The effects of blended learning on students' achievement in a foundation english course: A study on foundation english students at TISHK University in Erbil, Iraq

ثير التعلم المدمج على تطورالطلاب في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية للصفوف التأسيسية: دراسة عملية على طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في الصفوف التأسيسية في جامعة تيشك في أربيل/ العراق

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Abstract

Blended learning offers numerous opportunities for learners and teachers with the advancements in web technologies in education. This study explored the effects of blended learning on students' achievement in Foundation English course. To this aim, 30 freshman students who were studying at TISHK International University in Erbil, Iraq were split into two groups via stratified random sampling with an intervention lasting 12 weeks in 2021-2022 Academic Year. Control group students received a traditional instruction, while experimental group were exposed to a blended learning instruction model. The data were collected through two exams on English competency, a questionnaire and an interview in this mixed methods design study. Subsequently, SPSS 27. and MAXQDA were employed to analyze the data accordingly. The findings indicated that experimental group students who took part in blended learning activities outperformed with 0.001 p-value, while the progress was not significant in control group students who took traditional instruction. Likewise, interview and questionnaire analysis unearthed that asynchronous video lessons and Google Form quizzes enhanced their English proficiency tremendously, increased their self-confidence and improved their motivation. The findings of this study may have some implications for educators who consider the implementation of blended learning in their institutions.

Keywords: Blended learning, traditional instruction, asynchronous video lesson, Google Form quiz.

ملخص

التعليم المختلط يوفر العديد من الفرص للاساتذة والطلاب تحت ضوء التطورات في تقنيات الويب في التعليم. هذا البحث قدم لدراسة آثار التعلم المختلط على إنجاز الطلبة في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية الأساسية. لهذا الغرض، تم تقسيم 30 طالبا في الصف الأول الى مجموعتين , جميعهم يدرسون في جامعة تيشك الدولية في أربيل، العراق،ثم تم اخذ نماذج عشوائية على مدار 12 أسبوعًا في العام الأكاديمي 2021-2022. حصلت المجموعة الاولى على التعليم التقليدي ، في حين أن المجموعة التجريبية تعرضت لنموذج التعليم المختلط. تم جمع البيانات من خلال اختبارين على كفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية واستبيان ومقابلة في هذا البحث الذي يتضمن طرق البحوث المختلطة. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب الذين شاركوا في النشاطات التعليمية المختلطة نجحوا اعلى بقيمة 0.00P.
من جهة اخرى طلاب المجموعة الاولى اللذين تعرضوا الى التعليم التقليدي لم يحققوا نجاحا ملحوظا على صعيد الدروس و المهارات المكتسبة, حيث ساعد الاساليب المزدوجة مثل الاستبيانات, الاختبارات القصيرة , النشاطات المختلفة عبر ملفات قوقل و الدروس المصورة على تطوير جوانب اخرى من الطلاب كالثقة بالنفس, الشغف للتعلم و التشجيع. اخيرا, يحتوي هذه البحث على مواد تطبيقية سوف يساعد الاساتذة اللذين يستخدمون التعليم المزدوج في مؤسساتهم.

الكلمات الدلالية: التعلم المدمج ، التعليم التقليدي ، دروس الفيديو الغير المتزامنة ، اختبار قوقل

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Introduction

Traditional instruction used to be dominant throughout the world before the advent of electronic or hybrid mode of instruction. Traditional instruction model differentiates from others by positioning the teacher at the center of education. In other words, teacher is considered as the ultimate source of knowledge, and students are obliged to receive information passively (Seage & Turegun, 2020). In order for teachers to fulfil their facilitating roles in teaching, they must supply students with the requisite communication tools (Yildiz, 2016). Additionally, lecturing is the most common method of teaching in traditional instruction. Teachers can employ gestures, eye contact, rising and falling intonation during these lessons. Subsequently, all students have been taught with the same teaching pedagogies. In addition, the schedule and classrooms are fixed in traditional instruction. This century's technological advancements have had far-reaching effects on people all across the world (Kara & Yildiz, 2022). However, integrating technology into the classrooms is not compulsory in face to face education and traditional mode of instruction has been criticized by a number of scholars (Vernadakis et al., 2012; Vallée et al., 2020; Bazelais & Doleck, 2018) as the atmosphere has been regarded as demotivating, monotonous and uninspiring. It is evident that traditional instruction can lose its popularity in this century when digital natives are familiar with web-based learning tools. Digital natives are able to think, learn, criticize and demand differently as they were born under the ubiquitous influence of the internet and other modern ICT tools, so there is no hesitation that they want to have a different mode of instruction in educational settings.

There has been a steady shift from teaching to learning, so stakeholders of education have transformed their methods to provide new learning platforms thanks to the advancements in science and technology. Accordingly, the role of teachers has been transformed from being the source of knowledge to a facilitator, so they are expected to offer varied instruments in order to ensure students' learning (Abdulrahman & Kara, 2022; Sharoff, 2019; Yildiz, 2017). It can be argued that teachers do not have to transmit the whole knowledge anymore, rather they can direct their students to learn and satisfy their curiosity for novel information with numerous learning and teaching tools. The concept of e-learning has arisen to fill this gap in education. E-learning approach has been used widely thanks to the availability of web-based platforms in education.

E-learning has been characterized as flexible and convenience in many ways (Rodrigues et al., 2019). Students are able to reach the content through computers, laptops, tablets, smart TVs and mobile phones. Once e-learning technology has been adopted, the users can have a chance to receive education at flexible hours; they can also get individualized education; they can save much time and energy compared to face to face education; they are allowed to read and watch the content as much as they desire until it is removed; they can also earn a degree abroad. Additionally, e-learning offers some advantages for educators as well. To illustrate, they can record their videos or offer live sessions through video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet; they can create groups in live sessions to have discussions and employ peer-learning; they can also design exams and get detailed analysis for each student by clicking on one button; they can update the content timely. However, some negative comments have been postulated about the efficiency of e-learning (Oluyinka & Endozo, 2019; Yildiz, 2021; Yildiz, 2022). To name a few examples, losing the sense of community created in face to face lessons, unable to reach the content due to weak internet connection or power outage, not having sufficient computer literacy skills, having numerous distractors, unable to assess students' performance fairly and the possibility of receiving feedback later than expected time are some hindrances against e-learning initiatives. Thus, stakeholders of education have implemented new modes of learning to overcome such barriers successfully.

Diversity plays an important role in educational institutions. Diverse communities can receive education equally. Additionally, diverse genders, age groups, habits, perspectives, learning styles, backgrounds can be common. Likewise, students, parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers can have a wide diversity of opinion on the mode of instruction at schools. It cannot be envisioned that a single mode of education fits all people in the world where diversity is an undeniable fact (Schuelka et al., 2019). Correspondingly, blended learning has arisen to complement some missing elements in traditional education. Upon witnessing dizzying breakthroughs of 21st century in technology, blended learning has increased its popularity globally. Intermixing traditional instruction with online learning tools has been defined as blended learning. Driscoll (2002) emphasizes four concepts to define blended learning which were

mixing modes of web-based technology, combining various pedagogical approaches, supporting online lessons with instructor led face to face lessons, and creating real life experiences to turn theoretical knowledge into the practical one. Synchronous and asynchronous learning comprise the backbone of hybrid education. The former refers to being exposed to the same content at a given time, while the latter offers more flexibility to learn at different times (Rowe, 2019). Correspondingly, wikis, online quizzes, online writing applications, online assessment tools, blogs, podcasts, videos, social media platforms have been widely used in blended learning to foster learning through interaction and cooperation. Blended learning offers numerous advantages for students such as enhancing motivation and engagement, developing cognitive and social skills, increasing the quality of education, and increasing digital literacy. In other words, students can be more engaged in a mode of education through which they learn by stimulating different learning channels. In addition, the students who need to study further can revise as much as they can in order not to lag behind others. Moreover, students can improve their memories when they race against time to complete online tasks. Furthermore, they can be more sociable when they interact with others in collaboration. Apart from other benefits, students' digital literacy skills develop considerably while being familiar with different online learning platforms, so they can be equipped with one of the most important skills of 21st century.

Literature Review

Blended learning has undergone massive changes since initial attempts in the 1960s. Employees could log in to their character based terminals to receive information through computer based training in the 1960s enhanced by University of Illinois (Nicholson, 2007). Stanford University started a TV based technology to support live training in the 1970s. This platform which has been still active today was used to offer interactive and engaging atmosphere for learners. Learners could watch their instructors on TV, communicate with their peers and ask questions through e-mail (Pettit & Grace, 1970). The history witnessed the rise of CD-ROM and learning management systems in the 1980s. Early examples of e-learning were established in these years. Computer mediated instruction has boomed after the 2000s as computers have been manufactured for the masses rather than a few wealthy people (Barrow et al., 2009; Tandoh et al., 2014). Similarly,

closures of all public places including educational institutions accelerated the popularity of blended learning in 2020 and subsequent years. Blended learning currently functions in many forms to enrich the lessons via online classes, recorded lessons, online quizzes, videos, online discussion platforms, online assessment tools, online webinars, online training programs and so on. It is difficult to imagine an education system in this century without integrating some examples of blended learning.

Blended learning has been supported by a growing number of scholars with their sensible arguments. To name a few, combining traditional classroom with online tools enhances students' learning rate substantially (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Additionally, Kasraie and Alahmed (2014) state that blended learning provides a welcoming atmosphere to increase collaboration among students. Subsequently, Okaz (2015) postulate that learning management systems offers flexibility, so teachers and students can take advantage of them without being restricted to time and place. Owston (2018) highlights three points to support a blended form of instruction which were accommodating learners' needs academically, promoting critical thinking skills, allowing interaction among learners. Moreover, Kumrow (2007) attests that students' engagement, satisfaction and motivation increase dramatically if they are exposed to a blended instruction model. Furthermore, Dakhi et al. (2022) propose that Covid 19 period highlighted the significance of blended learning as it encouraged the students to improve their computer literacy, self-confidence and time management skills. However, some scholars hinted that the success of blended learning program depends on many criteria. To illustrate, Moskal et al. (2013) state that reliable and robust infrastructure, supportive administrators, dynamic teachers, competent students and caring parents can increase the positive outcomes of blended learning significantly. Otherwise, having chronic problems can be inevitable which demotivates all parties. Likewise, Rasheed et al. (2020) contend that lack of sufficient digital literacy among teachers or students can disrupt learning, so positive attitudes towards blended learning can decrease accordingly in these groups. In addition, Mustary (2019) asserts that it is hard to reap the benefits of blended learning when electricity cuts off or internet connection is unstable.

A number of studies have been conducted to measure the effects of blended learning on

education with the lenses of students, teachers, parents and administrators. For instance, Azizan (2010) conducted a study in Malaysia at some universities which indicated that blended learning not only boosted students' self-confidence but also increased the quality of overall education. Likewise, Chen and Jones (2007) carried out a study in a US university which revealed that students went though from surface to deep learning once they participated in the activities with a blended learning instruction model. They also emphasized that critical thinking, problem solving and digital literacy skills were enhanced substantially. Similarly, Rasheed et al. (2020) investigated 594 articles published between 2014 and 2018 which revealed that procrastination, time management, lack of training, inadequate digital literacy were common problems to be addressed. In addition, Uz and Uzun (2018) examined 102 undergraduate students in Turkey which revealed that blended learning improved students in terms of self-paced learning. The students who took part in a blended learning instruction mode outperformed. Moreover, Hosseinpour et al. (2019) found that EFL students in Iran who were exposed to instruction in a hybrid way increased their writing marks more significantly than the other groups. Subsequently, Nuri (2021) examined the effects of blended learning on university students in Iraq which revealed that blended learning fostered students' learning in four primary skills in English which were listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Students' perceptions on blended learning have also been explored in a number of studies. To illustrate, Owston et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study in Canada on university students which revealed that web-enhanced traditional lessons were more favorable to have more engaging classes. They also reiterated that learning from different sources with various learning tools and websites expanded their knowledge, so their intrinsic motivation increased tremendously. Additionally, López-Pérez et al. (2011) conducted a study in Spain with 1431 university students which revealed that students appreciated the efforts made by academics and executives in a blended learning atmosphere. Underlying reasons to hold positive opinions on this study were that students' exam marks and attendance rates increased, and drop-out rates decreased significantly. Additionally, Abbas (2018) analyzed university students' perceptions on blended learning in Iraq which indicated that the students who developed computer literacy skills had more positive views, whereas the students whose computer literacy

skills were not sufficient expressed some hesitations about the positive effects of blended learning. In other words, students' satisfaction rate differed greatly based on their digital literacy. Subsequently, Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) examined university students' perceptions on blended learning in Japan which unearthed that blended learning opportunities increased students' enthusiasm, so they considered the activities fun, informative and interesting.

Teachers' genuine opinions on blended learning have been inquired in a wealth of research. To name a few, Jerry and Yunus (2021) investigated primary school teachers' opinion in Malaysia which culminated in mixed views. Although they were mostly in favor of blended learning, they concerned some doubts about digital literacy, ICT infrastructure and employing some training sessions. Their study emphasized that planning these steps systematically can increase positive outcomes of blended learning activities. On the contrary, encountering some issues can be inevitable. Vereshchahina et al. (2018) compiled teachers' perceptions on blended learning in Ukraine which indicated that student-centered teaching, flexibility, variety, interaction, visually appealing features of blended learning were emphasized as the advantages of blended learning. In addition, Mouzakis (2008) conducted a blended learning instruction based study on Greek teachers in an in-service training program which revealed that teachers were satisfied with it to a large extent. They stated that novel videos, e-experiments, online discussions, web-based learning enhanced their performance and satisfaction enormously.

A number of studies have investigated administrators' perspectives on blended learning. For instance, Altun and Bulut (2021) shed light on some essential points on 105 administrators' perceptions in Turkey related to blended learning which showed that planning, guiding, motivating, supporting the teachers with timely actions can increase the positive effects of blended learning at schools. They also stated that unstable communication between teachers and administrators can cause a failure in blended learning. Thurab-Nkhosi (2018) examined the administrators' genuine opinions in the Caribbean on blended learning which revealed that clear vision and the quality of technology infrastructure were key points to run hybrid education successfully.

Purpose of the Study

Although numerous research articles have been published on blended learning globally, only few studies have been conducted about the effects of blended learning on university students' achievement in Iraq. Additionally, it has been observed that most of the studies conducted in Iraq were focused on perceptions of the students or teachers on blended learning. In this regard, this study was carried out to measure the effects of blended learning on students' success rates and examine students` and instructors' perceptions on blended learning in a Foundation English course at TISHK International University (TIU hereafter) in 2021-2022 Academic Year. This study sought to investigate the effects of asynchronous learning and teaching tools particularly recorded video lessons and Google Form quizzes once combined with traditional instruction. Correspondingly, research questions were formulated as follows:

Are there differences between the students who receive the instruction traditionally and the students who receive a blended learning based instruction in terms of academic achievement?
Does the current study change students' point of views towards blended learning?

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed method research design was applied in this study to use qualitative and quantitative research instruments harmoniously. Correspondingly, concurrent triangulation strategy was applied to cross-validate the findings. The rationale to employ concurrent triangulation strategy was to eliminate the weaknesses of one method by replacing with another method's strength, so the study can produce more valid results (Ipek & Mutlu, 2022; Gultekin et al., 2022). Additionally, the collected data were cross-checked whether they were consistent with each other.
Research Instruments

Two exams, a questionnaire and an interview were primary instruments to initiate, collect data, analyze, discuss and finalize the study.

Setting

The population of this study comprised 300 students who took Foundation English course in 2021-2022 academic year at TIU. The university has been renowned for offering all lessons in English with qualified academics in Erbil, Iraq since 2008, so 5000 students from various countries, ethnicities and creeds received education in 29 departments as of 2022. Subsequently, the university was ranked first in terms of facilities, students` satisfaction rates and published studies in Webometrics (2022) bulletin. Considering these advantages, the setting of this study was chosen TIU so that the atmosphere can be appealing to join the study voluntarily.

Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study were chosen by adopting a stratified random sampling method. All students who took Foundation English course were classified in 10 groups. Subsequently, 3 students were selected randomly. In the final phase, 30 students were split into two groups to represent either control or experimental group.

Table 1.
Distribution of Participants Based on Their Departments

Department	Number	%
Nursing	3	10
Medical Analysis	6	20
Business and Management	6	20
Accounting	9	30
Banking	6	20
Total	30	100

As shown clearly in Table 1, the participants were studying in 5 majors. The students in accounting department were the highest ones, while nursing students were the least ones. Additionally, medical analysis, business and management and banking departments were represented in this study.

Table 2.

Demographic Distribution and Ages of the Participants

Variables	Option	F	%
Gender	Female	19	63.33
	Male	11	36.67
Age	18-21	22	73.33
	22+	8	26.67
Total		30	100

According to figures in Table 2, female students outnumbered male ones. The number of female students was 19 (63.33 %), while it was 11 (36.67) for male students. Additionally, the majority of students were between 18 and 21 years old. To illustrate, 22 (73.33) students were between 18 and 21, whereas 8 (26.67 %) students were 22 or older.

A Brief Introduction of Foundation English Course

All of the participants in this study were students enrolled in a Foundational English course; therefore, some background information about this course would be useful to recognize them well. The university offers it spanning the whole year titled as required non-technical elective. The primary objective of this course is to improve students' English proficiency throughout the year, so that they will have no difficulty comprehending departmental courses while taking them entirely in English. The placement of Foundation English students was based on their achievement on the TIU Proficiency Exam administered by the university's language preparatory school. The students were required to respond to sixty multiple-choice questions, comprising sections on listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary. Additionally, their speaking skills were evaluated through interviews conducted in the lecturer's offices. Based on the results of the proficiency test, it was determined that these students had some prior knowledge of the English language, but not enough to comprehend all topics in English; therefore, they were required to take a Foundation English course in order to master English throughout the academic year. It was seen in the past that students' GPAs rose significantly when they enrolled in a Foundation English. The university's language preparatory school offers a Foundation English course taught by certified academics using proven language teaching methods. Online quizzes, word games, role playing, movie watching, story summarization, and scheduling field trips were frequent classroom activities in order to practice English. Therefore, the whole plan was on students' engagement with varied learning and teaching tools. Consequently, each semester's student survey revealed a student satisfaction rate of greater than 85 percent in Foundation English course.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection process was administered under 5 sub-branches which were orientation period, getting instruction based on the group, responding to questions in the interview, answering items in the questionnaire and taking exams.

Orientation Period

The researchers invited all students to the conference room and displayed examples of traditional and blended learning models interchangeably, so students have some opinions on both types of instructions. Subsequently, the researchers set aside a week to cover the lessons traditionally, and they allocated a week for a blended learning instruction model as well. Once they completed the orientation week, they took two separate revision tests on traditional and blended learning.

Treatment in Each Group

The students took two exams to measure the effects of blended learning. Correspondingly, the version of instruction differed greatly in control and experimental group.

The syllabus in control group was applied as it was written without making any major changes. To illustrate, they completed 5 units in Scope 1 within 10 weeks, wrote the essays, received face to face feedback, made a 1-minute presentation weekly. Additionally, they watched the unit videos related to the common theme and completed official worksheets on reading, vocabulary and grammar.

The version of instruction was quite different in experimental group. Although they completed 5 units in Scope 1 in the same manner, their syllabus was enriched with blended learning activities. To name a few, recorded lessons of each unit were sent to their accounts through TIU Student Information System once the units were completed in the lesson. Thus, they could double check their answers, expand their knowledge and compensate their missing lessons if available for some reasons. Additionally, they could pause, rewind or forward at any time according to their wishes, so they were not restricted to time. Apart from asynchronous video lessons, the students took 5 revision tests online by employing Google Form Quizzes. The students were given 24 hours to complete them. Revision tests included relevant audio tracks, videos, reading passages, grammar topics, vocabulary sections, writing parts and speaking sections. Online revision tests were revolutionary to increase students` self-confidence. The students who were silent in class spoke well in the speaking videos; the students` creativity was unleashed in online writing sessions as well. Once students took the revision tests within given time, the researcher analyzed the items one by one, so they could learn from their mistakes. The researcher released their overall marks and writing feedback on TIU Student Information System again. This cycle continued according to the pre-defined plan for this study.

Table 3.
Students' opinions on traditional instruction in control group

ITEMS	Mean	Strongly Agree %	f	Agree %	f	Neutral %	f	Disagree %	f	Strongly Disagree %	f
1. I am satisfied with the overall planning in this study.	2.66	13%	2	7%	1	33%	5	27%	4	20%	3
2. The lessons were engaging, interactive and fun.	1.86	0%	0	0 %	0	13 %	2	60 %	9	27	4
3. This study helped me to develop my proficiency in English.	3	20 %	3	7 %	1	40 %	6	20 %	3	13%	2
4. If a new opportunity arose, I would choose receiving traditional instruction again.	1	0 %	0	0 %	0	20 %	3	20 %	3	60	9
5. I wish traditional instruction was common at all educational institutions globally.	2.4	13 %	2	0 %	0	20 %	3	47 %	7	20	3
6. My instructor encouraged and supported us professionally during the study.	3.06	27 %	4	13 %	2	20 %	3	20 %	3	20	3
7. This study helped me to socialize.	2.86	20 %	3	13 %	2	27 %	4	13 %	2	27 %	4

Based on the gathered data in Table 3, some interpretations were made which could be seen below:

According to item 1 in the questionnaire related to overall satisfaction in the study, the mean score was 2.66 which was far from being significant. To illustrate, 2 (13 %) participants chose strongly agree and 1 (7 %) participant chose agree option. However, 5 (33 %) participants chose neutral; 4 (27 %) participants chose disagree; 3 (20) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be argued that participants' satisfaction rate was low in control group.

According to item 2 in the questionnaire related to having engaging, interactive and fun lessons, the mean score was 1.86 which was far from being significant. To illustrate, no participant chose neither strongly agree not agree option. However, 2 (13 %) participants chose neutral; 9 (60 %) participants chose disagree; 4 (27) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be stated that the participants did not find the lessons interesting in control group.

According to item 3 in the questionnaire related to developing English proficiency in the study, the mean score was 3 which was higher than previous mean scores. To illustrate, 3 (20 %)

participants chose strongly agree and 1 (7 %) participant chose agree option. However, 6 (40 %) participants chose neutral; 3 (20 %) participants chose disagree; 2 (13) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be proposed that participants' English proficiency improved to some extent although albeit insignificant.

According to item 4 in the questionnaire related to taking side with traditional instruction in further studies, the mean score was 1 which was insignificant. To illustrate, no participant chose neither strongly agree, nor agree option. However, 3 (20 %) participants chose neutral; 3 (20 %) participants chose disagree; 9 (60) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be stated that participants will not be in favor of traditional instruction for further studies.

According to item 5 in the questionnaire related to suggesting traditional instruction globally for all educational institutions, the mean score was 2.4 which was far from being significant. To illustrate, 2 (13 %) participants chose strongly agree, and no participant chose agree option. However, 3 (20 %) participants chose neutral; 7 (47 %) participants chose disagree; 3 (20) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be postulated that the

participants did not recommend traditional instruction for other institutions operating globally.

According to item 6 in the questionnaire related to evaluation of the instructor's performance, the mean score was 3.06 which was far from being significant. To illustrate, 4 (27 %) participants chose strongly agree, and 2 (13 %) participants chose agree option. However, 3 (20 %) participants chose neutral; 3 (20 %) participants chose disagree; 3 (20) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be asserted that adopting a traditional based instruction by the instructor was not favored.

According to item 7 in the questionnaire related to the effects of the study on being sociable, the mean score was 2.86 which was far from being significant. To illustrate, 3 (20 %) participants chose strongly agree, and 2 (13 %) participants chose agree option. However, 4 (27 %) participants chose neutral; 2 (13 %) participants chose disagree; 4 (27) participants chose strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be stated that participants in control group were hesitant about being more sociable in this study.

Once all items were analyzed in control group, it was unsubtle that participants had some negative perspectives on traditional instruction.

Table 4.
Students' opinions on blended learning in control group

ITEMS	Mean	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
1. I am satisfied with the overall planning in this study.	4.66	73%	11	20%	3	7 %	1	0 %	0	0 %	0
2. The lessons were engaging, interactive and fun.	4.53	67 %	10	20 %	3	13 %	2	0 %	0	0 %	0
3. This study helped me to develop my proficiency in English.	5	100 %	15	0 %	0	0	0	0 %	0	0 %	0
4. If a new opportunity arose, I would choose receiving blended instruction again.	4.93	93 %	14	7 %	1	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0
5. I wish blended instruction was common at all educational institutions globally.	4.8	80 %	12	20 %	3	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0
6. My instructor encouraged and supported us professionally during the study.	5	100 %	15	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0
7. This study helped me to socialize.	4.73	73 %	11	27 %	4	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	0

Based on the gathered data in Table 4, some interpretations were made which could be seen below:

According to item 1 in the questionnaire related to overall satisfaction in the study, the mean score was 4.66 which was highly significant. To illustrate, 11 (73 %) participants chose strongly

agree; 3 (20 %) participants chose agree option; 1 (7 %) participant chose neutral. However, no student chose neither disagree nor strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be argued that participants in experimental group were satisfied with the overall planning.

According to item 2 in the questionnaire related to having engaging, interactive and fun lessons, the mean score was 4.53 which was significant. To illustrate, 10 (67 %) participants chose strongly agree; 3 (20 %) participants chose agree option; 2 (13 %) participants chose neutral. However, no student chose neither disagree nor strongly disagree. Considering the responses, it can be proposed that blended learning was appreciated to have more engaging, interactive and fun lessons.

According to item 3 in the questionnaire related to the influence of blended learning on English proficiency, the mean was 5 which could not be higher. To illustrate, 15 (100 %) participants chose strongly agree, while no participant chose others. Considering the responses, it can be proposed that blended learning affected participants` proficiency directly.

Based on the figures and percentages in item 4 which was related to taking side with blended learning mode in future studies, the mean score was 4.93 which was highly significant. To illustrate, 14 (93 %) participants chose strongly agree, and 1 (7 %) participant chose agree option. However, no student chose neutral, disagree or strongly disagree option. Considering the responses, it is clear that students will be eager to join further studies enriched with blended learning in the years to come.

Item 5 figures and percentages indicated that participants were in favor of spreading blended learning to all educational institutions on a global scale by considering the mean score which was 4.8. To illustrate, 12 (80 %) participants chose strongly agree, and 3 (20 %) participants chose agree option. On the other hand, no student chose neutral, disagree or strongly disagree option.

Item 6 figures and percentages unearthed that the instructor received all the praise with a 5 mean score. All participants (100 %) opted in strongly agree, while no participant thought about other options. It can be stated that blended learning instruction was flawlessly applied by the instructor.

The last item in the questionnaire was related to the influence of the study on socialization. The mean score was 4.73 which showed that the majority of the participants thought about a tight relationship between blended learning and socialization. To illustrate, 11 (73 %) participants chose strongly agree, and 4 (27 %) participants chose agree option. On the other hand, no participant considered opting in other options.

Taking all items into consideration within experimental group, it can be asserted that blended learning received appreciation and praise to a large extent.

Interview

The participants and instructors responded to one question in this study which could be seen below:

- What is your genuine opinion on this study?

Some transcripts which highlighted essential points could be examined below:

We studied units between 6 and 10 in Scope 1. I was not eager to learn in the class every time, so recorded lessons sent by my instructor was fundamental to fill the gap. I watched them several times to learn well. Additionally, online unit tests were helpful to race against time, learn from our mistakes and have a chance to retake them. I can claim that blended learning embedded into traditional education flawlessly. I wish all courses were enriched with blended learning activities, so we can benefit from technology in education. (Student 19)

I took a test on multiple intelligence which revealed that my favorite mode of learning is spatial. It means that my learning will expand if I am exposed to visual materials such as graphs, presentations, videos. When we started this study, I was so excited to join. Fortunately, all steps proceeded well, and I could improve my proficiency in English. Supplementary videos related to units were shot professionally. Additionally, Google Form quizzes reflected my weaknesses well, so I could figure out them before the real exam. This study is so memorable which will be remembered as long as I live. I am glad to have joined it. (Student 7)

I was hesitant about the efficiency of blended learning at first. However, I was relieved as the days went by. The videos and unit quizzes were planned systematically. Additionally, we collaborated to find the mistakes while analyzing the quizzes. It supported us academically and socially. We increased our performance and became more sociable. (Student 5)

I used to read a lot about blended learning prior to my university education, however, I did not experience it earlier. It was my first experience to join a blended learning activity. Our instructor kept the balance between studying and taking a rest, so we were alert to learn more during lessons. Additionally, we noticed that our learning time can be extended by recorded lessons. Classrooms do not need to be the only places to learn and teach. Moreover, saving speaking videos and making writing submissions on Google Form helped me to unleash my creativity. I was introvert in classes, but online submissions helped me to overcome this phobia. I wish I had joined such an awesome study before. (Student 4)

I like learning with my laptop a lot because it is more convenient for me. During this study, I used my laptop for educational purposes. I watched the recorded lessons several times. I also paused to elaborate some points in my mind. These videos allowed me to take notes for my exams. In addition, I read many articles on different websites before sending my writing submission. This cycle enriched my learning with different platforms. Subsequently, speaking videos were useful to express our ideas in a minute. We learned how to take advantage of the technology in education, increase our marks in writing and overcome some barriers in speaking. I think all instructors should have a go for blended learning activities. (Student 2)

I joined the study in control group which indicated that traditional education was not sufficient enough to capture students' attention. Although we were eager to learn at first, our motivation decreased day by day. There were some compelling reasons for this loss. To begin with, there was no variety in our classes. All activities were done according to the pre-defined plans. Subsequently, we had no opportunity to change the monotonous lessons. We wanted to see some funny stories, inspirational videos, informative presentations. However, our instructor lectured, and we listened passively. It was not the education in my mind once I enrolled in lessons at a private university. I thought our lessons would be enriched with some games, stories, e- learning modules etc. I think integrating technology into classes was the missing part in our study. I hope it can be considered in future studies. (Student 1)

Watching some recorded lessons related to units was really helpful. The instructors offered some links in some videos, so I improved my English considerably by these extra links. I realized that there were many websites to support me academically. Additionally, these websites support learners gradually considering their levels. Additionally, our instructor offered valuable feedback for writing and speaking submissions by calling us into the office individually. Receiving valuable feedback in the office really increased my enthusiasm towards learning English. My instructor's techniques were simply encouraging and inspiring. (Student 16)

Getting detailed analysis for each exam was a great advantage for us in this study. We learned our strengths and weaknesses to take action correspondingly. Subsequently, recorded lessons of the units were fun and informative. The instructors told some funny stories in the recorded versions, enriched the lessons with many examples and directed us to go to other websites. No moment of this study was boring for me. I wish I had learned to take advantage of technology in education previously. (Student 21)

Blended learning based instruction is closer to real life. We know that there are different moments in our lives, so our days are different from each other. Likewise, our lessons should be different from each other. Once we know all stages in advance in a traditional lesson format, it will not be appealing for us. However, our lessons can be more engaging if our lessons are enriched with online learning tools such as e-lessons, e-games, e-exams, e-presentations. I believe that our lessons can transform quickly if using technology in education is at the heart of the lessons. (Student 28)

I ran the study as an instructor in control group with a traditional based instruction. I administered the lessons in a traditional format, so there were some missing elements in the lessons. The students lost their enthusiasm from time to time. Additionally, taking all activities on the paper was not so appealing for them. They demanded to take some exams online which was rejected. Additionally, some students were so silent, so they reserved their potential in speaking sections rather than expressing their ideas freely. Granting some rights to send some speaking videos could be helpful for these students. Additionally, they wanted to read some sample essays on the internet and compose their essays accordingly which was not possible in our lessons. Finally, integrating recorded videos into classes can be a great motivational tool for students because they can observe a lesson in a different format from a different instructor. As a result, updating the lessons with web-enhanced

tools could be helpful to raise the standards in education. (Instructor 1)

I initiated and finalized the study in experimental group with a blended learning based instruction. Although it was a novel idea, it worked excellently. Students joined the activities eagerly and joyfully. Additionally, I did not make much effort to lecture. Web enhanced tools such as recorded lessons, online quizzes helped me to save time and conduct data accordingly. Subsequently, students interacted with each other

while they were discussing about their common mistakes or composing their ideas in writing section. Additionally, their speaking competency increased thanks to welcoming their videos in an online format. Students unlocked their full potential once they recorded their speaking videos and sent online while at home. Reducing stress and allowing flexibility were key words which differentiated this study from others. (Instructor 2)

Table 5.
Independent Samples T Test Analysis

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Pre-test	Control	15	51.33	11.872			
Pre-test	Experimental	15	51.67	8.997	-.087	28	.932
Post-test	Control	15	59.33	14.864			
Post-test	Experimental	15	80.33	15.291	-3.814	28	.001

Note. P<0.05

Independent samples t-test was administered to see whether there was a significant difference between two groups when variables were considered. Once mean scores were compared, there was no significant difference in the pre-test, as the p-value of .932 was greater than pre-defined significance level 0.05. It can be stated that their levels were close to each other initially. However, a significant difference was observed when post-test p-value was recorded as .001, which was less than 0.05. Likewise, control group students started the study with 51.33 and completed with 59.33 mean score, whereas experimental group students commenced the study with 59.33 and completed with 80.33 mean score. According to the collected data, students in the experimental group who took a blended learning-based instruction outscored students in the control group who received traditional instruction. In other words, the improvement in control group was not as substantial as experimental group.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of blended learning instruction on university students' academic success. Additionally, students' genuine opinions towards blended learning were examined meticulously. Based on the findings in questionnaire, interview and exam results, several essential points were highlighted which could be seen below:

Regarding the responses in the questionnaire, stark differences were noticed in control and

experimental group. For instance, experimental group students were satisfied with the overall planning, regarded lessons as fun, engaging and interactive, opted in choosing blended learning for further studies. Additionally, they asserted that their English proficiency improved considerably. Similarly, they would rather spread blended learning to all institutions globally. Likewise, they attested that the instructor designed the whole study flawlessly. Moreover, the study offered ample opportunity to socialize and expand their knowledge in a social environment. However, negative comments were dominant in control group responses. They proposed that overall planning was not satisfactory; the lessons were monotonous; they will avoid being a member to take traditional education in future studies; the instructor's efforts were not appreciated; the study did not increase their proficiency in English; they did not suggest adopting a blended learning instruction in other institutions globally; they did not feel the notion that the study provided varied opportunities to socialize. These findings were consistent with previous studies. Altun (2015) states that integrating technology into foreign language teaching can enhance students' performance substantially. Additionally, Daskan and Yildiz (2020) attest that blended learning fosters students' learning because it offers fun, interactive and engaging lessons for learners. Moreover, Wichadee (2017) asserts that blended learning helps learners to develop competency in English with various interactive tools. Furthermore, Rafiola et al. (2020) propose that blended learning boosts students' self-

confidence and motivation if applied systematically. It can be stated that recorded video lessons and Google Form quizzes affected their learning rates sharply.

Interview transcripts shed light on key points as well. To illustrate, many students asserted that traditional instruction lost its popularity with the advent of web-enhanced tools in education. Additionally, a number of students asserted that they found more common grounds once taught by blended learning because they were born as digital natives who could adapt to new changes in technology without any difficulty. Moreover, the instructors responsible for running the study reiterated that the more they learned by wen-enhanced tools, the better they grasped the topics. After that, students hinted that their enthusiasm, motivation and success rose dramatically once being taught with blended learning. These findings were in line with previous studies. To name a few, the use of communication technologies in classes can change the overall learning and teaching atmosphere positively (Celik, 2021). Additionally, Wright (2017) asserts that students' perceptions were mostly positive on blended learning for its advantages. Moreover, Ashraf et al. (2021) attest that blended learning was appreciated by teachers thanks to its diversity, flexibility and convenience.

Exams taken twice by the participants unearthed some fundamental points. To illustrate, experimental group students increased their average 29 points which was only 8 points in control group. These results indicated that blended learning increased students' success rate more dramatically. Likewise, exam results complemented the findings of questionnaire and interview. Rafiola et al. (2020) state that blended learning can enhance students' learning tremendously which can affect overall success correspondingly.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to measure the impacts of blended learning via recorded video lessons and Google Form quizzes on students' success. Additionally, students' and instructions' perceptions were explored. Based on the collected data, it was revealed that blended learning contributed significantly to students` overall success. Additionally, students' and instructors' perceptions were positive towards blended learning. Conversely, traditional instruction did not yield better results for students. In addition, traditional instruction had received negative feedbacks in terms of having

fun, interactive and engaging classes. Considering the advantages of blended learning instruction, all stakeholders of education can be encouraged to implement it successfully

Some recommendations can be made for future studies. This study was conducted within 12 weeks at TIU on freshman students with 19 female ad 11 male students in Erbil, Iraq. Further studies can be carried out by extending the duration, number of students, institutions and classification of students. In addition, 5 departments were included in this study which can be increased in future studies. After that, the correlation between gender, age, department and success can be investigated in further studies.

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