajar mempunyai persepsi yang baik dalam menggunakan model AL yang ditambah baik, manakala kumpulan pelajar yang sama ada menggunakan model AL atau tidak dalam pembelajaran pengenalan CTER mempunyai keputusan yang baik terhadap prestasi pembelajaran. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini mendapati model AL yang ditambah baik dapat meningkatkan prestasi pembelajaran terutamanya untuk pembelajaran lanjutan CT dan boleh digunakan untuk pembelajaran CTER.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL	-	Adaptive Learning
AL1	-	Adaptation Level 1
AL2	-	Adaptation Level 2
ANA	-	Activity Navigation Agent
AI	-	Artificial Intelligence
AR	-	Augmented Reality
BN	-	Bayesian Network
CAP	-	Content Adjusting Principle
CDM	-	Conceptual data model
CGPA	-	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CT	-	Computational Thinking
CTER	-	Computational Thinking through Educational Robotic
DC	-	Dependencies Configuration
DMR	-	Domain Model Repository
EA	-	Extracurricular Activities
EALM	-	Enhancement of Adaptive Learning Model
EL	-	Education Level
ER	-	Educational Robotic
FL	-	Formal Learning
FSLSM	-	Felder Silverman Learning Style Model
GTA	-	Grounded Theory Analysis
HE	-	Higher Education
HOT	-	Higher Order Thinking
ILS	-	Index Learning Style
K	-	Kindergarten
KL	-	Knowledge Level
KLSM	-	Kolb's Learning Style Model
KPM	-	Ministry of Education
KSA	-	Knowledge Assessment Agent
LE	-	Level of Education / Education Level

LMR	-	Learning Material Repository
LMS	-	Learning Management System
LOM	-	Learning Object Metadata
LOT	-	Lower Order Thinking
LR	-	Literature Review
LRepo	-	Learning Repository
LSA	-	Learning Style Automation
LS	-	Learning Style
LSQ	-	Learning Style Questionnaire
LS1	-	Learning Style by FSLSM
LS2	-	Learning Style by KLSM
MKN	-	National Security Council
MNA	-	Material Navigation Agent
MoHE	-	Ministry of Higher Education
NBa	-	Naïve Bayes Algorithm
NRC	-	National Robotic Competition
PG	-	Postgraduate
PL	-	Personalized Learning
PS	-	Primary School
QAC	-	Question Address Code
QBR	-	Question Bank Repository
SE	-	Standard Error
SERG	-	Software Engineering Research Group
SMS	-	Systematic Mapping Study
SNA	-	Smart Navigation Agent
SLR	-	Systematic Literature Review
SOP	-	Standard Operating Procedure
SS	-	Secondary School
STEM	-	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematic
UG	-	Undergraduate
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UTMSPACE	-	School of Professional and Continuing Education
VE <sub>n</sub> Vi	-	Virtual Environment Interaction

- VR - Virtual Reality
- 4IR - The Fourth Industrial Revolution

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is upon us. The experts predict more than 7,000,000 jobs will be affected in the next five years in the world's largest economies especially in technological fields such as robotics, autonomous vehicles and many more (IEEE, 2020). The changes of 4IR technologies have forced the employment landscape to undergo a massive shift on selecting only those employees with advanced skills. The Thrivent 4IR demanded highly specialized skills to be driven in today's world workforce (Chidera, 2020).

One of the skills is the ability in solving problems. Problems can be either complex or non-complex. A problem can be only tackled if the solver understands and knows the ways in which it could be solved (Rutgers, 2020). It is imperative for us to educate the youth and the working adults to develop well in this computational world. Consequently, computational thinking (CT) skills can be nurtured to help them in solving the problems in a systematic way (Wing, 2006).

CT skills are known as a fundamental skill that is suitable for everyone in developing the ability to solve problems (Wing, 2006). The skills mapped the understanding of human behaviours into the concepts of computer science such as logical and algorithmic thinking, modelling, problem-solving and many more (Beecher, 2017). CT is not just applicable in computer field but in a range of subject areas such as art, mathematics and many more (Barr and Stephenson, 2011).

For instance, CT to a computer scientist is shown by studying the algorithms and applications to different software or hardware problems while to a mathematician, it might mean by carrying out long division factoring or doing carries in addition or

subtraction. In different perspective, CT skills encourages learners to consider how they can leverage technologies or methods to aid them in solving problems.

In addition, Wing (2008) suggested that CT needs to be understood and applied for all levels of education. However, this resulted in a challenge on choosing the suitability of CT concepts on what should be learned and applied. Also, in fostering the improvement of CT skills, the use of pedagogical tools to support knowledge was suggested (Grover and Pea, 2013). There are numerous open educational tools and instruments designed to assist the learners to the encouragement of CT skills development.

In recent years, robotics has seen the greatest development and implementation as a pedagogical tool. An analysis of the trends in the use of pedagogical tools has been made. The result shows that most researchers explained that the main purpose of the uses of the robotics are to attract the excitement of the learners in learning particular subjects as the learners are able to play and interact with the robots (Androutsopoulos et al., 2018; Atmatzidou and Demetriadis, 2016). They did not stated that CT has become the outcome of the study but it can be seen that the CT able to be a part as the outcomes. The analysis of the trends in the use of pedagogical tools is described in Appendix A.

Robotics are widely used in education for teaching and learning. Commonly known as educational robotics (ER), ER is able to be used in recognizing CT through problem solving activities. ER is believed to aid the learners to understand CT Skills better. Many researchers also have studied how to nurture the CT skills of the youth through educational robotics in recent decades. However, many things need to be considered when designing and constructing the integration (Pears et al., 2007).

## **1.2 Research Background**

The suitability of CT concepts remains a question about what should be learned across the continuum of subjects at the different levels of learning (Duncan, Bell, and

Atlas, 2017). Most researchers commonly consider the basic concepts to be nurtured to the students such as abstraction, algorithmic thinking, pattern recognition, and decomposition through problem-solving activities. Furthermore, Malaysia has introduced the basic of CT Skills in the national school syllabus (Malaysia, 2019). However, there remains a challenge in proving the success of the students' perception and understanding of the CT skills learning.

A pilot survey focused on secondary school students in Johor, Malaysia in 2019 (see Appendix B) to investigate their comprehension and familiarity on the CT concept. Most of the students claimed that they were not familiar with the CT concepts. CT has been promoted to be a part of a standard curriculum for the school level in Malaysia since 2016 (Soon and Mustafa, 2018). Survey results indicated that the students had a limited understanding of the CT concepts.

Many pedagogical tools and activities have been designed and developed which included Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) technologies. Researchers (Hodhod et al., 2013; Yang, 2019) designed a pedagogical tool with AR integration to engage the learner's awareness with the technologies besides claiming that the development effort helps the learners to understand CT. There are also researchers that applied virtual reality in delivering CT skills (Parmar et al., 2016). They designed an embodied interaction in virtual environments to enhance CT skills into learners by developing an edutainment application called Virtual Environment Interactions (VEnVI) (Parmar et al., 2016).

Even so, in learning and understanding the CT concepts better and suitable for every level of education, most researchers took initiatives to deliver the CT concepts through ER. Due to the revolution of technologies, there are many types of ER available for teaching and learning. ER is also able to provide a high impact in the future by involving students in technology which followed the 4IR demand (Eguchi, 2014). ER can be an interactive pedagogical tool to help the students become involved in problem-solving activities.

ER as the supporting tool to nurture CT concepts also resulted in a challenge as both subjects have a bigger scope in learning and learner context. Many sources of CT and ER have been developed and designed by researchers and developers for multi-level of education in recent years. However, most of the current technologies of ER do not explicitly state that CT concepts could become a part of the learning outcomes.

Recently, ER is most focused to present their functionalities and let the students learn the robots in an interactive way. For instance, Witherspoon et al. (2017) promote the uses of robotic functionalities such as line following function to the students through robotic programming subject domain. They also have engaged has engage students to the CT concepts during problem solving activities indirectly as they need to design solution in solving the problems. There is lack of studies that show a general view on the integration of both subjects in solving problems.

Besides that, by considering few facets such as different level of knowledge and education, not all kinds of ER are able be used generally as pedagogical tools (Lopez-Rodriguez and Cuesta, 2016). There are ER suitable for kindergarten level and ER considered too advanced for that level. This is similar to the issue faced by CT domain. There are CT concepts that are too advanced for the students regarding their age and logical thinking skills (Atmatzidou and Demetriadis, 2016). This bottleneck issue can be controlled by personalizing the learning as an uncontrolled learning may influence the results of the study in achieving the goals.

Thus, researchers commit greater effort in developing more information on how to provide suitable material for the students based on the differences in personal traits. A recent learning environment has presented two potential services in serving a personalized support in learning, which are personalized learning (PL) and adaptive learning (AL). PL is being promoted as a way of transforming the educational system by tailoring the learning pace and content to individual students (Lee, 2014) while AL is an approach to enhance the benefit of learning by adapting information delivery to individuals according to their personal behaviour and knowledge (Ishak, 2016).

Both AL and PL have commonality in the characteristics, whereas the prior knowledge of individual learners is a must to indicate the suitable path for learners in learning. However, AL has the outstanding role in helping to evaluate the learners' experiences during learning compared to PL (Neelakandan, 2020). AL is also able to re-modify the learning path of the learners according to their learning progress. Neelakandan (2020) suggested to consider AL to deliver a better learning experience as AL also considered the PL elements.

Many AL models have been proposed (Mahnane et al., 2013; Ishak, 2016; Ennouamani et al., 2019) to provide effective learning environment and materials based on adaptive features that are mapped with the personal traits such as learning style and knowledge level. The AL is able to provide them the suitable materials regarding their personal traits and improve their motivation in learning. AL model is also proven to be able to help the students in improving their learning performance by measuring the students' understanding towards the subject through assessments (Mahnane et al., 2013; Eryilmaz and Ahmed, 2017). The study by Ishak (2016) also observed that the students have a positive perception in using AL environments in learning.

However, regarding the domain of this study, there is still no direct study or development of AL model that focused on learning CT through ER (CTER). Thus, implementing adaptive learning model to ease the students' learning for CTER remains questionable. Even so, the existing AL model also can be referred to investigate the extent of this study review to support and fulfil the requirements on providing best learning materials and activities while improving the performances of the students towards the topics learned.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Delivering CTER to students is challenging. First, there is complexity in determining the suitability of CT concepts to be learned or taught at different levels of education and knowledge as there are many kinds of CT concepts introduced by the

researchers. Furthermore, the recent ER developments did not specifically define CT skill development as a part of the learning goals. Thus, this study presents the integration of CT and ER. Also, the revolution of ER and CT causes the development of various contents and materials which might pose difficulties considering the demography of the students.

Along with that, to deliver the CTER effectively, adaptivity aspects in learning must be used to personalize the material that is appropriate for the students' tastes. However, there has been no direct study or development for the deployment of the AL model in any associated themes for learning CTER. As a result, there is a need to research and evaluate the effects of the AL model in learning CTER. The following are the general research questions that this study attempts to answer:

*“How can the learning of CT through ER (CTER) be nurtured using an AL model?”*

To answer this question, a set of research questions can be derived and defined as follow:

- (a) What are the bottlenecks or issues to attain CT core principles through ER?
- (b) Can all the concepts in CT be attained through ER activities?
- (c) Can AL model address the bottlenecks or issues in (c)?
- (d) How can the AL model be enhanced by providing the learning material and activity adaptively?
- (e) How to evaluate the AL model in (e)?

#### **1.4 Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to propose an enhancement of adaptive learning model which gives focus to CTER learning. This research further investigates the

students' performance and perception in using AL model for CTER learning. The aim of the study is derived to research objectives which are as follows:

- (a) To enhance the adaptive learning model by providing learning activity and material adaptively based on different background of learners.
- (b) To apply the enhanced adaptive learning model in learning CTER.
- (c) To evaluate and investigate the students' performance in applying adaptive learning model on learning CTER.

### **1.5 Scope of the Research**

In this research, the scope of the study is defined as follows:

- (a) RoboKar is chosen as the pedagogical tool for CTER learning.
- (b) Two experiments are conducted to achieve different objectives. First experiment to achieve the first objective involves undergraduate students from UTM, Johor to investigate the improvement of performances in applying the enhanced model of AL as compared to the current AL model. The second experiment will involve secondary school students from Dun Kemelah, Segamat, Johor to investigate the uses of adaptive learning model in learning CTER to achieve the second objective.
- (c) For the first experiment, this study covers the advanced concepts of CT through Data Structure and Algorithm Course.
- (d) For the second experiment, this study only covers the basic concepts of CT along with the ER activities including the abstraction, decomposition, algorithmic thinking, pattern recognition and test and debugging concepts.
- (e) For adaptivity elements, three adaptive features are covered, which are knowledge level of students (Pass or Fail), learning style from Felder Silverman Learning Style Model (FSLSM) and learning style from Kolb

Learning Style Model (KLSM). This study only covers two dimensions from both learning styles whereas FLSM measured visual and verbal persona while KSLM measured theorist and pragmatist persona. The selected dimensions are based on the availability resources from the current AL model and the suitability to meet the research requirements.

## **1.6 Significance of Research**

Finding from this research will contribute to the understanding of how ER can be integrated into CT skills in solving problem. The presentation of the relationship of CT and ER is able to list the elements or factors needed to be considered before delivering CT through ER. Also, the relationship between CT and ER can explained and shows that CT can become part of the outcomes in learning ER. In addition, the benefits of robotics in education fields can be positively revealed which can help in fostering innovation into youth and not only focus on promoting the ER functionalities.

This study also gives benefits to the students as they can get suitable learning material and content for them based on their own preferences, which focus on their background of knowledge and style of learning. However, the other persona such as teachers or the curriculum designer of the school can also benefit from this study, such as the conceptual view on nurturing CT through ER. This study also benefits the software engineering community who are planning, designing, or revising a new framework or platform in nurturing CT while attracting the interest of students to robotics in this era of 4IR.

## **1.7 Thesis Organization**

This research includes six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the overview concerning this research. The important issues revolving the area of interest are also discussed. The aim, objectives, scope, and the significance of the study are also presented. Chapter 2 provides deeper understanding on the area of interest. The past

literatures that employed various methods are presented. Justification on the needs to improve on the existing methods are also discussed. Chapter 3 presents the methodology design for this research. This chapter are provided details of the proposed techniques and measurement for this research. Chapter 4 explained how the adaptive learning model is developed and can be implemented and the integration of the CT and ER into the proposed adaptive learning model is presented. Chapter 5 also described the evaluation result of the case study. Finally, the summarization of the work conducted within this thesis, the contribution of the research, the research limitations and the direction of the future works are provided in Chapter 6.

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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### **Indexed Proceeding**

Jamal, N. N., Jawawi, D. N., Hassan, R., & Kamil, R. I. (2020, May). Adaptive Learning in Computing Education: A Systematic Mapping Study. In *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* (Vol. 864, No. 1, p. 012069). IOP Publishing. **(Indexed by Scopus)**

### **Indexed Journal**

Jamal, N. N., Jawawi, D. N., Hassan, R., & Mamat, R. (2021). Conceptual Model of Learning Computational Thinking Through Educational Robotic. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 16(15). **(Indexed by Scopus)**