

# Predictive Factors Associated with Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic in Malaysia: A conceptual Framework

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## ABSTRACT

English learners are increasing and teachers are needed everywhere. Due to the sudden shut down of all the English Academy's, colleges and schools during the covid-19 pandemic period made the English learners to face major difficulties in learning English language. Therefore, this study aims to predict the effective factors on e-learning among the English language learners. An analysis for the relevant literature was conducted to demonstrate the relationships. The findings of this study proposed a conceptual framework that predicts the associated factors with e-learning: teaching methods, psychological factors, language skills, and proficiency level. Further empirical studies are should be conducted to validate this conceptual framework.

**Keywords:** English Language Learners, Online learning, Covid-19 pandemic, challenges, e-learning

## 1. Introduction

A contagious disease called as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus-2 which was later on known as the covid-19 was first identified in the country of Wuhan in the year of 2019 at the late of December. The disease got spread to 200 other countries. The covid-19 pandemic brought in many changes in the learning system. The learners were all restricted from attending the physical classes due to the implementation of the lockdown (Ahmad et al., 2019; Hasan & Bao, 2020). Every aspect of the life of the common people was affected majorly due to the pandemic period of Covid-19 (Shahzad et al., 2020).

Moreover, the changes which occurred due to the pandemic period affected the educational practices. The Education sectors are the major part to endure the negative impacts of the process of movement control order or lockdown. All of the schools and the educational sectors were closed during this phase (Othman, Kadar, Umar, & Ahmad, 2020). During the pandemic of Covid-19 in many other countries such as China, South Korea, Italy and Iran have developed the home schooling temporarily for millions of learners and it has been very inconvenient for the learners. They had faced immense difficulties due to online schooling (Zhao et al., 2020). Many countries have developed the home schooling with the cooperation of the schools and the education sectors (Brom et al., 2020).

The implementation of social distancing in the schools and to conduct the online classes that is known to be the implementation of the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (Aliyyah et al., 2020). The teaching and learning of English language was brought into virtual classes as well. It made a huge change in the area of acquiring the language. However, it did bring in many positive impacts in the methodology of teaching and learning of the English language (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English language is known to be the lingua franca and the most well-known and spoken language by many all across the world (Yen & Mohamad, 2020). English is widely spoken and recognized by many all around the world and English Language is the primary or the first language in many of the countries and based on the explanation which was given by Staley (2005) in the article of English language History. Staley (2005) has also mentioned that the children and the adults move from one country to another country to learn the English Language due to its need and importance in the global era of today. According to Kenneally (2007), among the 6,000 languages that is being spoken by the people all around the world

and by the half of the world population speaks 10 of those languages and English is known to be the most dominant and conquering language among all the other languages

As the English learners are increasing and teachers are needed everywhere due to the sudden shut down of all the English Academy's, colleges and schools the learners of English has started to face major difficulties in the English language learning and improvising due to the pandemic period of Covid-19 (Verawardina et al., 2020). This allegation has been passed by the Rahman, 2020 in order to break the chain of Covid-19. Yen and Mohamad (2020) has stated that the decision of shutting down all the schools and the stopping the face-to-face classrooms had led to survival condition and adapting to the 'new normal'. This paper conducts the research on the challenges, problems and what are the measure to overcome the challenges faced by the language learners.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Many learners all around the world have started using the online interactive applications to learn from home. The traditional method of teaching had gradually been replaced with the usage of online applications and with the help of these online teaching applications teaching and learning had been happening anywhere and everywhere. However, the teachers and the learners were not completely ready for the shift but the order of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia followed by all the schools and tertiary education. The mode of learning changed completely from face to face to digital learning (DeAlwis, 2020). Online educational practices during Covid-19 brought many challenges. According to Demuyakor (2020) there are few factors which affect the online learning among the English language learners such as, teaching method, psychological factors, language skills and proficiency level among the learners in learning the English language.

Furthermore, the online education had been used by many colleges and even the school for some minor or major reasons but never up to the extent of usage as much as how it has been or still being practiced due to the movement control order in the year of 2020 (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). The online education which is being widely used right now in digitally advanced countries and had never been practiced in certain countries. This tough time has brought the importance of using this teaching method in order to continue the education Basilaia and Kavadze (2020). Apart from that, the learners were affected psychologically due to the implementation of the e-learning. The fear of the academic year loss, influence of other learners and the mental health of the learners were affected greatly and the learners were not able to cope up with the teaching and learning during this particular time frame (Hasan & Bao, 2020).

Focusing on the teaching of English Language the learners tend to memorise and the grammar rules, syntax, vocabulary and the basic English language terms which are essential for learning the particular language and it has changed the attitudes of the learners in learning the language (Shahzad et al., 2020). All these were the initial stages of how the teaching developed and the methodologies which were used by the teachers predominantly in teaching in the classrooms and the learners will have the comfort if the language is taught with the Communicative language teaching approach (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Referring to the pandemic of Covid-19 every English Language learners who have been working harder to complete with their courses according to their level were learning them online and some of them were delayed from learning them as well.

Learning and acquiring a language is a hard phase to go through by a learner. Since, from the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic period, the learners and the teachers were forced to implement virtual learning method by using different online platforms (Wargadinata, Maimunah, Dewi, & Rofiq, 2020). As it has been mentioned earlier in all the researchers the Education is the main factor which was focused on during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The research regarding the education during the covid-19 pandemic, the difficulties in learning certain skills of English language and the virtual learning during this pandemic has been covered except the effect of Covid-19 during the pandemic in English language learning entirely has not been conducted before. However, there were limited body of research on the challenges faced by English language learners on e-learning. Therefore, this study aims to predict the factors affect the e-learning effectiveness among the English language learners.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study will help the learners to plan their learning accordingly from the factors given in this study so that can avoid those barriers and learn the English Language in an effective way. An effective way of learning will be always be the first choice for the learners because it makes their life easier. As for the educators, they will have a view on how to tackle those barriers and make their teaching and learning

process in a much effective way. The findings of this study will provide future researchers with a conceptual framework that can predict the associated factors which are teaching method, psychological factors, language skills and proficiency level among the learners in learning English language. By finding out those factors, future researchers will be able to conduct a research study to find out the effectiveness level of those factors and work on to find the solutions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Education System in Malaysia during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The education system in Malaysia faced many challenges during the pandemic period of Covid-19 same as the other countries. The education system in Malaysia all this while and how it has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic period will be discussed in this particular part mainly. In Malaysia, the Education system was mainly dependent on the teacher's level of competence in teaching any of the subjects had been the main focus of the development of the Standard Guru of Malaysia was being majorly focused to assess on the level of education of Malaysia (Yusof et al,2020) during the pandemic period. The traditional method of teaching and learning had been completely replaced with the online and virtual learning. The teachers who had been striving for the competence level in face-to-face classroom teaching were starting to get the approval to be an online instructor in Malaysia during the pandemic period (Shahzad et al, 2020).

Apart from that in the education system of Malaysia, the development of the Education 4.0 had been the main target in preparing the learners to face real world and to be prepared for any kind challenges, as it has been stated by Bujang et al, (2020), in which the education system is imposing towards the learners. The preparation for the development of the Education 4.0 had been on the progress. But, the immediate implementation of the advancement in the learning system due to the covid-19 was being a sudden escalation for the learners to adapt towards in the pandemic period (Maria et al, 2018).

The announcement of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education until December 2020 the traditional classroom of teaching and learning was swiftly being moved to the online education. Moreover, Mohamad Nasri, Husnin, Mahmud, and Halim (2020) has stated that the TPACK- technological knowledge and technological pedagogical knowledge, system was also implemented in Malaysia during the pandemic period to ensure on the continuity of the education. However, the plus point of the education being moved towards the technology completely could not be cherished by many of the learners, as they were having lack of sensible and touch which only can be provided by the traditional teaching and learning method (Chung et al,2020).

### **2. 2 The Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic in English Language Learning.**

In Malaysia, after the order of the Movement Control Order's (MCO) establishment many of the learners were prohibited from going to Yen and Mohamad (2020) the schools and the school holidays were being extended. Malaysia is known to be the 165 country to close down the schools and the colleges due to the Movement Control Order (MCO). All the primary and the secondary school learners were being a part of the digital or virtual learning while all the materials for support and training will be uploaded in the Portal called as the e-Guru (Wan, 2020). The English learners will be affected and put into the virtual learning where all the classes are conducted through online. In most cases having accessibility to the online English teaching and learning materials are great. The researcher Shahzad et al. (2020) has mentioned that it has a lot of beneficiaries but the learners will still undergo the exact pressure on online teaching and learning. It is an emerging method of teaching and learning the other learners in the MCO period or lockdown. The sudden implementation of the online or virtual learning is lack of quality at the same time (Basilaiia & Kavadze, 2020).

Furthermore, learning any language, as it is in English language, is incomplete without acquiring any one of its four skills. Virtual learning is a great platform to impart the English language knowledge, share many of the related articles, news, videos and relevant tutorial through the digital learning itself but, according to Mohamad Nasri et al. (2020) the teaching and learning of all the skills of English cannot be completely be developed and imparted to the learners through the online teaching and learning. Furthermore, Yen and Mohamad (2020) has mentioned that the pupils faced major difficulties in learning to spell the world and they faced various difficulties in improving their abilities to spell when the classes were conducted online during the pandemic period (Covid-19 pandemic). Apart from that, Syahrin and Salih (2020) has also mentioned that the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on English language learning does come

with the negative and the positive factors. The learning and practicing a particular language will come with the input and the output.

Moreover, the input of the language among the four skills are the listening and reading. In these two processes the learners will learn and acquire the language from the vocabulary, syntax, phonology and morphology. The learners learning style preferences will be the main concern in imparting the input and output of a language and the components which are being imposed will only be absorbed by the learners according to their capabilities (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Based on the input which the learners have acquiring they will be exposed to the process of applying the gained knowledge through the output which are the processes of the speaking and writing. The main process of the teaching and learning English can be done through the virtual learning successfully according to Kacetl and Klímová (2019), however, the learning in which the teachers cannot clearly assess and completely understand the learners. It will be bringing in improper or misunderstanding in the learning. As every learners way of learning the second language may differ and the virtual learning at once will not be a solution for it all (Shahzad et al., 2020).

### **2.3 The Importance of Learning English during Covid-19 Pandemic.**

The Covid-19 has not just brought the major effect on the health of the humans all around the world. It has majorly brought in many changes. The usage of the technology is the only source which keeps the entire economy to run during the pandemic period of Covid-19 and brought in the economic suffering at the same time (Baldwin & Weder di Mauro, 2020). In the area of teaching many new methods of teaching has been discovered, even in the field of medicine where the education of residents during this covid-19 pandemic period is severely affected. New proposal to maintain the surgical education of the residents are being proposed to keep progressing the teaching of the educators (Chick et al, 2020). Furthermore, in January 2005 WHO's multilingual website has launched in six official languages which are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It has been stated that eventhough, all the official documents of WHO has been published in the six languages other documents such as the technical reports and the clinical guidelines are yet to be published in the official six languages (Chinese & Hindi, 2015). As many of the languages are being used in the transmission of the information, translations play a bigger part in the languages.

Apart from that, the learners and teachers can also utilise the online applications such as Kahoot, Padlet, and Edmodo and so on to bring a new vibe and energy to learn the English language in a better way. It is also the most appropriate time to bring in variety of new exposure for the learners to benefit in learning the language in a creative and interactive manner (Symonenko, Zaitseva, Osadchyi, Osadcha, & Shmeltser, 2020). Especially in the language classes usage of the technology provides unlimited resources for the learners to learn. The teachers have the complete power to supply endless materials and needed and provide high quality education by using the computer technology (Ahmadi & Reza, 2018). In addition, learning the language through the mobile devices is also something that has earned its credit. Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are a great source for the development of the language learning (Yunus, 2018).

Besides that, learning English during this pandemic period of Covid-19 can have a great exposure and to be more advanced and prepared to keep going and learning the languages even when there are many challenges in the field of education with alternative learning methods as it is proposed by Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra, and Tuominen (2020) during the pandemic periods as Covid-19. Moreover, the preparation for it consumes sometime according to the proficiency level of the learners. Once the preparation process is done through the help of the online materials and other resources it will not be an issue. The progress can keep moving forward based on the information mentioned by International Test of English Proficiency International (ITEP) 2020 (Kelly, 2020). English language learning is also something to be brought in to picture at this point of time. The learning of the language should not stop in any cases as such. The progress of learning the English language during this tough time is more beneficial compare to before.

### **2.4 Challenges faced by English Language Learners during Covid-19 Pandemic.**

The pandemic period of Covid-19 every English Language learners who have been working harder to complete with their courses were put into the phase of learning them online or they some of them were delayed from learning them as well. The learning and acquiring a language itself is a hard phase to go through by a learner. The teachers are there to ease the phase with more guidance and well prepared materials needed for the knowledge to be imparted and this situation makes the teachers to be forced to implement the virtual learning method (Huang et al., 2020). All the process of teaching and learning has

been highlighted to use the online method of teaching and learning by using the online applications and the models to learn the language (Wargadinata et al, 2020).

Furthermore, in a recent study by Wang et al. (2020), has mentioned that universities need to focus more on the learners who are suffering due to the anxiety and depression symptom by providing more mental health related information. As a suggestion to avoid this from happening the institutions should provide the hostel and the accommodations for the learners or the learners who are not able to return back to their countries. Furthermore, all the needed safety service and the health units should be available for them all the time if such cases arise in the future (Sahu, 2020). After that, the language that is being imparted is never fully reaching the learners (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). All these factors will be making the language learning to be even harder for the learners. The technology can never substitute a teacher. The learners who had been completely relying on the application to learn the English language to sit for any proficiency test are advised to have the guidance from an English teacher at least for a short period of time, in order to get the proper guidance from a teacher (Jeong, 2017).

Besides that, the abroad learner who travelled to learn the languages were also affected due to the pandemic period. As the learners were on hold and not able to move to their countries for safety measures. The learners who have stayed in the countries to learn the language may have issues with the internet connection or in some cases they may not have sufficient books or source to use for their further reference (Sahu, 2020). Especially for the abroad learners (Sahu, 2020). The institutions may provide any scholarship or allowance for the learners for the time being if it really a necessary in order to keep them progressing in the course. Therefore, the institutions, language centres or the schools should prepare for the pandemic, natural disasters in advance to deal with those kind of issues and to not bring down the learners convenience in learning the language (Lassoued, Alhendawi, & Bashitialshaaer, 2020). A good pedagogy is nothing but nonsense if there is a failure to cope up with the internet connection based on the statement in the article of (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

Lastly, the challenges which the English language learners faced may be a new phase to open up to the difficulties and to have a better plan to handle issues and challenges as such with the knowledge that is gained from the experience of this pandemic period.

#### **2.4.1. Teaching methods**

The other researchers have discussed about the factor of the challenge in the teaching methods of the English Language Learning. During the lockdown period of Covid-19, all the teachers and the learners were moved quickly into the unconventional method of teaching and learning and the learners were having low preparedness in grasping the lessons. In certain schools the 5-phase processes were developed for the virtual learning's progression (AVGERINO & MOROS, 2020). In the country of Georgia, the schools created the Microsoft teams platform and moved the traditional classroom into the online setting completely and they suffered in bringing in the examinations and assignments into the frame of the online setting (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). Moreover, the online educational environment has brought the methodological problems and failure in the information sharing during the English classes as it has been stated by the researcher Shahzad et al. (2020) and the reflection of it on the learners. Furthermore, the limited response of the learners during the teaching of a lesson during the online teaching was an issue and the learners were not being engaging in the class throughout the lesson (Crawford et al, 2020).

Furthermore, in the other research conducted by Aliyyah et al. (2020) has mentioned that the online learning to be very limited and restricted and the learners faced difficulties in understanding the assignments and in completing them. The learners who are from the villages and from the low income households could not connect to the online learning much and the teachers needed to deliver the lessons through some other forms which delayed the process of learning for the learners completely (Kaden, 2020). The researchers have spoken about the challenges in the teaching methods in the English language learning earlier and the drawbacks of implementing the new learning systems.

#### **2.4.2. Psychological factors.**

The learners faced challenges in psychologically during English Language Learning and it has been spoken and elaborated by the other researchers before especially in the English language learning. In a research that was conducted by Han and Hiver (2018), has mentioned that the learners lost their motivation during the learning of the pandemic period (Covid-19 pandemic) and especially in the skill of writing in English Language. Furthermore, the English Language could not be learned by some of the learners and achieve the proficiency level which cause the emotional turmoil for the learners (Clyne, 2002). Moreover, the distance learning does effect on the cognitive styles and the information processing system and the learners who were not able to keep up with it had lack of motivation and felt extremely demotivated to further on the language learning (Chen & Hsu, 2020).

Furthermore, the learners need the motivation to learn the Second language and the movement towards the virtual classes affected on the motivation psychology due to the nature and roles of the language itself. The language teaching which involves namely, clarity, accuracy, precision, and depth could not be achieved the learners and the teacher based on a researcher (Van Loi, 2020). Apart from that, in certain cases, the learners will prefer the writing classes on the English language to be something that can be learned in a much creative manner. The learners will have their free pace but in the online learning the learners lost the freedom and the restricted learning brought major effects in their language development that could cause anxiety for the learners (Al-Jarf, 2007). Moreover, the language learning that is done in the online classes that is beyond the capacity of the learners can cause stress and lack of motivation for them to continue in the foreign language learning (Krisi, Nagar, & Knoll, 2020).

#### **2.4.3. Language skills**

The language skills which comprise the reading, writing, speaking and listening are essential in a language learning and the researchers have spoken about the challenges of learning those specific skills during the pandemic period of Covid-19 as well. The writing is known to be the important skills and through the virtual classes, not just the learners even the teachers faced major difficulties in teaching the learners on how to write in English language (RahmtAllah, 2020). The next skill that was focused is the speaking skill of the learners. Sayuti et al. (2020) has mentioned that, the learners have lack of confidence and with the speaking that is done through the virtual classes brought in even more comfortless for the learners to speak or utter the words accordingly.

Moreover, in the country of Malaysia, the ESL pupils did face the major difficulty during the pandemic period (Covid-19 pandemic) in learning to spell the words properly based on the classes that is conducted virtually for those beginner learners (Yen & Mohamad, 2020). Apart from the traditional classroom teaching the online classroom teaching had lack of peer interaction and as for the speaking classes the interaction between the peers was completely inefficient for the learners to practice (Hernández & Flórez, 2020). Furthermore, in a study that was conducted in Hong Kong by Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020), in which he has stated that the learners with the mixed abilities being in the same class will endure the difficulty in learning the language when the teachers are providing the lessons for all of them generally. Language learning that is imposed with Learning Language Strategies (LLS) have shown slight improvement in imparting certain skills but they have not been completely effective yet (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). Therefore, the challenges in the language skills in English language learning has been a major issue and need to be discovered apart from the other researchers.

#### **2.4.4. Proficiency level of the Learners**

The challenges in the Proficiency level of the English Language Learners had been affected during the covid-19 and had been discussed by the other researchers as well. Firstly, the learners were mainly put into the situation of learning the languages independently during the period of covid-19 and they did face difficulties in understanding and doing the work by themselves during the pandemic period (Covid-19 pandemic) and their proficiency level was the main issue in not motivating them to be consistent in learning the language (SUGARMAN & LAZARÍN, 2020). The learners have also complained in a study that was conducted by, that the learning of the English language had been completely ineffective and had not been providing any benefits to improve the proficiency level of the language (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). Moreover, the lack of the learners' productive skills shows the current state of their proficiency level and how it is affecting them in quickly adapting and practicing the new norm of learning English Language (Syahrin & Salih, 2020).

Besides that, the participation of the learners through the video conferencing or zoom classes had been not useful for the development of the learners proficiency level due to their non-willingness to express with their current level proficiency of the language based on Destianingsih and Satria (2020) statement. Furthermore, in the country of China, the mobile leaning had been used for teaching the English language, the learners who were learning the language in that manner lost the complete touch with the teachers and they were not able to cop up with the proficiency level of the teachers (Gao & Zhang, 2020). Apart from that, Kaharuddin (2020) has stated that the learners creativity in developing the English skills has become complicated and the blending of the teaching and learning with technology brought down the mastery skills of the learners in acquiring the language. The challenges in the Proficiency skill has been discussed by concerned by the other researchers and need to be focused even further.

Based on the literature reviewed above, the following hypotheses were generated:

- H1: Teaching method positively associates with English language learning.
- H2: Psychological positively associates with the English language learning.
- H3: Language skills positively associates with the English language learning.
- H4: Proficiency level positively associates with the English language learning.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The methodology undertaken in this study is literature review through content analysis approach which is part of developing conceptual model and connecting concepts in a conceptual framework. The relevant literature review was found based on certain key words which are English Language Learners, Online learning, Covid-19 pandemic, challenges, e-learning, Malaysian education system and many more. The language used for this study is English. All of the articles were chosen from the last 5 years which is from 2015 – 2020. The total number of articles that was chosen to analyze are 58. Furthermore, the articles that have been chosen for this study are journal articles and books.

Conceptual framework is provided to explain on what is expected to be found in the research. It will differentiate the relevant factors and its relation with the other variables. As for this study, the conceptual framework is based on the types of challenges faced by the English language learners during the period of Covid-19. Those challenges are identified by the level of factors which affect the online learning among the English language learners. The challenges are, teaching method, psychological factors, language skills and proficiency level among the learners in learning the English language. All the challenges were chosen because their related to one another. Those factors are the common challenges which are faced by the English language learners that will be discussed in the research.

#### **3.1 Conceptual Model**

Based on the developed hypothesis in previous sections, a conceptual model (Figure 1) has been proposed. The model below is indicating the relation between the factors teaching methods, psychological, language skills and proficiency level and how it is affecting the English Language Learning. This model specifically explains on the challenges which the English language learners encountered during the pandemic period of Covid-19 in Malaysia. Moreover, the proposed model will help the readers to understand how the factors associated with English Language Learning is directly affecting the learners. Compare to the other researchers model, this model has directly indicated the challenges which the English Language Learners specifically faced in learning the language during the pandemic period of Covid-19. The challenges in the e-learning are various and this particular model will provide the future learners, current learners, academicians and the researchers to understand the challenges associated with the e-learning during the pandemic period of Covid-19 to the English learners.

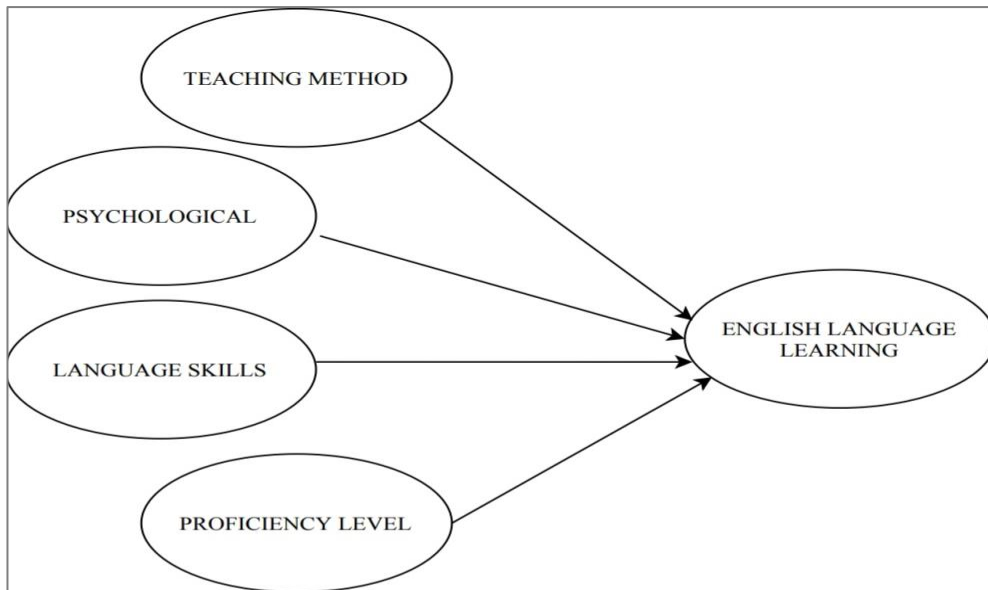


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

#### 4. Conclusion and recommendations

E-learning has provided many beneficiaries for the learners to continue with their process of learning but still it does not come without any challenges. The challenges which the English language learners faced during the pandemic period in Malaysia have been completely discussed throughout this study. The purpose of this study is to determine the challenges which the English language learners faced particularly during the pandemic season of Covid-19. Based on the discussed literature review the teaching method, psychological, language skills and the proficiency level are the main obstacles for the English Language Learners in Malaysia to learn with the e-learning during the pandemic period of Covid-19. This research and the proposed model indicate on the challenges which the learners faced. This research should be taken into consideration by the readers, academicians or researchers to lessen and search for the solutions for the challenges in e-learning for the English learners. This must be done, in order for it to be not affecting during the e-learning for English Language Learners in the future. Further empirical studies should be implemented and the factors in the conceptual model should be validated.

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