

E-learning readiness among English language teachers in Sabah, Malaysia: A pilot study

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Abstract

This paper aims to assess the reliability of the instrument adapted to identify the level of e-learning readiness among English language teachers at secondary schools in Sabah, Malaysia. Five dimensions selected from Chapnick's (2000) E-Learning Readiness Model (i.e., psychological readiness, technological skills readiness, equipment readiness, content readiness, and human resource readiness) were subjected for investigation. Using a simple random sampling, this quantitative research employed an online cross-sectional questionnaire to collect data from English language teachers at different secondary schools in Sabah. 72 English language teachers responded to the online questionnaire, where Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire items. Findings demonstrate that the overall Cronbach's alpha of the survey reached 0.871. Further results show that the Cronbach's alpha of the five dimensions ranges between 0.826 scored by Human Resource Readiness and 0.886 reported by Technological Skills Readiness. These findings show that the questionnaire is highly reliable to be used within the context of Sabah secondary schools. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Keywords: E-learning; E-Learning Readiness Model; English language teaching; Sabah.

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To keep pace with the Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) characterizing this century, the Malaysian government has been putting great efforts into promoting the use of ICT in education, especially in teaching English (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013-2015; Mutambik, 2018; Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013; Mahmoud Safy Mahmoud & Mitkees, 2017; Razak, Alakrash & Sahboun, 2018). Nevertheless, English language teaching in Malaysia is still relatively outdated due to the use of traditional methods at schools (Shams, 2013).

Integrating e-learning into language teaching is undoubtedly of paramount importance. Clarke (2008) emphasizes that e-learning has brought some changes to language instruction as it has introduced new pedagogical methods to language teachers. As far as teaching English is concerned, it is emphasized that utilizing e-learning in teaching English is useful, contributes to attracting students' attention (Ling & Muuk, 2015), and helps to increase students' vocabulary acquisition (Imtiaz Hassan Taj et al, 2017). Furthermore, using e-learning in English teaching also brings useful and supportive teaching materials for English teaching and learning, resulting in a more effective, motivational, and interesting English teaching and learning environment for both English language teachers and students (Aikina & Zubkova, 2015; Muslem, Yusuf & Juliana, 2018).

E-learning readiness refers to the ability to adopt new technologies in the educational field (Hashim & Tasir, 2014). It is concerned whether individuals are prepared to apply the e-learning with related technical skills, positive attitudes towards it in the teaching and learning process (Alem et al., 2016). Thus, investigating the e-learning readiness among the concerned stakeholders is highly needed to assess the success of e-learning implementation in education.

However, the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) states that the ICT transformational shift in education has not been attained ideally (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013)*. As far as the context of the current research is concerned, levels of e-learning readiness among school teachers in Sabah are largely unknown, particularly among English language teachers. Thus, the current research aims at piloting a research proposal to identify the level of e-learning readiness among English language teachers at secondary schools in Sabah, Malaysia. The present study addresses the following research question:

What is the level of e-learning readiness among English language teachers at secondary schools in Sabah, Malaysia?

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Theoretical Framework

Chapnick's (2000) Readiness Model is adapted as the theoretical framework for this study as illustrated in Figure 1.

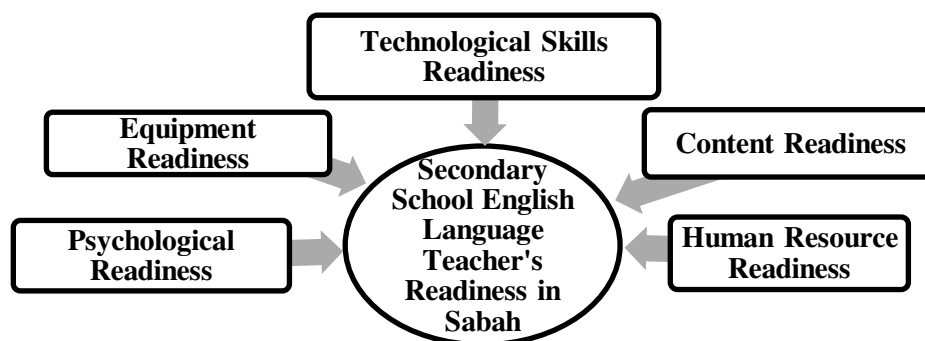


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework (Adapted from Chapnick's, 2000, Readiness Model)

As shown by Figure 1 above, there are five dimensions extracted from Chapnick's Readiness Model as follows:

Psychological Readiness is related to stakeholders' mindset and initiative to embrace e-learning, the development of readiness would be impeded if one's resistance to using e-learning is high.

Equipment Readiness is referred to whether the equipment to support the use of e-learning is allocated and invested evenly and sufficiently at schools to fulfill the needs of e-learning.

Technological Skills Readiness is defined as the stakeholders' technological literate and their competency of operating and manipulating e-learning in reality.

Content Readiness deals with the content for e-learning usage and the delivery methods/formats, to measure whether the content used in e-learning is appropriate and up to the standards set by its syllabus and curriculum.

Human Resource Readiness is concerned with the accessibility and availability of the human resource system to reflect on human resource sectors such as technical backups and management teams to support the use of e-learning.

Based on the discussion above, each of these dimensions deals with a partial aspect of e-learning readiness. Thus, measuring the levels of these five constructs would highly likely extend our knowledge regarding the current situation of e-learning readiness within the context of secondary schools in Sabah, particularly in relation to English language teaching.

METHOD

In this quantitative study, a cross-sectional online survey was used to collect the data from English language teachers at secondary schools in Sabah to assess their level of e-learning readiness in teaching the English language, where a simple random sampling was the technique employed by the present study. The five-point Likert-scale survey consists of 23 items adapted from Mutiaradevi (2009), Mulwa & Kyalo (2011), Agarwal and Prasad (1998), and Terzis and Economides, (2011). It contains items to measure technological skills readiness, equipment readiness, psychological readiness, human resource readiness, and content readiness. Besides that, to maintain the rigorousness of the instrument used, the validity of the questionnaire such as content validity and face validity had been established by the researchers with four experts (two Ph.D. and two Master's Degree holders) before randomly distributing the questionnaire to the respondents using Google forms.

There were no special preferences in choosing participants, as long as the respondents teach English subjects at public secondary schools in Sabah. At first, a total number of 75 questionnaires were received, but then only 72 sets of questionnaires were valid to be used for data analysis, while three respondents were excluded as they are not residing in Sabah. Therefore, the researchers decided to retain these 72 English language teachers who were randomly sampled from different secondary schools in Sabah to be involved in the study.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	66	91.7 %
Male	6	8.3 %
Total	72	100 %
Age		
20-30 years old	10	13.9 %
31-40 years old	24	33.3 %
41 years old and above	38	52.8 %
Total	72	100 %
Race		
Bumiputera*	57	79.2 %
Chinese	12	16.7 %
India	3	4.2 %
Total	72	100 %

* A term used to refer to the Indigenous people of the land.

As illustrated by Table 1 below, the overall population of 72 respondents based on gender, there are 66 female respondents with a percentage of 91.7% as compared to only 6 male respondents with 8.3%. Based on the age, the highest frequency of respondents are aged from 41 years old and above with a total 38 (52.8%) followed by respondents are aged from 31-40 years old with 24 (33.3%), then respondents whose age from 20-30 years with 10(13.9 %). From the overall population based on race, most of the respondents are Bumiputera (indigenous people of the land) with 57 (79.2%) followed by Chinese with 12 (16.7 %), then there are only three Indian respondents involved in the study with a percentage of 4.2.

FINDINGS

RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT USED

Table 2. The Reliability Test of the E-Learning Readiness Questionnaire

E-learning Readiness Constructs	Number of Items	Reliability	Category
Technological Skills Readiness	4	0.886	Reliable
Psychological Readiness	5	0.877	Reliable
Human Resource Readiness	4	0.826	Reliable
Equipment Readiness	7	0.837	Reliable
Content Readiness	3	0.858	Reliable
Overall English Language Teachers' E-learning Readiness	23	0.871	Reliable

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the items used in the questionnaire employed by the current research. According to Taber (2018), the value of Cronbach's alpha is required to achieve the desired value of 0.70. For this part, reliability was tested for the various e-learning readiness dimensions used in the questionnaire. As Table 2 illustrates, the reliability test indicates that all the values of Cronbach's alpha of the five dimensions range between 0.826, scored by Human Resource Readiness, and 0.886, reported for Technological Skills Readiness. These findings indicate that the questionnaire items are highly reliable to be used with the respondents in the study.

CONCLUSION

This study managed to achieve its purpose to assess the reliability of the instrument used to identify the level of e-learning readiness among English language teachers at secondary schools in Sabah, Malaysia, based on five readiness dimensions adopted from Chapnick's (2000) Readiness Model. Generally, the overall Cronbach's Alpha of the survey reached 0.871, which

indicates that it is highly reliable to be used. For further research, due to the limited research carried out to examine e-learning readiness among English language teachers, more studies are needed to be conducted with more readiness constructs (environmental, sociological, and financial readiness) proposed by Chapnick' (2000). A larger number of respondents in Sabah should also be considered for further research to determine how ready secondary school English language teachers are to integrate e-learning in teaching English. Moreover, there was a disproportion of male and female English language teachers involved in the study, almost 92 percent of respondents were females. Further research is recommended to involve more male teachers to have a balanced representation of gender. Additionally, teachers who are teaching in rural areas should also be focused on in future researchers since rural areas are neglected by researchers because of its inaccessibility and inconvenience.

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Authors' Brief CV

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