Exploring Students’ Readiness on English Language Blended Learning

Fazlinda Hamzah, Soo Yew Phong, Mohd Azlan Shah Sharifudin, Zainab Mohd Zain, Mahdalela Rahim
Introduction

◊ Pandit (2015) defined blended learning as students learn in part through digital and online media where students have the control over time, place, path, or pace.

◊ In recent years, blended learning has gained traction since it offers the best of both worlds – face-to-face and online learning.

◊ Despite the many advantages of blended learning, it is important to understand that the effectiveness of blended learning depends on several factors. One of the important factors is students’ readiness.
Therefore, the objectives of the current research are:

1. To determine the level of students’ readiness for English language blended learning in a public university.

2. To examine if there are any significant differences in students’ readiness between students who are majored in English language studies and students of other courses.
Readiness for blended learning

Technical abilities
  Technological accessibility
  Self-directed learning

Attitude towards traditional classroom setting
Attitude towards blended classroom setting

Readiness for blended learning

Anene et al., 2014; Donnie Adams et al. 2018; El-Gayar et al., 2011; Holley & Oliver, 2010; Rasouli et al., 2016.
Data Collection

◊ In order to collect data, a quantitative research design was adopted, and an online survey questionnaire was developed, followed by a semi-structured interview with randomly selected respondents.

◊ Random sampling was used to select 137 students from a public university in Melaka to answer the questionnaire. The sample comprised of 30 males and 107 females, their age ranged from 18-24 years old and they were students of different courses such as Business Administration, Art & Design, Accountancy, Hotel and Tourism Management, Communication and Media, English for Professional Communication, Computer Science and Mathematics, and Plantation and Agrotechnology.

◊ Triangulation method was employed to validate the questionnaire results and the interview results were compared. Six students were randomly selected to be respondents of interview: four female students and two male students from Business Administration, Communication and Media, and English for Professional Communication. The interview was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of students’ readiness on English language blended learning classes
Data Analysis

- The data collected from the questionnaire in the study are analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-v-17) software. Descriptive statistic of mean, standard deviation, and significant test were selected to ascertain the levels of students’ perceptions in the Likert scale.

- Thematic content analysis was done on the data collected from the interviews. Students’ responses based on the interviews were categorised into different themes such as their preference of face-to-face or blended learning and the reasons behind it as well as suggestions for the improvement of blended learning experience.
Result and Discussion- Questionnaire

What is the level of students’ readiness for English language blended learning?

◊ In terms of preference, students are inclined towards traditional classroom setting compared to blended classroom setting since the means for attitude towards traditional classroom are higher for all items compared to the means for all items in attitude towards blended classroom setting.

◊ The means for all items in technology accessibility, technical abilities, and self directed learning are also higher than the means for attitude towards blended classroom setting.

◊ This further proves that technological knowledge might not be a deterrent in students’ readiness for blended learning any more than their attitude towards blended learning.
Are there any differences in students’ readiness for English language blended learning between students who are majored in English language studies and students of other courses?

◊ Based on the results, it can be seen that although there is not much difference in terms of mean values for these two groups of students, the mean value for students of other courses in *Attitude Towards Blended Classroom Setting* is slightly higher than the mean values for students of English for Professional Communication.

◊ Interestingly, this shows that students of other courses may have a higher level of readiness compared to students of English for Professional Communication.
Result and Discussion - Interview

✧ Recurrent comments and explanations indicate that students enjoy learning English through traditional classroom setting better than blended learning because they felt that face-to-face class allows them to have an in-depth discussion with the lecturers to help them remember better. They also gain more understanding when they communicate face-to-face with lecturers.

✧ Furthermore, they also mentioned the reasons their preferences are not skewed towards blended learning is due to recurring technical issues such as malfunctioning devices and/or poor internet connectivity. They further claimed that these have caused misunderstandings in the lessons. Other remarks include students feel that online learning is monotonous, they value instant feedbacks from lecturers, they tend to be distracted during online classes, and they seem to dislike the idea that they have to be responsible for their own learning.
Conclusion

◊ The results of the questionnaire show that although students are ready in certain aspects such as technical abilities, technology accessibility, and self-directed learning, it can be said that in terms of attitude towards blended learning; they are not ready yet. The interview conducted revealed that students’ learning preferences could be the contributing factor to explain the results from the questionnaire.

◊ All of the interview respondents cited the reasons they prefer face-to-face communication as learning is easier with the assistance of nonverbal clues such as facial expressions and body language of their lecturers and receiving instantaneous feedbacks from their lecturers are also helpful for them.
In order for students to be ready to accept blended learning they must have positive attitude towards it. Therefore, recommendations to improve teaching and learning experience through blended learning should be devised such as the way to embed a lecturer’s human touch into students’ blended learning experience and the importance of instant and constant feedbacks from the lecturers.