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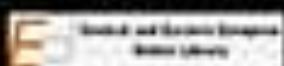
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Facebook Integrated Chatbot for Bulgarian Language Aiding Learning Content Delivery
George Pashev, Silvia Gaftandzhieva

Group Formation based on Students' Learning Styles by Circular Genetic Algorithm
Anon Sukstrienwong

Sustainable Natural Resource Management to Ensure Strategic Environmental Development
Viktor Koval, Inesa Mikhno, Iryna Udovychenko, Yevgeniia Gordiichuk, Iryna Kalina

Regulating Internet of Things: The Case of the United Arab Emirates
Ahmad Ghandour, Brendon J. Woodford

Mobile Application for the Blind and Their Family
Harco Leslie Hendric Spits Warnars, Nicholas Nicholas, Muhammad Raihan, Arief Ramadhan, Teddy Mantoro, Wan Adilah Wan Adnan

Evaluation of the Yield Strength of a Carbon Composite Material Prepared by Wet Lamination and Vacuum Bag Molding
Radoslav Vandžura, Vladimír Simkulet, Michal Hatala, Darina Dupláková, František Botko

HBASE Performance Analysis in Big Datasets Processing
Tsvetelina Mladenova, Yordan Kalmukov, Milko Marinov, Irena Valova

Organizational Commitment of Human Resources in the Context of Leadership Styles in the Organization
Dávid Miško, Matúš Vagaš, Zuzana Birknerová, Juraj Tej, Eva Benková

Benchmarking of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia Manufacturing Industry and Industry 4.0
Hadis Bajrić, Branko Vučijak, Edin Kadrić, Andrej Anđelić

Efficiency of Retail Enterprises in Context of Achievement of Competitive Advantages: Ukrainian Realities
Maryna Chorna, Lyubov Bezghinova, Oleksandr Dorokhov, Iryna Zhuvahina, Anatoly Volosov

The Effect of Mindset on Tourist Behaviour and Mindful Consumption in a Community Enterprise in Krabi, Thailand
Sudjai Jirojkul, Siwarit Pongsakornrungrasit, Nontipak Pianroj, Prachyakorn Chaiyakot, Shahin Mia, Tawakul Masst, Kuaanan Techato

Rep:grid Software Supported Visualization of a Corporate Culture
Henning Bundtzen, Gerriet Hinrichs

Davies Bouldin Index Algorithm for Optimizing Clustering Case Studies Mapping School Facilities

Yudhistira Arie Wijaya, Dedy Achmad Kurniady, Eddy Setyanto, Wahdan Sanur Tarihoran, Dadan Rusmana, Robbi Rahim

Online Learning Management During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Geoinformatics Course Based on Cloud Application
Supattra Puttinaovarat

The Evolution of Green Shipping Practices Adoption in the International Maritime Industry
Alam Md Moshiul, Roslina Mohammad, Hira Fariha Anjum, Aliya Yesmin, Shreeshivadasan Chelliapan

Formation of the Organizational Structure of Managing a Large Project of Oil Field Development
Chulpan Zakirova, Regina Sadykova, Gennady Stroykov, Zinnur Zakirov

Knowledge Representation of Mathematics Education Program among Students in Euclidean Parallelism
Lailatul Mubarakah, Cholis Sa'dijah, I Nengah Parta, I Made Sulandra

Using Augmented Reality to Enhance Medical Education in Heart Diseases: Action Design Research
Dimah Alahmadi, Hind Bitar, Hana ALsaadi, Lamees Boker, Linah Alghamdi

Perceptions of Vocational Education and Training Teachers with regard to an Industrial Robot Training
Sasithorn Chookaew, Suppachai Howimanporn, Santi Hutamarn, Tarinee Thongkerd

Ethical Corporate Communications Management: Example of Ukrainian Brewing Industry
Oleksandr Vostriakov, Liudmyla Volokhova, Galyna Volokhova, Anastasiia Volokhova

Design Patterns Discovery in Source Code: Novel Technique Using Substring Match
Akshara Pande, Vivekanand Pant, Manjari Gupta, Alok Mishra

Barriers to the Use of Serious Computer Games in the Practical Work with Children with Educational Difficulties
Margarita Stankova, Daniela Tuparova, Georgi Tuparov, Polina Mihova

Role of Education and Financial Market Development in Attracting Foreign Direct Investment Inflows in Pakistan
Haider Mahmood, Muhammad Tanveer

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Architectural Creative Learning Methods
Happy Indira Dewi, Muhammad Hayun, Ahmad Susanto, Zulfitria Zulfitria

Experimental Investigation on Influence of Infill Density on Tensile Mechanical Properties of Different FDM 3D Printed Materials
Adi Pandžić, Damir Hodžić, Edin Kadrić

Does Social Risk Amplification Theory Explain the Resistance to COVID-19 Geo-Localization Applications?

Mohamed Nabil Mzoughi, Karim Garrouch

Detection of Mirai Malware Attacks in IoT Environments Using Random Forest Algorithms

Nur Widiyasono, Ida Ayu Dwi Giriantari, Made Sudarma, L Linawati

An Analysis of a Blockchain-Enabled E-Government Document Interchange Architecture (DIA) in Thailand

Chaiporn Thoppae, Prasong Praneetpolgrang

Innovative Potential of the Agrarian Sector of Ukraine: Forming and Efficiency of Realization

Andrii Hutorov, Yurii Lupenko, Svitlana Sherstiuk, Yevhen Ponomarenko, Olena Hutorova, Oksana Yermolenko

Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Following Distance Learning in Mathematics Based on E-Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Rahmi Ramadhani, Siti Fatimah Sihotang, Nuraini Sri Bina, Rusmini, Fitrah Sari Wahyuni Harahap, Yulia Fitri

Evaluating Students' Cyber Ethics Awareness in a Gender-Segregated Environment Under the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Mahmoud Abou Naaj, Mirna Nachouki

A Case Study of Thinking out of the Box in Electrical Engineering

Lia Elena Aciu, Petre Lucian Ogrutan

Multiple Representation-Based Learning through Cognitive Dissonance Strategy to Reduce Student's Misconceptions in Volumetric Analysis

Hayuni Retno Widarti, Anna Permanasari, Sri Mulyani, Deni Ainur Rokhim, Habiddin

Pedagogical Factors Influencing Training of E-Commerce Entrepreneurs: The Malaysian Case

Noornasirah Nasri, Yulita Hanum P Iskandar

Analysis of Self-Regulated Learning Skills in Senior High School Students: A Phenomenological Study

Ameliasari Tauresia Kesuma, Heri Retnawati, Himawan Putranta

B40 Online Business Platform: E-Commerce and Life Cycle Model Considerations

Mohamad Aqib Haqmi Abas, Ahmad Ihsan Mohd Yassin, Nooritawati Md Tahir, Azlee Zabidi, Megat Syahirul Amin Megat Ali

Controlling Mini Exhaust Fan through Android-Based Smartphone for IoT-Based Smart Home System

Syifaul Fuada, Maulana Yusuf Fathany, Trio Adiono, Khilda Afifah

Entrepreneurial Orientation of Male and Female Entrepreneurs in Small Firms

Janka Betáková, Małgorzata Okręglicka, Katarína Havierníková

Virtual Technologies in the Medical Professions - Creation of 360 - Degree Environments for Health Care Training

Despina Georgieva, Greta Koleva, Irinka Hristova

Economic-statistical Evaluation of Sustainable Development of Forest Trees

Marcela Malindzakova, Dusan Malindzak jr., Patrik Garaj

The Use of Mathematical Statistics Methods in Modelling the Psychophysiological «Value» of Cognitive Activity of Students with Different Levels of Academic Success

Iryna Kalynychenko, Hanna Zaikina, Hanna Latina, Olha Skyba, Dmytro Kalynychenko

PDCA Cycle – Tool for Improvement of the Business Processes – Case Study

Peter Malega, Naqib Daneshjo, Vladimír Rudy, Peter Drábik

Selection of Accounting Software for Small and Medium Enterprises Using the Fuzzy Topsis Method

Oleh Vysochan, Olha Vysochan, Alla Yasinska, Vasyl Hyk

The Development of an Instrument on Negative Fractions to Measure the Cognitive Obstacle Based on Mental Mechanism Stages

Susiswo Susiswo, Tatik Retno Murniasih, Cholis Sa'dijah, Makbul Muksar, Wasilatul Murtafiah

Use of a 3D Model for Automatic Generation of Template Matching Algorithms

Marek Kočiško, Martin Pollák, Juraj Kunderík

Exploring the Argumentation Skills of Prospective Teachers based on Commognitive Approach using Moodle LMS

Andika Setyo Budi Lestari, Toto Nusantara, Susiswo Susiswo, Tjang Daniel Chandra, Nonik Indrawatiningsih

Keyword Categorization using Statistical Methods

Dominika Krasňanská, Silvia Komara, Mária Vojtková

Application Machine Learning in Construction Management

Phong Thanh Nguyen

Simulation of a Production Workplace Using Virtual Reality

Monika Töröková, Jozef Török

The Impact of Integrated Mobile System on Students' Academic Achievement, Interaction and Satisfaction

Mohammad Musa Al-Momani, Olga PILLI

Augmented Reality Interactive Learning Model, using the Imagineering Process for the SMART Classroom

Panita Wannapiroon, Prachyanun Nilsook, Nutthapat Kaewrattanapat, Naphong Wannapiroon, Wera Supa

Stability of Non-Hyperbolic Equilibrium Point for Polynomial System of Differential Equations

Vahidin Hadžiabdić, Midhat Mehuljić, Jasmin Bektešević

Optimization of Crude Oil Transfer by Trucking Services with Agent Based Modelling

Nurma Amelia, Ferliadi F, Avid Christa, Fergyanto E Gunawan, Muhammad Asrol

Speech Encryption Technique using S - box based on Multi Chaotic Maps

Sarah Mohammed Abdullah, Iman Qays Abduljaleel

International Students' in Taiwan Perspectives of Global Awareness Improvement

Radna Andi Wibowo, Ming-Chang Wu

Analysis of Discussion Forums of a Programming MOOC

Abdelghani Babori

Development of the Concept of Cybersecurity of the Organization

Anatolii A. Loishyn, Spartak Hohoniants, Mykola Ya.Tkach, Maksym H. Tyshchenko, Nataliya M. Tarasenko, Volodymyr S. Kyvliuk

Design and Development of a Web-based Student Screening Module as Part of a Personalized Learning System

Pavel Zlatarov, Ekaterina Ivanova, Galina Ivanova, Julia Doncheva

Mobile Applications for COVID-19: Benefits, Technologies and Future Research Opportunities

Alem Čolaković, Amel Kosovac, Nermin Goran, Ermin Muharemović, Ajdin Džananović, Adisa Medić, Muamer Dervišević

An Empirical Relationship between Agriculture Investment and Economic Growth in North Macedonia: An ARDL Analysis

Nikolche Jankulovski, Biljana Angelova, Meri Boshkoska

Adaptive Image Segmentation for Traumatic Brain Haemorrhage

Ahmad Yahya Dawod, Aniwat Phaphuangwittayakul

The Development of an Instrument on Negative Fractions to Measure the Cognitive Obstacle Based on Mental Mechanism Stages

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Abstract – The cognitive obstacle is a thinking barrier of pre-service teachers caused by less meaningful learning and the difficult nature of fraction material. The pre-service teachers' cognitive obstacle measurement is done by giving negative fraction questions that contradict positive fractions. This research objective is to develop an instrument that can measure cognitive obstacles based on mental mechanism stages. This development research uses three stages of 4D development: defining, designing, and developing. The research participants were 71 pre-service teachers from two different universities in Malang, Indonesia. The research findings show that questions of a negative fraction have a high level of validity in measuring the cognitive obstacle of pre-service teachers. Triangulation is recommended for further research related to cognitive obstacles that arise when solving fraction problems of negative numbers.

Keywords – instrument, negative fraction, cognitive obstacle, mental mechanism

1. Introduction

The cognitive obstacle is a barrier to one's thinking when facing new contradictory problems [1]. The

cognitive obstacle in learning material of fractions can be caused by less meaningful learning [2] and the difficult nature of fraction material [3],[4],[5].

People with cognitive obstacle have several characteristics such as generalizing the knowledge obtained to prior experience, relying on false intuition, and having a problem with language representation [6],[7],[8]. Poor understanding of positive fractions will hinder someone from learning negative fractions. Based on these characteristics, people thinking process will be hampered when facing a contradictory problem. For example, a problem in positive numbers will contradict with negative numbers [1].

Several researchers had examined the cognitive obstacle on positive number fractions. Research in Japan showed that untreated students had problems understanding the equal-whole of positive fractions [3]. Research in Canada showed that pre-service teachers were still experiencing cognitive obstacles when building a meaningful solution in solving positive fractions [4]. Meanwhile, several studies in Indonesia showed that cognitive obstacles occurred when solving positive fractions, such as misconceptions about fraction density and obstacle related to language representation [9],[10],[11].

It is necessary to develop an instrument to measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-service teachers on negative fractions learning material. Most of the pre-service teachers still make many mistakes in solving negative fractions [12]. The instrument being developed refers to 3 characteristics of cognitive obstacles.

The negative fraction instrument is an instrument that contradicts a positive fraction. The different signs between positive and negative will lead to a contradictory concept [13],[14],[15]. The contradictory concept leads to cognitive obstacles [1],[16].

The cognitive obstacle can be measured based on the stages of the mental mechanism of APOS. The mental mechanism stages consist of interiorization,

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coordination, reversal, encapsulation, and de-encapsulation [17]. The cognitive mechanism stages can be used to analyse pre-service teachers' understanding of fractions [17],[18],[19]. The experts' presentation explained why the pre-service teachers' cognitive obstacle on fraction problems could be analysed by the mental mechanism stages of the APOS theory.

The obstacle being experienced by pre-service mathematics teachers in Malang when facing negative fractions becomes the main problem of this research. The development of an instrument on negative fractions is needed to measure the cognitive obstacle. This research aims to develop a negative fraction instrument that can measure cognitive obstacles based on the mental mechanism stages. The instrument is developed based on cognitive obstacle indicators, including false intuitive obstacles, generalization obstacles, and language representation obstacles.

2. Method

The development framework refers to the 4D development stages by Thiagarajan [20]. This research type is development research. The instrument is developed to measure cognitive obstacle applies three stages of 4D development, namely defining, designing, and developing.

The defined stage includes several activities, including front-end analysis, pre-service teacher analysis, material analysis, and test analysis. The front-end analysis is a literature study on fractions given at the university to measure cognitive obstacles as instrument design and development according to the mental mechanism stages. The pre-service teachers' characteristics are used to analyse the development of instrument on negative fractions material. The material is analysed in detail to identify the material according to the curriculum in higher education. The test is designed to bring up the pre-service teachers' cognitive obstacle related to negative fractions according to the mental mechanism stages. The design stage includes the development of an instrument that can measure the pre-service teachers' cognitive obstacle. The activities include analysing the learning objective and analysing the pre-service teachers at two private universities in Malang, generating a test grid. The cognitive obstacle indicators are adjusted to mental mechanism stages. The development stage is carried out in two steps, namely expert validation and development trials/testing. The development stage aims to produce the final instrument after going through expert revisions and trials.

The research subjects were 71 pre-service teachers from 2 private universities in Malang City, Indonesia. The pre-service teachers in question had already finished the course of Mathematical Foundation and School Mathematics Development

Studies 1. Both classes instill an understanding of numbers so that the candidates have sufficient cognitive knowledge to solve fraction problems [16]. The candidates were selected based on various abilities they already have. The research used several instruments, including tests, assessment scores, and validation. The test was arranged according to cognitive obstacles' characteristics, including language representation obstacle, generalization obstacle, and false intuitive obstacle. The test consisted of 2 fraction questions developed on negative numbers. The test instrument's development referred to the indicators of cognitive obstacles seen in Table 1.

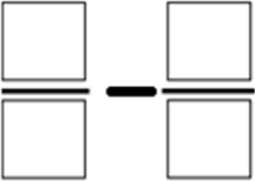
Table 1. Indicators of the cognitive barrier according to mental mechanism stages

Problem	Barrier Indicator	Mental Mechanism
1.	- Understand the sentence "the fraction will produce a value closest to one but not equal to one" as an integer that is closest to one but not equal to one	Interiorization
	- Understand the sentence "the fraction will produce a value closest to one but not equal to one" as a fraction that has the distance of zero from one	
	- Understand the sentence "the fraction will produce a value closest to one but not equal to one" as a fraction before one	
2.	- Understanding $C - D = D$ as everything minus D will result in D	Coordination
1.	- Coordinating the component of numbers, including 1, 3, -4, and -7	
	- Coordinating the component of numbers, including 1, 3, -4, and 6	
	- Coordinating the component of numbers, including 1, 3, 6, and 8	
2.	- Confused about estimation	
	- Confused about partitions on different lines of number	
	- Not using $-1/2$, 0, and $1/2$ as benchmarks	
1.	- Associates with an integer so that the numerator minus the numerator and denominator minus the denominator	Reversal
2.	- Relate and generalize with the example of $C - D = D$	
1.	- Process of setting $\frac{3}{1} - \frac{-7}{-4}$	n
	- Process of setting $\frac{1}{5} - \frac{3}{-4}$	
	- Process of setting $\frac{1}{3} - \frac{-4}{6}$	

Problem	Barrier Indicator	Mental Mechanism
2.	- The process of determining all pairs of subtractions that give G, namely: $A - G = G$, $B - G = G$, $C - G = G$, $D - G = G$, $E - G = G$, and $F - G = G$ - The process of determining $H - G = G$ and $G - E = G$	De-encapsulation
	- The process of questioning back $\frac{3}{1} - \frac{-7}{-4} = \frac{3-(-7)}{1-(-4)} = \frac{3+7}{1+4} = \frac{10}{5} = 2$, closest to 1	
1.	- The process of questioning back $\frac{1}{5} - \frac{3}{-4} = \frac{4+15}{20} = \frac{19}{20}$ is closest to 1 - The process of questioning back that $\frac{1}{3} - \frac{-4}{6} = \frac{1}{3} + \frac{4}{6} = \frac{2+4}{6} = \frac{6}{6} = 1$, one is the closest to one without rereading the question	
2.	- The process of questioning back that all pairs of subtraction from G will yield G - The process of questioning again that H and G must be positive numbers	

The instrument test being developed is adapted from [21],[22]. The two developed test questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Instrument being developed

No.	The test developed on negative numbers
1	Make two fractions (both the numerator and denominator contain one number only)! The numbers provided to form the two fractions are 1, 3, -4, 5, 6, -7, and 8. Each number can only be used once. Subtracting the two fractions will produce a value that is closest to one but not equal to one. 
2	Given that A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H each represent a number on the number line. Each number can be subtracted, for example, $C - D = D$ (by estimation). Using the estimation, write down all pairs of subtraction that give the value G (in the Figure below)!

The second instrument being developed is the assessment score. The appropriate instrument assessment score can be seen in Table 3. below.

Table 3. Assessment scores according to mental mechanism stages

No.	Answer	Score
1	Correct up to the interiorization stage	10
2	Correct until the coordination stage	30
3	Correct until the reversal stage	60
4	Correct up to the encapsulation stage	90
5	Correct up to the de-encapsulation stage	100

This research uses two types of validity, namely content and construct. Validity is the compatibility level between the measuring instrument and the one to be measured [23]. Two validators carried out content validation from each of the two private universities in Malang. The validation sheet questions contain material ratings/assessment, barrier indicators, and language with a rating scale of 1 to 4. The content validity was calculated using Aiken's V as follows [24],[25].

$$V = \sum(r - l) / [n(C - 1)]$$

r = score given by the assessor

l = lowest validity assessment score

C = highest validity assessment score

n = number of experts who made the assessment

This research involved four assessors and 4 rating scales. Aiken's V minimum standard for this research was 0.92, with a probability of 0.020 [24]. Construct validity is used to identify the validity and reliability of the questions. The data were calculated using SPSS 21.

3. Results and Analysis

Validity describes the extent of compatibility between the measuring instrument and the one to be measured. Content validity is a series of questions related to material, barrier indicators, and language. In comparison, construct validity is the relationship between the test score and the theoretical construct prediction.

3.1. Content Validity

Before being tested on pre-service teachers, the instrument questions had been arranged based on indicators of cognitive obstacles on negative fractions material. Four validators carried out the validation. This assessment was carried out to determine content validity. The content validity coefficient was calculated based on Aiken's V. The calculated result was declared as valid when fulfilling the Aiken's V coefficient limit for 4 rating

scales and four assessors, namely 0.92 with a probability of 0.020. Aiken's V average score can be seen in Table 4. below.

Table 4. Aiken's V average score for the scoring rubric

Validation	Average of Aiken's V
Material	0.96
Barrier indicator on the questions	0.94
Language	0.93

Some suggestions for improvement from the validators, namely the need to pay attention to the command sentence in question number 1 that used an exclamation mark and pay attention to the spelling of the language in the questions. Meanwhile, the other validators gave revisions related to the language in question 2.

3.2. Construct Validity

The validity and reliability of the questions using SPSS can be seen in Table 5. and Table 6. below.

Table 5. Result of question validation

Problem	Problem 1	Problem 2	Criteria
t count	4.71	3.76	valid
t table	1.99	1.99	valid

The questions are declared as valid if $t \text{ count} \geq t \text{ table}$. Based on Table 5., it is obtained that t count for question 1 is greater than t table for question 1, namely $4.71 > 1.99$, and t count for question 2 is greater than t table for question 2, namely $3.76 > 1.99$. It means that question 1 and question 2 can be declared as valid.

The result of the questions' reliability can be seen in Table 6. below.

Table 6. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	N of Items
.215	.262	3

Based on Table 6., it can be seen that $0.262 > 0.05$ so that the questions can be declared as reliable.

The result of the content validity shows a valid value because it fulfils Aiken's V coefficient. This means that the questions are appropriate and relevant to the objectives to be achieved. This research aims to develop and validate a negative fraction instrument to measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-

service mathematics teachers according to mental mechanism stages. The research's initial stage was carried out by analysing the pre-service teachers, the material, and the literature studies related to fraction material in college. According to the expert, the content is in the category of valid.

In this research, an instrument to measure cognitive obstacles to negative fractions learning material has been developed. At the same time, previous studies revealed only a cognitive obstacle to positive fractions learning material [9],[26],[16]. Other researches showed the cognitive obstacle to negative integers [1],[27].

In measuring the cognitive obstacle on negative fractions, mental mechanism stages from APOS were used. This is in line with another research that stated that APOS's mental mechanism stages could be used to analyse the understanding of pre-service teachers regarding fraction material [17]. APOS theory can also be used to analyse teaching on numbers of material in universities [19]. Also, the APOS theory can explore pre-service teachers' understanding of fraction material [18]. The experts' presentation explained why the process of pre-service teachers' obstacle on the problem of fractions could be analysed using the APOS theory.

This research results show a valid and reliable development instrument. However, the research has limitations as follows: (a) the small number of sample size, and (b) not using the triangulation process at the time the cognitive obstacle was arising in solving problems on negative numbers. Modification and revision are required for the instrument being developed.

Based on the statistical result, negative fraction questions that can measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-service mathematics teachers were found. Future researches are suggested to use triangulation related to the cognitive obstacle that arises when solving negative fraction questions.

4. Conclusion

The research findings show that negative fraction questions have a high level of validity. The questions can be used to measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-service teachers when solving fraction problems. Two questions instrument had been developed to measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-service mathematics teachers. The developed instrument can be applied in a learning process to measure the cognitive obstacle of pre-service mathematics teachers on fraction problems because it has high validity and reliability.

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