



## Investigating Kurdish EFL Students' Attitudes towards Blended Learning at University Level

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating Kurdish EFL students' attitudes towards blended learning at university level. Blended learning is a new method of teaching and learning which combines any type of traditional learning with technology. The study has adopted face-to-face and online learning as two models of blended learning. To conduct the present study, a questionnaire of twenty-four Likert scales and ten close-ended items was designed on the challenges and benefits of face-to-face and online learning. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 undergraduate students at the Dept. of English, University of Zakho during the academic year 2021-2022. Data were analyzed using SPSS software via one-sample t test for the Likert-scale part of the questionnaire, and descriptive statistics analysis in terms of frequencies and percentages for close-ended items part of the questionnaire. The results arrived at in the present study showed that most of the students found face-to-face model of blended learning as a preferable model to be used to learn English language. It also showed that the students were satisfied with blended learning program adopted at the university. Additionally, more than half of the participants believed that attending classes on campus are more beneficial than online classes. Hopefully, this study can help the students as well as the teachers at the university to get benefit from, and cope with the difficulties encountered by the students in the process of teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Face-to-face learning, Online learning, Students' attitudes, Kurdish EFL students.



## دراسة لميول الطلبة الكرد الدارسين للغة الانكليزية نحو التعليم المدمج في المستوى الجامعي

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### الخلاصة

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من ميول الطلبة الكرد الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية نحو التعلم المدمج على المستوى الجامعي. التعلم المدمج هو طريقة جديدة للتعليم والتعلم تجمع بين أي نوع من التعلم التقليدي و التعلم التكنولوجي. اعتمدت الدراسة على نموذجين لاجراء الدراسة الحالية وهما التعلم الحضوري داخل الصف والتعلم عبر الإنترنت. لإجراء هذه الدراسة ، تم تصميم استبيان مكون من أربعة وعشرين فقرة على شكل لا يكرت سكيل وعشرة اسئلة ذو الاجوية القصيرة حول التحديات التي يواجهها الطلبة والفوائد من هذين النموذجيين. تم توزيع الاستبيان على عينة من 100 طالب جامعي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة زاخو خلال العام الدراسي 2021-2022. وبعد ذلك تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج SPSS عبر اختبار One sample T-Test ، والتكرار والنسب المئوية للعناصر المغلقة. أظهرت النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها في الدراسة الحالية أن معظم الطلاب اختاروا نموذج التعليم الحضوري داخل الصف (وجهاً لوجه) للتعلم المدمج كنموذج مفضل لاستخدامه في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. كما أظهر أن الطلاب راضون عن برنامج التعلم المدمج المعتمد في الجامعة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، يعتقد أكثر من نصف المشاركين أن حضور الفصول في الحرم الجامعي أكثر فائدة من الدروس عبر الإنترنت. نأمل أن تساعد هذه الدراسة الطلاب وكذلك التدريسين في الجامعة على الاستفادة منها وكيفية التعامل مع الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب في عملية التدريس والتعلم. الكلمات الرئيسية: التعلم المدمج ، التعلم وجهاً لوجه ، التعلم عبر الإنترنت ، مواقف الطلاب ، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.



فەكۆلین د هەلویستێ قوتابیین كورد یێن زمانی ئنگلیزی وهكو زمانهكی بیانی بهرامبەر خواندنا  
ئاویته ل سەر ئاستی زانکویی

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### پوخته

ئارمانجا سهرهكی ژ ئهقی فەكۆلینی دیار کرنا ههلووستی قوتابیین کورده ل سهر زمانی ئنگلیزی وهكو زمانهكی بیانی د خواندنا ئاویتهدا ل سهر ئاستی زانکویی. خواندنا ئاویته شیوازهک نوی یی پهروه رده و فیر کر نییه، کو ههر جوره فیر بوونهکا نه ریتی ل گهل تهکنولوژیایی تیکهل دکهت. فەكۆلین ههر دوو مودیلین خواندنا ئاویته یین روی ب روی و ئونلاین ب خو فه دگريت. بو نهجامدانا فی فەكۆلینی، پرسیار نامهیهک کو ژ بیست و چار پئفهرین لیکهت و (١٠) پرسیارین بهرسف کورت پیکدهیت، کو ل سهر مفا و بهر هنگار بیین ههر دوو مودیلین روی ب روی و ئونلاین یین خواندنا ئاویته دارشتیه. ئهف پرسنامهیه ژ لایی (١٠٠) قوتابیین پشکا زمانی ئنگلیزی ل زانکویا زاخو دماوهی سالا خواندنا (٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢) دا هاتیبه نهجامدان. داتایین ئهقی فەكۆلینی هاتینه شروقهکرن ب هاریکاریا پروگرامی (SPSS)) و ب ریکا (one sample t test) و ههروهسا ریزهیا سهدی هاتیبه بکار ئینان بو شروقهکرنا پرسیارین بهرسف کورت. نهجامین ئهقی فەكۆلینی ددهنه دیار کرن کو پتریا قوتابیین مودیلای روی ب روی یا خواندنا ئاویته وهک پروگرامهکی باشتر یی فیر بوونی دبین، کو بو فیر بوونا زمانی ئنگلیزی بهیته بکار ئینان. ههروهسا دهیته دیار کرن کو زور بهیا قوتابیین درازینه ژ ئهوی خواندنا ئاویته ئهوا کو ل زانکویی دهیته بکار ئینان. لسهر ئهقی چهندی، پتر ژ نیفا بهژ دار بوویان باوهردکن کو بهژ دار یکرین د وانهیاندا د ناڤ کهمپا زانکوییدا مفایین زیدهتر ههنه ژ وانهمین ئونلاین. ب هیفیا ئهوی چهندی ئهف فەكۆلینه ب شیت هاریکاریا قوتابیین و ههروهسا



مامؤستايين زانكويي بكهت، داکو مفای ژئ وهرېگرن، وړوی بړوی وان زحمهتیبیان بین کو د پړوسیسا وانه گوتتی و فیربوونیدا ریبیری قوتابییان دبیت.

پهیفین سهرمکی: خواندنا ناویته، فیربوونا روی بړوی، فیربوونا نونلاین، هملویستی قوتابییان، قوتابیین زمانئ ټنگلیزی ومک زمانهکئ بیانی.

## 1.1 Introduction

Graham et al. (2019) defined blended learning as a strategic combination of in-person and online teaching. According to Osguthorpe et al. (2003), blended learning combines face-to-face to distant conveyance structure, nevertheless, blended learning does not only mean to show a webpage. Those who use blended learning are striving to maximize the benefits of both face-to-face and online learning methods. Blended learning is defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as the contemplative blending of face-to-face educational experiences with online learning activities. Riel, Lawless, and Brown (2016) stated that blended learning settings offer learners online and face-to-face spaces to interact, discuss, and engage on major programs. These places all have unique advantages for effective learning. Moreover, Albiladi and Alshareef (2019) stated that online and remote learning are both included in the emerging concept of blended learning, which integrates both of these learning styles. The usage of blended learning has been highlighted by a new study that looks at the social and academic advantages of this method of learning. The potential of blended learning hinges on the advantages of both conventional and online modalities of teaching since it mixes them. Furthermore, in dealing with blended learning, students find it difficult to follow up their learning via this system due to some factors, such as being unable to access the internet, being unqualified enough to deal with electronic devices, being unable get a computer or a mobile due to economic problems. Besides other difficulties encountered while attending classes on campus. This study aimed at studying the benefits and challenges of face-to-face and online models of blended learning at university level. Since the appearance of Covid-19 two years ago, most of the institutions and universities around the world has adopted blended learning-based program in their curriculum including the



universities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Due to the new challenges facing students, the present study investigates the factors that can help students to get benefit from the blended learning and improve their skills at using technology. Based on that, it is believed that this study will be of importance to EFL students in terms of identifying the difficulties and benefits of this system. Likewise, it is expected that this study will have a positive effect on the students as well as on other people's attitudes in the academic circle towards blended learning.

Moreover, the following research questions are set to conduct the present study.

1. What are the mean scores of each model of blended learning in terms of benefits and challenges?
2. Which model of blended learning is preferred most by the students?
3. What are the main challenges the students encounter with blended learning?
4. What are the main benefits of blended learning the students got in blended learning?

In addition to the research questions, the following hypotheses are derived from research questions.

1. The mean scores for the benefits of face-to-face learning will be higher than those of online model of blended learning.
2. The students prefer face-to-face learning more than online learning.
3. Having an access and being unqualified in using the electronic platforms are the main challenges the students have when dealing with blended learning.

## 2.2 Study Background

Banditvilai (2016) claims that although the notion of blended learning has been known for centuries, its terminology did not become widely accepted until sometime in the early twenty-first century. Blended learning systems, according to Graham (2006), are learning environments that incorporate face-to-face learning with computer-mediated education. The two delivery techniques are meant to work in tandem. Now, the phrase "blended learning" refers to merging the Internet and other digital tools with traditional classroom





formats that need the physical presence of both the teacher and the learners (Poon, 2013). Finding a flexible setting that works for all learners can be challenging. However, blended learning strategy makes it possible to create an educational environment that is "available, adaptable, dynamic, participatory, supportive, and motivating (Zhang and Zhu, 2018). Additionally, learners are encouraged to take part both inside and outside of the classroom using blended learning since it offers more learning opportunities. Blended learning is a flexible, scalable, and effective method of instructing and learning. In other words, the online model of blended learning provides learners with freedom to learn whenever and wherever they want, without being constrained by schedules or colleagues (Senffner and Kepler, 2015). Therefore, blended learning is the mean of facing difficulties of adjusting academic success to individual needs by incorporating the latest technological advances provided by online learning with the engagement and collaboration offered in the finest of traditional education. Courses offering BL experiences are developed using e-learning platforms like Moodle, a modular object-oriented dynamic learning context. This type of learning environment meets the demands of students who are unable to attend traditional classes for personal or professional reasons. Additionally, it gives a chance to interact with the teacher and prevents a wholly impersonal course experience, as would be the case with a course that only offers online instruction. Added to that, blended learning is the natural fusion of well chosen, compatible face-to-face and online methodologies and technologies (Shantakumari and Sajit, 2015). Consequently, blended learning can be utilized successfully to help language learners improve their language skills. Rather than using conventional face-to-face or completely online methods, blended learning can help learners strengthen their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Grgurovic 2011; Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour, 2017). In addition, Neumeier (2005) offers a foundation to build a blended learning environment in the context of language teaching and learning. Six characteristics make up this framework, which identifies the essential components of creating a hybrid educational environment for language learning and teaching. These variables are (1) method, (2) integration model, (3) learning distribution material and goals, (4)



techniques of language teaching, (5) learning subject engagements, and (6) place. When deciding whether to incorporate blended learning into their teaching methods, language teachers must consider each of these factors carefully.

### 2.3 Blended learning Models

The term "blended learning" refers to a variety of instructional techniques that integrate face-to-face learning with individualized, student-directed, computer-based learning modules. The proportional emphasis of these two programs differs from a school to another, however the fundamental approach is always the same: utilize technology on a personal basis to get beyond the most frequent barriers to learning, such as time, financial resources, space, and varied learning styles and paces. A model for student-centered learning that is scaled to a school-wide environment is provided by blended learning (Eastman, 2015).

On the one hand, Bryan and Volchenkova (2016) state that blended learning consists of six models: the face-to-face driven model, the rotation model, the flex model, the online lab model, the self-blend model and the enriched Virtual model. On the other hand, Eastman (2015) presents that most blending methods currently fall into one of four models: rotational, flex, self-blended and enriched Virtual.

According to Bryan and Volchenkova (2016) the face-to-face driven model is a model of blended learning in which classroom learning and online learning are supplemented. The rotation model is a blended learning model in which learners alternate between online-based modalities and other classroom activities. The rotational model is organized around and broadly defined as time blocks during which learners usually work together in small groups with an instructor or assistant instructor or independently while utilizing educational, engaging, and/or adaptive technology. Station rotation, lab rotation, flipped classrooms, and individual rotation are the four most recognized forms of the rotational concept (Eastman, 2015). The Flex model allows learners to move amongst learning activities on a flexible timetable based on their needs. In a Flex model, online learning is considered as the foundation of student learning. While students go through the course syllabus



and materials, teachers deliver guidance and instruction on an as-needed basis. In-class time is spent on collaborative initiatives such as a writer's workshop or Socratic conversations. Students can have a lot of control over their learning with this technique (Lazorenko, 2021). The Flex model prioritizes individual and online learning for the majority of material delivery. As required, students meet with teachers in person individually and in small groups. With this methodology, students may work independently while still getting the chance to interact with others in person to better their comprehension. Each learner has their own workspace in the normal flexible area, and there is also space for small group meetings and easy supplementary pull-out tables. In keeping with the working model, "cyber cafes" could also be used to offer students additional workspaces and peer-interaction opportunities (Eastman, 2015). The online lab model is a blended learning model which allows learners to enhance their regular studies with an on-campus online course. The self-blend model helps students to combine their regular studies with an off-campus online course (Lazorenko, 2021). In self-blended methods, a part of student's course is delivered online. These programs are a supplement to ones which are taught in more conventional ways (e.g., in person seminars, lectures and labs). The self-blended content could be presented in many different settings within or outside of the classroom, giving students flexibility over when and where they receive it (Eastman, 2015). The Enriched Virtual model is another model of blended learning which is an option to full-time online education in which participants performed the majority of their schoolwork online at home or outside of school, however, students must attend classes for necessary face-to-face learning sessions with a professor. Enriched Virtual programs, unlike the Flipped Classroom, do not often demand school attendance daily; certain courses might only require attendance twice a week (Lazorenko, 2021). Enhanced Virtual Blended Learning expands on the self-blended model by delivering a part of each course online. The delivery of this content is asynchronously and may occur at different areas. Face-to-face interaction with instructors and classmates in more traditional classroom setting serves to supplement this asynchronous knowledge. Learners might not attend school or college daily, in contrary to the majority of the other blended





learning methods. The self-blended approach and environmental considerations offer venues for seminars, lectures, labs, and cyber lounges for using online resources. Daily attendance reductions could result in less space being needed for facilities overall (Eastman, 2015).

#### 2.4 Attitudes

According to Allport (1973), an attitude is a mental and neurological state of readiness that has been structured through experience, and that directs or dynamically influences how an individual responds to all stimuli, regardless of context. Smith's approach (1971) states that an attitude is the component of organizing thoughts around a thing or a circumstance to respond in a preferred way. Tang and Chaw (2013 cited in Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019) states that an individual's attitude can be defined as their way of behaving or speaking when engaging or conversing with other people. An attitude is crucial in daily life. Being nice does not guarantee that someone has a positive attitude. When an attitude is used in daily life, we have a duty to consider how learners' motivation affects their ability to communicate and accomplish. Attitudes definition could be examined on six different levels towards blended learning: learning flexibility (the ability to carry out learning activities anywhere), study management (staying on schedule), technology, online learning (using tools such as educational application programs), online interaction (virtual communication), and classroom instruction.

The attitudes that are being examined in this way are signs of the learners' support for blended learning. It is significant to observe that students who typically value learning and are highly motivated to study also value online learning in blended learning better (Zhu, Au and Yates, 2013 cited in Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019). Students' views toward this approach are generally greatly improved when the blended learning approach is applied to learning environment. Similar attitudes exist against the use of social media for academic purposes and blended learning (Acar, 2013 cited in Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019). The views of students toward this kind of educational environment are closely related to how satisfied students are with a course that is offered through blended learning.



Yamin (2011 cited in Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019) proposed that there are two categories of motivation in the process of education which are extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual's motivation and requirements grow into a course of study that is not directly tied to their own learning activities. Intrinsic motivation can be defined on the basis of recognizing the requirements and providing encouragement which is absolutely related to learning activities. Similarly, Krashen, Gardner, and Lambert (1972 cited in Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019) believed that instrumental motivation and integrative motivation serve different purposes when it comes to learning a second language. It is projected that proficiency in terms of the two functions will be related to integral motivation, which is defined as the desire to be like respected members of the community who speak the second language. In order to get intake, the existence of integrative motivation should inspire the learner to communicate with learners of the second language out of pure interest. Similar reasoning also implies a low filter for interactively driven acquirers.

## 2.5 Previous Studies

Fedynich, Bradley and Bradley (2015) conducted a study on graduate students' perceptions of online learning. With new programs being offered on a regular basis, they believed that online learning had undoubtedly made its way into higher education. They stated that the participants who took part in their study should serve as an important source of data. The main aim of their study was to gain insights into graduate students' perceptions regarding online learning. Two hundred forty-nine graduate students were questioned to determine the positive components to their happiness and the obstacles they saw as impeding it. Students from various institutions at South Texas University took part in the online questionnaire that was used to evaluate online courses. Students' perceptions of their experiences with online courses were analyzed to gather data for the study. The study comprised students who had no prior experience taking online courses. The analysis of student perspectives based on their individual experiences with online learning was used to gather data for this study. The questionnaire, which used a Likert Scale



to rate items, covered four main subject areas. There are four of these: management and support systems, 2. assessment and feedback/instructor roles, 3. student roles and responsibilities, and 4. instructional design and delivery. The study's conclusions showed that students' satisfaction is significantly impacted by interacting with one another and with the teacher. The requirements for various teaching styles and delivery to promote students' desire to learn, as well as enough learner assistance that linked to campus resources, were also mentioned as concerns. Students, on the other hand, expressed great satisfaction with the arrangement and clarity of the lesson when adequate resources were used. The importance of the lecturer's involvement in ensuring student satisfaction was noted.

In their study, Shantakumari and Sajith (2015) defined blended learning as a manner of addressing the problems of adapting learning and development to the requirements of students by merging the inventive and technological breakthroughs afforded by online courses with the contact and involvement offered in the finest of conventional learning. His study's primary goal is to identify how students perceive blended learning, which will, in turn, reveal how satisfied they are and how effective the classes are. His research was a cross-sectional study carried out at the GMU, Ajman, between January and December 2013. A questionnaire was used to gather opinions from 75 students enrolled in the university's certificate programs about blended learning process, content, and accessibility. Based on gender, age, and course enrolment, student perceptions were evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test. The median ratings for every question across the three areas were over three, indicating good perceptions of blended learning which was discovered in the end. Between gender and age, the distribution of perceptions was comparable. The participation in the course, however, showed significant differences ( $P = 0.02$ ). As a result, students have a favorable opinion of the blended learning courses that are provided by that university. Students in various courses have diverse views of the same material, which suggests that blended learning format should be modified in accordance with the course material to improve its perception.



In a study entitled "Enhancing Students' Language Skills through Blended Learning" in a university in Asia, Banditvilai (2016) described blended learning. He represented blended learning as an educational setting in a large portion of the world where computers and the internet are easily accessible. It blends independent study with beneficial face-to-face learning with an instructor. In this study, the four language learning skills are taught using standard classroom language teaching techniques alongside online learning tactics in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program in Thailand. Speaking, reading, writing, and listening are the main skills which have been used. This article's main goal is to examine the efficacy of a blended learning environment, which blends one type of online learning with conventional classroom instruction to see if students' language skills and opinions of the course are improved. The subjects in this study were a class of the second-year undergraduate English majors at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus in Thailand. All of them were Thai. They varied in age from 18 to 21. 60 students—52 girls and 8 boys enrolled. They formed a cohesive group due to their similar ages and completion of the three required English courses for English majors. i.e., reading in English. The academic performance and students' attitudes were compared between the experimental group and the control group to assess the ability of accessible technology to foster the development of language proficiency and students' independency. The results of this study demonstrate that online practice improves the four language skills, as well as self-directed learning and learner motivation, in a direct and significant way. Students have the chance to learn on their own and get knowledge in a decentralized manner when e-learning is included into traditional classroom instructions.

According to Huang, (2016) the terms "blended learning," "face-to-face learning," and "online learning" have quite varied meanings in various educational contexts. Blended learning is defined as the combined educational context where face-to-face and online learning are blended within a single teaching and learning environment in the researcher's study, "Learners' Perceptions of Blended Learning and the Roles and Interaction of Face-to-face



and Online Learning." Additionally, face-to-face instruction refers to conventional classroom instruction in which teachers and students interact directly in real classrooms. Therefore, online learning is defined as computer-based, self-directed learning that occurs either synchronously or asynchronously over the internet. This calls for the utilization of numerous virtual tools and resources, including chat, message boards, net meetings, and online course materials. The study investigated the way students perceive blended learning in regard to the respective functions of face-to-face and online learning, as well as how these two types of learning interact in blended EFL environments. The study used a questionnaire to collect data from 296 university students about their perceptions toward a mixed English course they had taken there. The findings demonstrated that students had a generally positive attitude toward blended learning and that they recognized the interdependence of face-to-face and online instruction in the blended English course. Added to that, it was thought that the two methods of learning played distinct roles in the study of English. Students felt that online learning was more beneficial for listening whereas face-to-face learning encouraged the acquisition of global information and boosted learners' motivation in studying English. The study found that most students preferred blended learning to either face-to-face or online instruction alone, with face-to-face instruction being favored over online instruction.

Likewise, Ikhwan and Widodo (2019) conducted a study on Attitude Conception: The Role of Blended Learning in Environmental Education. They claimed that the 21st century's technology stage of transition aims to achieve the objective of elaborating quality of education for knowledge transmission during the educational process. Learners were keen on following the learning process via attitude conceptualization because the primary goal of their study was to investigate the construction of blended learning. In order to obtain empirical proof of blended learning's effectiveness and its link to learners' motivation and pleasure when learning English as a foreign language, face-to-face and online learning were merged by evaluating the students' opinions toward conventional and mixed approaches. They compared the elements of





blended learning and traditional learning processes using qualitative research methods. Additionally, based on educators' perceptions of attitude conception, they also wanted to portray the function of blended learning. The primary affective aspect in language training and a predictor of successful language learners is the student's attitude. Therefore, the existence of blended learning was giving students the chance to take charge of accomplishing the learning objectives on their own. The study used observation and interview for collecting data from 68 students and teachers who worked as the primary facilitators or major controllers of the attitude process in students. The results they arrived at indicated that blended learning is more suitable than conventional learning. Thus, this study offered controlled teacher perceptions for instruction that might aid students in developing appropriate digital literacy through attitude from the role of blended learning.

In another study by Anwar and Wahid (2021) entitled Learners' perception on online learning implementation during covid-19 pandemic, found learners' perception of learning using the online media during COVID 19 pandemic. They mentioned that the COVID 19's rapid and widespread global adoption has altered how education is carried out. Online learning has replaced the traditional classroom instruction in schools and universities. A questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended items and an interview were used to collect data from 68 learners from the English Education Study Program. Researchers used descriptive qualitative methodologies to get the findings. This study found that students generally have a good idea of online learning. Online education is seen as an efficient and affordable method of getting knowledge during Covid-19 pandemic. However, the majority of students complained about the poor internet access, which has an impact on their ability to learn. Another point the results indicated in this study is that the interaction between the learners and the lecturers help them to achieve better learning. Moreover, the students were generally satisfied with how online learning was delivered, including the materials that were made available, the accompanying learning resources, and the directions for submitting assignments. Students recognized the need for development in the creation of



activities that encourage critical thinking. instructors must make sure that all learners have the chance to ask questions and receive rapid feedback in order to foster effective classroom interaction. Each course must provide timely formative assessment as well. In order to increase student participation and engagement in group projects as well as individual assignments, teachers and institution policy makers must redefine the dynamics of online learning delivery. Students' motivation to learn independently from home can be increased by making online instruction engaging. Finally, having an internet connection available is crucial for online learning because it connects students and professors. Low internet connectivity in underdeveloped areas has a significant impact on online learning. Consequently, universities must help learners access the internet by offering them discounted internet data.

Although there are a number of studies on blended learning, no general and unified opinions of blended learning adapted program and its models was existed and applied to Kurdish EFL students to date. Generally, researchers have different opinions regarding blended learning and its models. Some researchers explained how blended learning is perceived but no attempt has been made to take students' attitudes regarding blended learning and its two models face-to-face and online learning into consideration. Despite the fact that most of the previous studies presented the benefits of blended learning, none of those studies explained the challenges of blended learning. Therefore, this study is different from others in that it focuses on the benefits and challenges of face-to-face and online models of blended learning. It will also compare both models and present the best-chosen model to be used for learning English language by university students.

### 3. Method

The present study is a survey on Kurdish EFL students' attitudes blended learning at university level. It has adopted a quantitative approach for data collection. The present study is also based on two models of blended learning, namely face-to-face and online learning. To conduct the present study, a two-part questionnaire was designed to collect data from 100 undergraduate



students at the Dept. of English, Faculty of Humanities, University of Zakho during the academic year 2021-2022. The first part of the questionnaire is a Likert-scale consisting of 4 categories: Face-to-face learning (benefits & challenges), and Online learning (benefits & challenges). Each category consists of 6 items on blended learning. The second part of the questionnaire consists of 10 close-ended items on blended learning (See Appendix 1). The questionnaire was first given to a jury to check its suitability and reliability to the context of the present study. After that some changes were made to questionnaire based on the jury members' feedback. The study is conducted at the university of Zakho, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The sample of the study was chosen non-randomly since they are already at the dept. of English who had experienced blended learning for more than two years.

### 3.1. Data Analysis

Analyzing data collected via the questionnaire, One-Sample T test technique is used to obtain the mean scores and standard deviations of each item in each category of the Likert Scale part by using Software SPSS (version 20). Whereas the second part of the questionnaire, i.e., the closed-ended items was analyzed through a descriptive statistics analysis in terms of frequencies and percentages. Taking into account each research question set for this study, each category of the first part of the questionnaire was analyzed in terms of benefits and challenges as follows.

1. What are the mean scores of each model of blended learning in terms of benefits and challenges?
2. Which model of blended learning is preferred most by the students?
3. What are the main challenges the students encounter with blended learning?
4. What are the main benefits of blended learning the students got in blended learning?

#### 3.1.1. Benefits of Face-to-face learning

The students' response to the first category, i.e., 'Benefits of face-to-face learning' shows that they have a good attitude towards attending face-to-face



classes. In other words, the students find the classes more successful and beneficial when attending classes on campus. Across most items, most of the students do believe that this model gives them a better chance to work with other students, and they are more interesting than online classes. Moreover, fewer students agreed that attending face-to-face classes enables them to think more critically and they also believed that doing examinations, assignments and other tasks in the classroom are more interesting. Table (1) shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each item under this category from the highest to the lowest.

Table 1: The mean scores of the benefits of face-to-face model of learning.

N.	Items	participants	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	I learn better when attending face-to-face classes on campus	100	4.45	.783	.078
2	Face-to-face learning gives me a better chance to work with other students in pairs and groups.	100	4.38	.711	.071
3	Attending face-to-face classes is more interesting than online classes.	100	4.23	1.036	.104
4	Face-to-face learning motivates me to interact in the classroom.	100	4.20	.814	.081
5	Attending face-to-face classes on campus enables me to think more critically.	100	3.72	1.053	.105
6	I like doing examinations, assignments, and other tasks in the classroom.	100	3.57	1.174	.117
Total mean score of the whole category			24.55		

### 3.1.2. Challenges of Face-to-face learning

The students' attitudes towards the second category, i.e., the challenges of the face-to-face learning shows that late attendance interrupts and affects the class to run smoothly in face-to-face learning. On the other hand, few students believed that teachers are not motivated and punctual in face-to-face model.



Moreover, some other students believed that some teachers cannot manage their classes due to the lack of experience and shortage of time, they also did not deny that attending face-to-face classes on time is difficult for them due to commuting problems. Table (2) shows means scored for each item on the challenges of face-to-face learning from the highest to the lowest. Those students also believed that the time allocated to face-to-face class interactions, participation, examination and other tasks is not enough due to the large classes. The overall mean score of all items in this table is 19.14, this shows that some students find face-to-face model of blended learning difficult to be used for learning languages.

Table 2: The mean scores of the challenges of face-to-face model of blended learning.

N	Items	Participa nt	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	In face-to-face learning, student late attendance interrupts and affects the class to run smoothly.	100	3.65	1.029	.103
2	Some teachers cannot manage their face-to-face classes successfully due to lack of experience. Shortage of time.	100	3.35	1.104	.110
3	Attending face-to-face classes on time is difficult due to commuting problems.	100	3.27	1.171	.117
4	The time allocated to face-to-face class interaction and participation is not enough due to the large classes.	100	3.25	.947	.095
5	The time allocated to face-to-face learning is not enough to do examinations and other tasks.	100	3.06	1.071	.107
6	Teachers are not motivated in face-to-face classes and are not punctual when coming to the class.	100	2.56	1.157	.116
Total mean score of the whole category			19.1400		

### 3.1.3. Benefits of online learning





Concerning the benefits of online model of blended learning, the students were not happy with online learning, and they thought that online classes are not organized and informative than on campus classes, and they also thought that most of the students are not satisfied with online learning. Moreover, online learning was not helpful in providing them with more opportunities to interact with other students. Moreover, these participants showed that online classes do not help them develop better critical thinking. However, some students preferred doing examinations and assignments via electronic platforms. The mean scores for each item on the benefits of online learning are shown in Table (3).

Table 3: The mean scores of the benefits of online model of blended learning.

N.	Items	participants	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	I prefer doing examinations and assignments via electronic platforms.	100	2.85	1.306	.131
2	I can get more explanatory feedback from my teachers via online and electronic platforms.	100	2.69	1.107	.111
3	Attending online classes helps me achieve my learning goals.	100	2.67	1.181	.118
4	Online classes help me develop better critical thinking.	100	2.56	1.140	.114
5	Online classes provide me with more opportunities to interact with other student.	100	2.44	1.008	.101
6	Online classes are more organized and informative than on campus classes.	100	2.17	1.025	.103
Total mean score of the whole category			15.3800		

### 3.1.4. Challenges of online learning

The final section of part one of the questionnaire concentrates on the attitudes of EFL university students towards the challenges of online model of blended learning. Most of the students think that accessing the electronic platforms is not easy due to the poor internet services. While some other



students disagreed if they were not skillful enough to use the computer and electronic platforms. Based on that, online classes do not help students learn from other students, and it also does not help them to support their learning in face-to-face classes. Moreover, students believed that teachers do not follow the timetables for each lesson when uploading lessons and teaching materials to the electronic platforms. The last item shows that many students agreed that some teachers do not know how to create effective PowerPoint presentations and access the electronic platforms. Table (4) shows the mean scores for each item on the challenges of online classes from the highest to the lowest.

Table 4: The mean scores of the challenges of online model of blended learning.

N.	Items	participants	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1	Accessing the electronic platforms is not easy due to the poor internet service.	100	4.16	.961	.096
2	Online classes do not help me learn from other students.	100	3.76	1.215	.122
3	Online classes do not help me understand face-to-face classes.	100	3.65	1.234	.123
4	When uploading lessons and teaching materials to the electronic platforms, teachers do not follow the timetables for each lesson.	100	3.59	1.026	.103
5	Some teachers do not know how to create effective PowerPoint presentations and access the electronic platforms.	100	3.43	1.148	.115
6	I am not skillful enough to use the computer and log into the electronic platforms.	100	2.95	1.209	.121
Total mean score of the whole category			21.5400		

Based on the data shown in Tables (1,2,3, 4), it can be seen that the overall mean scores for each category from the highest to the lowest are benefits of face-to-face learning, challenges of online learning, challenges of face-to-face learning, benefits of online learning with the mean scores 24.55, 21.54, 19.14, and 15.38 respectively.

### 3.2. Close-ended items



The second part of the questionnaire concentrates on both models of blended learning, namely face-to-face and online models. In this part, the participants responded to 10 close-ended questions and the results showed that most students had positive attitudes towards blended learning. In this section, percentages are given to each item. Across all participants, 55 % of them were satisfied with blended learning program adapted at university while 45 % were not satisfied with that program. Around 51% of the students preferred on campus-classes, 45% of participants preferred both programs whereas only 4% preferred online classes. In responding to another item, most of the students which is around 85% know how to use Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint efficiently. Moreover, the students who participated in study use different electronic platforms and social media to improve their language skills, and as follows, 78% of the participants use google, 73% use Instagram, 29% of the students use YouTube, 25% of them use Moodle, 16% use Facebook, 15% use zoom, 13% use telegram and 9 % use Viber.

However, some participants have problems when using electronic platforms which is around 53% of the total learners who participated in the current study and 47% of them do not have any problems when using electronic platforms. 47% of the students, spend more than three hours using the electronic platforms for learning purposes per-week, 25% spend two hours, 16% spend one hour while only 12% of the total participants take three hours.

Additionally, almost all participants have access to internet at home which is around 97%, whereas more than half of the participants have access to internet at university which is around 65% and 35% of the total participants do not have access to internet at university. Although most of the students who participated in the current study know how to create presentations using PowerPoint, 6% of the participants do not know how to create presentations using PowerPoint. Finally, students who participated in the study had different opinions regarding the skills they learn through blended learning. 64% of the participants chose listening as the skill they learn best through blended learning, 61% of the total participants chose speaking, 51% chose vocabularies, 44% chose grammar, 39% chose pronunciation, 37 percent chose literature and reading, and 33 % chose writing.



### 3.3. Discussion of the results

In the current study, the attitudes of Kurdish EFL university students towards blended learning are investigated. The findings of this study showed that most of the participants have positive attitudes towards blended learning which is similar to the results arrived at by the studies conducted by Shantakumari, 2015; Ikhwan and Widodo, 2019. They also believed that face-to-face model of blended learning is better than online model to be used by teachers for teaching EFL university students any Languages which is in align with the findings of the previous study by Huang (2016), while it is different from the study done by Banditvilai (2016) whose results found out that online model was the preferable method to be used for learners to learn a language. Additionally, face-to-face learning is preferred the most students since it is found out in this study that face-to-face learning is more interesting than online learning, it helps students learn better, interact better with other classmates and it also motivates learners to learn different language skills. Moreover, the study indicated that most of the students believed that face-to-face learning gives them a better chance to work with other students, whereas Fedynich, Bradley and Bradley (2015) and Anwar and Wahid (2021) showed that online learning helps students to interact with one another and with teachers.

Furthermore, according to the results of this study, the first two hypotheses which have been derived from research questions are verified while the last hypothesis is rejected. As it can be seen in Tables, tables 1,2,3 and 4, the overall mean scores of face-to-face learning is higher than those of online model of blended learning. It also showed that face-to-face learning is preferred the most students rather than online learning. On the other hand, the study stated that the main challenges of online learning are accessing the electronic platforms which is not easy due to the poor internet service and being unqualified in using electronic platforms.

### 4. Conclusion

The present study has arrived at the following concluding remarks.



1. Different Kurdish EFL learners have different opinions regarding blended learning models, namely face-to-face and online models. The ranking of the categories representing the benefits and challenges of face-to-face and online learning in term the mean scores is as follows: benefits of face-to-face learning, challenges of online learning, challenges of face-to-face learning, benefits of online learning respectively.

2. Most of the students found face-to-face model of blended learning as a preferable model to be used to learn English language while only few students preferred online model.

3. Many students were satisfied with blended learning program adapted at university while some other were not satisfied with that program. Although more than half of the students believed that attending on campus classes are more beneficial than online classes, some students preferred both models to be used together for learning English Language.

4. Almost all learners have access to internet at home and more than half of them have access to the internet at university.

5. Most of the students are familiar with using different types of software, different electronic platforms and social media to improve their language skills

6. The time students spend on using electronic platforms per week varies from 1 hour to more than 3 hours.

7. The language skills the students learn better via blended learning from the highest to the lowest are listening, vocabularies, grammar, pronunciation, literature and reading, and writing respectively.

### Recommendations

Since blended learning has become a must in most academic institutions and based on the results arrived at in the present study, the following recommendations are forwarded to the people and institutions in the academic circle to make the process of teaching and learning more successful.

1. Providing the universities and colleges with good internet service, both for staff and students to help the process of teaching and learning run more smoothly.

2. Proving teaching staff with training courses to help them deal with electronic devices in a more professional way. For example, using the





electronic platforms for the assessment process, not only for uploading the lectures.

3. Issuing stricter instructions by the universities on the necessity of using electronic platforms, especially the ones adopted by such universities, such as Moodle, Zoom, etc.

4. The way teachers and students use the electronic platforms should be followed up by the colleges and departments.

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