

**STUDENT READINESS TOWARDS DIFFERENT OPTIONS OF BLENDED
LEARNING IN ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASSROOMS AT TERTIARY LEVEL: A
PILOT STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of an instrument, a questionnaire, developed to assess the level of student readiness towards different options of blended learning in English literature classrooms at tertiary level. It was also conducted to know the readiness of the students towards different options of blended learning and the availability of these options. For the methodology, questionnaires were given to a total of 30 students. The students consisted of 10 Diploma in English Language Studies students and 20 Diploma in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) students. The Cronbach Alpha test was run to test the reliability of the instrument, while the mean analysis was conducted to analyse the availability of blended learning options and the readiness of the students towards these options. The reliability analysis conducted on the 51 items gave a high Cronbach Alpha coefficients value at 0.826 with Cronbach Alpha coefficients for each construct is 0.75 and up. This indicates that all items in the instrument are reliable and can be used to measure the extent of student readiness towards different options of blended learning. The mean average of 3.75 and 3.72 indicate that the students have high level of readiness towards different options of blended learning in English literature classrooms and are certain of the availability of these options.

Keywords: student readiness, reliability of instrument, different blended learning options, English literature classrooms.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The widespread development of information and communication technology (ICT) has influenced the education field considerably. ICT contributes to the expansion of e-learning (learning conducted via the electronic media, typically on the Internet) and this expansion becomes the impetus of the blended learning implementation. Among the important factors that influence a successful implementation of blended learning are excellent facilities such as Internet connection and wide availability of devices (mobile phones, tablets, laptops or computers) to access the Internet. Yet, one factor, the readiness of the students to adopt blended learning should have been taken into consideration when assessing the vital factors that influence its successful implementation.

Majority of tertiary students taking diploma or degree courses nowadays are Generation Z who were born after 1990 (Geck, 2007). As the successor of Generation Y, they are a part of the 'net generation' (Tapscott, 1998), their births coincided with the birth of World Wide Web. One significant characteristic of this generation is they have been widely exposed to the Internet since they were young. They are very familiar with digital communication tools and interacting on social media makes up a substantial amount of their social interaction. This preliminary information provides this study with a presumption that they are naturally ready for blended learning and their readiness needs to be measured. The concept of student readiness for online learning can be traced to the idea proposed in 1998 by Australian researchers, Warner, Christie, and Choy (Hung, Chen, & Own, 2010). According to them, online learning readiness are defined into three aspects: firstly, students' preferences for the form of delivery as opposed to face-to-face classroom instruction, secondly, student confidence in using electronic communication for learning, particularly their ability and confidence to use the Internet and computer-mediated communication, and finally, students' ability to engage in autonomous learning (Hung, Chen, & Own, 2010).

There have been a number of studies on student readiness for the past ten years. Most of these studies were conducted outside of Malaysia. Several recent ones include a study conducted in Libya on nursing student readiness towards e-learning environment (Contreras & Hilles, 2015), nursing student readiness for e-learning experience in Egypt (Ali, 2016), the readiness of students towards availability of online learning tools in Nigeria (Afolabi, 2015), and online

learners' e-readiness in Turkey (Ilgaz & Gulbahar, 2015). These researches' findings suggested that students were ready (Afolabi, 2015), revealed total high score level of e-learning readiness (Ali, 2016) and had positive attitude towards the usefulness of e-learning and ready to embrace its technology (Contreras & Hilles, 2015).

Locally, a few studies have been conducted on student readiness towards blended learning. For example, a study done in UiTM Shah Alam on students' readiness to use e-learning in the teaching and learning of visual art education (Anuar, Wan Zakaria, Md Noor, Othman, 2016). A similar study was also conducted in Shah Alam to assess student readiness for a blended learning English language proficiency course in UiTM (Nasir & Ismail, 2016). The findings of both study showed that the students exhibited above-medium level of readiness towards blended learning (Nasir & Ismail, 2016) and were ready to use technology in their learning (Anuar, Wan Zakaria, Md Noor, Othman, 2016). Another study conducted in UniSZA Terengganu, found that the students were internet-savvy and displaying readiness to adopt blended learning in learning Arabic language (Osman & Hamzah, 2017).

However, while there are a number of researches tackling student readiness towards blended learning in other courses, there are limited studies that investigate student readiness towards blended learning in English literature courses. A related study found was conducted by Dwaik, Jweiless and Shrouf in 2016 at Hebron University, Palestine. The study focused on the influence of blended learning in American literature courses on students' learning and attitude. It was found that the students had positive attitudes towards using computer technology in learning English literature course, and blended learning was effective in developing and improving the students' performance (Dwaik, Jweiless & Shrouf, 2016). Thus, in Malaysian context, there is a need to conduct a study on the readiness of students towards blended learning in English literature classrooms to fill in the gap of the scarcity of studies.

Blended learning is much needed in English literature classrooms as it is important to create a fun and interesting learning environment and ease the process of learning Literature. English literature, a content subject, is not easy as students who learn it have to deal with both the language and the content (Yunus & Suliman, 2014). It is a challenge for the English literature instructors as well as the students to

understand and appreciate the literary texts especially if the students lack in terms of the language repertoire (Yunus & Suliman, 2014). Classes that employ only conventional methods are considered as boring by students. Blended learning should be employed rather than relying on the traditional teaching method.

This study was undertaken to find the level of student readiness towards blended learning options in English literature courses at tertiary level. The following are the research questions:

- i. What is the level of student readiness towards different options of blended learning in English literature classrooms at tertiary level?
- ii. Are the students certain of the availability of different blended learning options in English literature classrooms at tertiary level?

To approach these questions, a framework was formed. This framework is a combination of a framework introduced in “A framework for investigating blended learning effectiveness” (Wong, Tatnall, & Burgess, 2014) and the readiness for blended learning factors suggested in a 2013 study conducted by Chun and Lee. The adoption of blended learning is analyzed through student readiness towards different options of blended learning.

2.0 METHODS

This was a descriptive research that employed survey as its method of data collection. The sampling was non-probability sampling and its type was purposive as the respondents were chosen for their shared characteristics and based on the objective of this study. They were English or Teaching English as a Second Language majors and had previously learned English literature. The number of chosen respondents was 30 with 10 Diploma in English Language Studies students and 20 Diploma in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) students. All of the respondents were students of International Islamic University College, Selangor.

The sample size of 30 students was chosen because according to Connelly (2008), existing literature suggested that a pilot study sample should be 10% of the sample projected for the actual study, while Isaac and Michael (1995) suggested that

the number to be between 10 – 30 participants. According to Portal Rasmi Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi (2015), the total enrolment for Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), where the actual data collection would be, was around 32,262. Thus, considering Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sampling for an estimate of 30000 populations (N), the sample size (S) would be 370. Thus, 30 students were adequate for a pilot study sampling.

The questionnaires contained demographic details and information relating to need analysis such as facilities provided and blended learning experience, and two sections on availability of blended learning options for English literature classes and student readiness towards blended learning. A close question format involving yes-or-no answer was used for constructs on facilities provided and blended learning experience. On the other hand, constructs on availability of blended learning options and student readiness towards blended learning used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree and strongly agree.

The questionnaire itself had been peer-reviewed for validity by a lecturer from Education Faculty, International Islamic University College, Selangor who was an expert in teaching technology before data collection. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, the coordinator of the TESL program was informed of the researchers' intention to collect the data from Semester 4 TESL students. The respondents from both TESL and DELS courses were also informed of the purpose of the study before questionnaires were distributed. All of the respondents consented to be a part of the study.

Once the pilot test was conducted, the Cronbach Alpha analysis was run to see how far the instrument was reliable and consistent. For Cronbach Alpha analysis, Cronbach Alpha coefficients should be at least 0.7 and above (George & Mallery, 2001). Referring to Table 1, the reliability of the analysis conducted on 51 items gave a high Cronbach Alpha coefficient value at 0.826, while the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for each construct was 0.75 and up. This indicated that all items in the instrument were reliable and could be used to measure the extent of student readiness towards different options of blended learning.

Table 1: Total Score Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient Index

Element	Number of items	Overall Alpha Value
Availability of Blended Learning Options for English Literature Classes	17	0.776
Student Readiness towards Blended Learning	34	0.752
Student Readiness towards Different Options of Blended Learning	51	0.826

The questionnaires were analysed upon completion by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. For demographic details, descriptive analysis was obtained by calculating the frequency and percentage, while for availability of blended learning options and student readiness towards blended learning mean scores were obtained.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Information

The analysis for Part A, which was the demographic information, was based on the frequency and percentage. The identifiable aspects were:

- i) Gender
- ii) Student Age Class

Referring to Table 2, the sample of the research involved in this study was thirty (30) people where 20 percent of respondents were male and 80 percent were female. Female students were the most participated respondents in this study.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Frequency by Gender

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	6	20.0
Female	24	80.0
Total	30	100.0

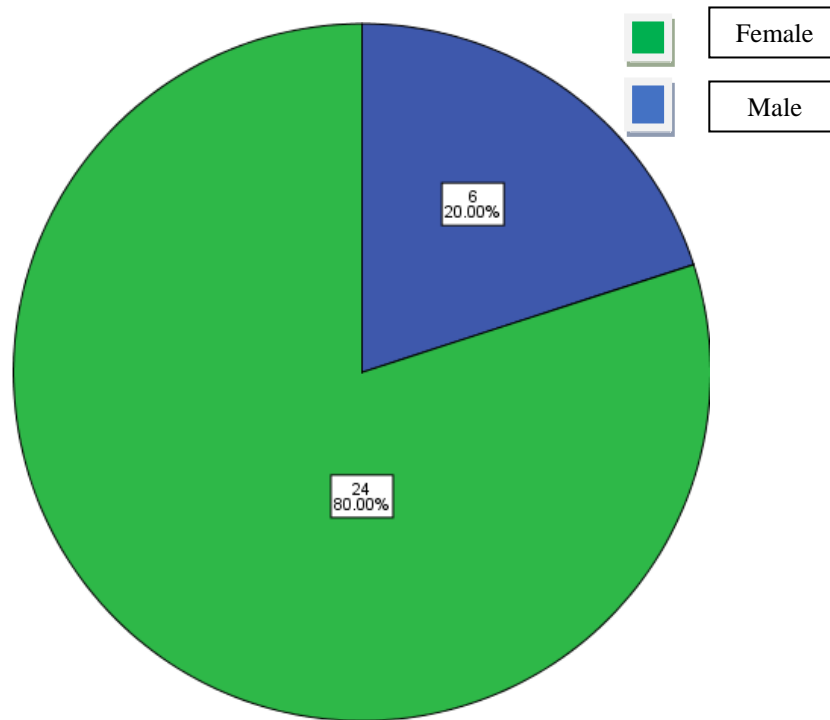


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents Frequency by Gender

Referring to Table 3, which is the statistical distribution of respondents based on age group, it could be seen that the majority of the respondents were 18-20 years old with 27 students or 90 percent, while the minority of the respondents belonged to the 21-25 years old age group which was 3 or 10 percent from 30 respondents.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Frequency Based on Age Class

Age Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	27	90.0
21-25	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

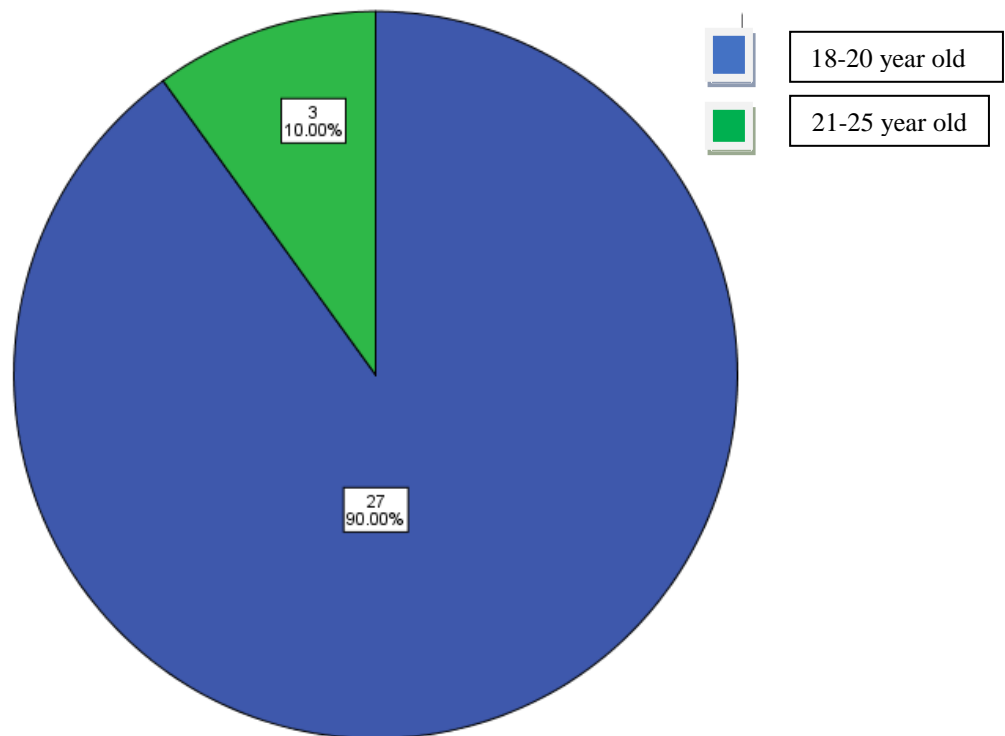


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents Frequency Based on Age Class

3.2 Availability of Blended Learning Options for English Literature Classes

The average analysis of mean for each part was carried out to get the overall mean average for all respondents (n = 30) as follows.

The average mean analysis of each item in Part B was conducted to get the mean average for availability of blended learning options for English literature classes.

Table 4: Mean of Availability of Blended Learning Options for English Literature Classes

No.	Item	Mean
1.	Literature courses are carried out in traditional manner through face-to-face lecture by using chalk and talk.	3.67
2.	Literature courses are interesting and fun.	4.37
3.	PowerPoints are used in the face-to-face class.	4.13
4.	Videos and media materials used in class make me understand the chosen literary text	4.33
5.	Whatsapp group are created for courses discussion purpose.	4.23
6.	Literature course is interesting and fun when it is taught using	3.87

	face-to-face method.	
7.	Literature course is interesting and fun when it is taught using PowerPoints.	3.60
8.	Literature course is interesting and fun when it is taught using videos.	4.27
9.	Literature courses is interesting and fun when it is taught using Whatsapp.	2.70
10.	Literature course is interesting and fun when it is taught using online / e-learning.	3.07
11.	The course syllabus is provided on the Learning Management System (LMS).	4.07
12.	Lecture notes and reading materials can be retrieved from the Learning Management System (LMS).	4.27
13.	Tutorial questions are posted on the Learning Management System (LMS).	3.20
14.	Online assessment such as quizzes are posted on the Learning Management System (LMS).	3.00
15.	Assignment questions are posted on the Learning Management System (LMS).	3.43
16.	Online forum is carried out on the Learning Management System (LMS).	2.87
17.	Other blended learning options i.e. Whatsapp, Facebook, YouTube, Blogging and Podcasting are used as a medium of interaction in English Literature courses.	4.20
	Mean Average	3.72

3.3 Student Readiness towards Blended Learning

The average mean analysis of each item in Part C was conducted to obtain the mean average for student readiness towards blended learning.

Table 5: Mean of Student Readiness towards Blended Learning

No.	Item	Mean
1.	I would like unlimited access to lecture materials.	4.23
2.	I would like to decide where I want to study.	4.07
3.	I like to decide at my own pace.	4.20
4.	I would like to decide when I want to study.	3.97
5.	I believe face-to-face learning is more effective than blended learning.	3.97
6.	I am comfortable with self directed learning.	3.73

7.	I do not resist having my lessons online.	3.43
8.	I like blended learning as it provides richer instructional content.	3.70
9.	I would like lecturer time in the classroom to be reduced.	3.20
10.	I would like to have my classes online rather than in the classroom.	2.77
11.	I get bored when study online.	3.20
12.	I find it very difficult to study online.	3.23
13.	I am more likely to miss assignment due dates in a blended learning environment.	3.07
14.	I can study over and over again online.	3.27
15.	Blended learning encourages me to make plans.	3.77
16.	Blended learning makes me more responsible for my studies.	3.57
17.	I believe the Web is a useful platform for learning.	4.20
18.	I am familiar with Web technologies.	4.07
19.	I find Web technologies easy to use.	4.07
20.	I think we should use technologies in learning.	4.07
21.	I have sense of community when I meet other students in the classroom.	4.07
22.	I like the fast feedback when I meet my lecturer in person.	4.37
23.	I find learning through collaboration with others face-to-face is more effective.	4.23
24.	I learn better through lecturer-directed classroom-based learning.	4.07
25.	I learn better when someone guides me personally.	4.33
26.	I am comfortable in using Web technologies to exchange knowledge with others.	3.83
27.	I would like to interact with my lecturer online.	3.07
28.	I would like to interact with other students outside of the classroom.	4.00
29.	I find it easy to communicate with others online.	3.60
30.	I appreciate easy online access to my lecturer.	3.70
31.	I can collaborate well with a virtual team in doing assignments.	3.70
32.	If there is an opportunity, I intend to register for a course that adopts the blended learning approach.	3.40
33.	If there is an opportunity, I want to join in a course that adopts the blended learning approach.	3.70
34.	If there is an opportunity, I plan to attend a course that that adopts the blended learning approach.	3.67
Mean Average		3.75

4.0 DISCUSSION

The study involves thirty (30) students enrolling in Diploma in English Language Studies and Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), a 10% sample size from the size projected for the actual study, which is around 370. Most of the respondents are female students (24) and only 6 of them are male, and they are within the age range of 18 – 20 years old. The mean score was used for measuring availability of different blended learning options and student readiness. This method of data analysis is chosen as there are biases in term of gender and age of the respondents if a parametric analysis is conducted.

The study identifies the availability of different blended learning options in English literature classrooms and student readiness towards these options by using five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree and strongly agree. The interpretation of means is based on Table 6.

Table 6: Interpretations of Score and Level

Score	Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.66	Moderate
3.67 – 5.00	High

Source: Mohd Majid, 1990; Norasyikin & Mohd Isa, 2017

Out of the 17 constructs on the availability of different blended learning options in Table 4, it can be seen that the mean is high on item 2, at 4.37, which shows that the respondents think that Literature courses are interesting and fun. This unexpectedly differs than the finding by Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy & Jusoff (2009) which revealed that students found it boring that teachers spent a lot of time discussing literary devices like plot, characters, and theme of the texts in class. It is also discovered that the lowest mean is 2.70 for item 9. This mean fall under moderate level category (Konting, 1990) which shows that the respondents only have a moderate level of agreement on whether Literature course is interesting and fun when it is taught using Whatsapp. Yet, other constructs on the usage of other blended learning options to make Literature course interesting and fun are quite high such as Power Point (item 7 - 3.60), video

(item 8 - 4.27), online (item 10 - 3.07) and face-to-face (item 6 - 3.87). This shows that the students are probably unfamiliar with the teaching of Literature using Whatsapp.

Nevertheless, based on the overall average outcome for each field in Table 4, it can be seen that the mean average for availability of blended learning options for English literature classes is at 3.72 which is within the range of 3.00 (uncertain) to 4.00 (agree) of the Likert scale. According to the mean interpretation by Konting (1990), 3.72 fall within the category of high level. This shows that most of the respondents have high level of certainty on the availability of blended learning options for English literature classes.

Out of the 34 constructs for student readiness towards blended learning in Table 5, item 22 has the highest average of 4.37 in which most students prefer quick feedback from their lecturers. Item 10 has the lowest mean at 2.77, which shows that the respondents only have a moderate level of readiness (Konting, 1990) to have their classes online rather than in the classroom. Nonetheless, referring to several constructs that are within high level range such as item 33 (3.70), and item 34 (3.67), it shows that the respondents plan to join in or attend a course that adopts the blended learning approach. This could signify that they are ready for blended learning. Moreover, referring to the overall average result in Table 5, it can be seen that the overall mean average for student readiness towards blended learning is 3.75. This shows that the respondents are ready towards blended learning as 3.75 falls within the category of high level (Konting, 1990) and it is interpreted here that the students have high level of readiness towards blended learning.

As a whole, a closer look at all 51 constructs does show that the respondents do have slight uncertainties about their readiness towards blended learning and the availability of different blended learning options in English literature classrooms. The researchers assume that the reason is probably due to the passive implementation of blended learning in the institution where the data was collected. Yet, referring to the overall mean average, the respondents display high level of readiness and this indicates that they are ready for blended learning and are certain of the availability of different blended learning options in English literature classrooms. The findings are supported by the findings of studies conducted by Nasir and Ismail (2016) and Anuar, Wan Zakaria, Md Noor and Othman (2016), that showed that students exhibited above-medium level of readiness towards blended learning and were ready to use technology in their

learning. Another finding by Osman and Hamzah (2017) also supports the findings of this research by indicating that students did display readiness to adopt blended learning. A finding by Chun and Lee (2013) also had recorded that students did have positive attitudes towards implementation of blended learning. It is therefore recommended that further research on student readiness towards different blended learning options in English literature classrooms be continued on a full-scale basis as the initial findings of this pilot study show that the students are ready.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It is found in this study that the respondents display high level of readiness towards different options of blended learning and are certain of the availability of these options. This indicates that future aggressive implementation of blended learning, especially in English literature classrooms is possible. Further research might explore the extent of blended learning implementation, taking into consideration the institution as well as the instructor readiness.

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