

A Comparative Study between Traditional and Online Blended Teaching**on Iraqi- Kurdistan Students' Writing Skills**Habib Soleimani¹, Parwana Burhan Abdallah²¹University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran²College of Education, Charmo University, Sulaimaniya, IraqEmail: h.soleimani@uok.ac.ir¹, parwana.ku@gmail.com²**Abstract:**

EFL students have been struggling with writing as it is a challenging chore, especially for those who are still learning the fundamentals of the English language. Therefore, this study explores the effects of both styles of online-blended and traditional teaching. As it investigates the two styles on improving the learners' writing abilities in one of the high Schools in Kurdistan -Sulaymaniyah region. The purpose of this study is to find out and answer two research questions namely: Does blended teaching have any significant effect on improving EFL learners' writing ability? 2. Is there a significant difference between achievements in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms?

The researcher chose two groups of students of a high school, The groups were control and experimental, each one with different teaching style. This experiment took ten weeks. An OPT (Oxford Placement Test) was given to the students to establish the participants' performances in English language. The findings revealed that the blended group (experimental) was more effective as improved the students' writing skills through the instruments of pre-posttest.

Keywords: English Language, writing abilities, traditional teaching, blended teaching, online learning, EFL learners

المخلص:

يعاني طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الكتابة لأنها كانت ومازالت مهمة صعبة، خاصة بالنسبة لأولئك الذين ما زالوا يتعلمون أساسيات اللغة الإنجليزية. لذلك، تستكشف هذه الدراسة آثار كل من أساليب التدريس التقليدي المختلط عبر الإنترنت. حيث يبحث في نمطي تحسين قدرات المتعلمين الكتابية في إحدى المدارس الثانوية في إقليم كردستان - السليمانية. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة والإجابة على سؤالين بحثيين هما: ١. هل للتعليم المدمج أي تأثير كبير على تحسين القدرة الكتابية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؟ ٢. هل هناك فرق كبير بين الإنجازات في الكتابة للمتعلمين الذين يدرسون في الفصول المختلطة مقابل التقليدية؟

اختارت الباحثة مجموعتين من طلاب الثانوية العامة، المجموعة الضابطة والتجريبية، ولكل واحدة أسلوب تدريس مختلف. استغرقت هذه التجربة عشرة أسابيع. تم إجراء اختبار OPT للطلاب لتحديد أداء المشاركين في اللغة الإنجليزية. أظهرت النتائج أن المجموعة الممزوجة (التجريبية) كانت أكثر فاعلية حيث حسنت مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب من خلال أدوات الاختبار القبلي البعدي. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللغة الإنجليزية، قدرات الكتابة، التدريس التقليدي، التدريس المدمج، التعلم عبر الإنترنت، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

پوخته:

خوێندکارهکانی ئی ئی ئی ئی له گهڵ نووسیندا تێدهکۆشن و ههک ئهوهی که کۆرسێکی بهڕهنگاری بوو، به تایبتهی بۆ ئهوانهیه که ههستا فێری بنهرمهتیهکانی زمانی ئینگلیزین. لهبهر ئهوه، ئهم لیکۆلینهوهیه کاریگهری ههردوو ستایلی تیکهڵکراوی ئونلاین و فێرکردنی نهریتی ناو پۆل دهوێژێتهوه. ههروهک له دوو شێواز که دهکۆلێتهوه لهسهر باشتروونی توانای نووسینی فێرخوازان لهیهکیک لهخوێندنگه ئامادهیهیهکانی ههریمی کوردستان - سلیمانی مهههست لهم توێژینهوهیه دۆزینهوهی و وهلامدانهوهی دوو پرسپاری توێژینهوهیه که ئهمانهم : 1. ئایا فێرکردنی تیکهڵکراو کاریگهریهکی گهرنگی ههیه لهسهر باشتروونی توانای نووسینی فێرخوازان زامانی ئینگلیزی و ههک زامانی بیانی (EFL) ؟ 2. ئایا جیاوازییهکی گهرنگ ههیه له نێوان دهستکهرتیهکان له نووسینی فێرخوازان که له پۆله تیکهڵکه (ناوێته) وله بهر امهر پۆله تهقلیدیهکهدا فێرکراون؟

توێژمهکه دوو گروپی خوێندکاری قوتابخانهی ئامادهیهی ههلبژارد، گروپهکان کۆنترۆل و تاقیکردنهوه بوون، ههریهکهمیان به شێوازی فێرکردنی جیاوازه ئهم تاقیکردنهوهیه ده ههفتهی خایاند. له سهرمهتادا تاقیکردنهوهی OPT به قوتابیان درا بۆ زانیانی زانیاری و ئاستی بهشداریبووان لهسهر زامانی ئینگلیزی. دۆزینهوهکان دهریانهست که گروپی تیکهڵکراو واته ناو پۆل و ئونلاین بیکهوه (تاقیکردنهوهی) کاریگهرتر بوو و ههک باشتروونی کارامهیی نووسینی قوتابیان له رێگهیهی ئامهریهکانی پێش تاقیکردنهوهی پاش تاقیکردنهوهی.

کلیله و شه: زامانی ئینگلیزی، توانای نووسین، فێرکردنی ناو پۆل، فێرکردنی ناوێته، فێربوونی ئونلاین، فێرخوازی EFL.

1. Introduction:

English is a worldwide spoken language, which implies that it is utilized for communicating in the majority of the countries. Although, as Brumfit (2001) points out, it is not its exclusive aim. According to Pakir, English is a modern and language of technology, as it is essential for “computer, medicine, tourism, commerce, and literature” (1999). Because of using technology as a daily routine, using English language became a need by the people. Among these, there are students and learners who use technology in their learning. In terms of education, the majority of learners need to study English and be familiar with computer innovation. While English is widely required in education, students should be able to use it effectively. English is necessary for all occupations, according to Flanegin and Rudd (2000). To acquire any language, the four basic abilities of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are vital. Particularly, writing is a necessary and crucial ability for students to grasp their English and transform their speech and thoughts to written form and symbols, nonetheless, it is sought to be the most difficult skill to master. Moreover, Brown (2001) has indicated written language as the visual illustration of spoken language, and that written ability is similar to oral skills, the main difference having visual rather than aural signals.

Furthermore, Online learning that has a significant impact on the process of learning and teaching has replaced the traditional classroom-based teaching approaches in recent years. However, in addition to online learning, a new method known as blended learning has developed to streamline and enhance the learning process. Bath and Bourke (2010) made a comparison and observed that along with technology, such as online learning and blended learning, the majority of activities and practices including the abilities such as writing, become simpler to monitor and master. The foundation of blended learning, commonly known as hybrid learning, dates back to the 1960s, however this approach has been used formally since the 1990s. In some countries, it was originally introduced in college courses as Jusoff, asserts (2009). In other words, rather of being constrained to groups or partners, the online method of blended learning enables students to learn whenever and

wherever they desire. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to evaluate students' writings both before and after the teaching and learning process in order to ascertain if blended learning or traditional learning may assist students and enhance their writing abilities. To find out the effectiveness of these two methods of teaching on learners' abilities the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Does blended teaching have any significant effect on improving EFL learners' writing ability?
2. Is there a significant difference between achievements in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms?

2. Literature review

A number of studies investigated the impact of traditional, online, and blended education methods on students' writing skills in order to determine which method was more successful. Among the researches, Sriwahyuni (2019) sought to determine whether using a blended learning approach would help students in eleventh grade in improving their writing abilities by utilizing a pre-experimental design and a quantitative approach. To use the pretest and posttest in this study, the investigator simply chose to enroll in one course where 181 students participated. After that, a sample was chosen using a random selection approach. The results indicate that employing the blended learning model assisted students in developing their organization and content writing abilities. Adas and Bakir (2013) carried out a comparative study in which a number of students participated, with in each of the two groups (control and experimental). In both, they applied traditional and blended methods. Subsequently, the investigator identified significant variations in the experimental group's outcomes through (pretest-posttest). The experimental group members considerably outperformed their counterparts in the control group as they stated that enjoyed using technology to integrate inside instructions and graphics with outside chores. Their compositions undergone considerable development. The findings show that having more access to online resources improved English writing abilities. Likewise, by using the flexible synchronous approach, learners' writing abilities may have improved.

The following topics were examined in Maier's survey (2010), which comprised (2196) students from 29 Austrian universities. Students' opinions of online learning programs and their favorite learning methods (face to face or online). The capacity of online learning to incorporate a solid and cohesive structure for learning materials, fostering self-directed learning, and disseminating information led to student recommendations. For communication objectives, they preferred face-to-face style. At the end of the learning process, students expressed admiration for face-to-face instruction when learning concepts or skills related to the subject matter. From the other side, when "self-regulated" learning skills are required, students choose online classes.

Moreover, based on the data gathered in pearcy (2009), the teachers later revealed that online and blended learners were more engaged with the curriculum and learned some of the challenging concepts more rapidly than face-to-face learners. This study's goal was to examine two important research concerns. The first evaluated (blended, online, and in-person) teaching effectiveness in connection to students' attitudes about the specific topic and their perceptions of the learning

experience's effects. The relationship between the students' perceptions and actual activities, as well as their impact on overall learning satisfaction, was examined in the second study question.

3. Methodology:

In this study, which employed both quantitative and qualitative data, the students' writing skills were assessed before and after the course as part of the study's quasi-experimental pretest-posttest methodology. The participants were chosen at random as part of the quasi-experimental design of this study. Writing abilities were the study's dependent variables, while traditional teaching and online blended were the independent variables.

3.1 Participants:

In two groups of eleventh graders of a High School, there were fifty-eight Kurdish female EFL students who formed the population of the current research. Since Kurdish was the participants' first language, the experimental and control groups were randomly selected. As a result, one group only received traditional instruction in writing skills, while the other group received training in blended learning (traditional and online teaching).

3.2 Instruments:

The OPT (Oxford placement test) and pretest-posttest were the study's instruments. In order to determine each participant's level of English proficiency, the OPT was administered to them ahead of the beginning of the session. All of the students' test results were categorized into six standard levels, with the lowest level being A1- beginners to C2 -Advanced. Consequently, the writing abilities of the EFL students were the dependent variable for this research. To determine the students' performance, the researcher did a pretest prior to teaching writing and a posttest at the conclusion of the teaching experience. The writing tests were both administered at precisely the same time and followed the same procedures.

Table1. Participants' performance (Oxford placement test):

OPT standard level	Students' performance Group A	Students' performance Group B
A1-Beginner. (0-10)	0	0
A2-Elementary. (11-20)	15	22
B1-Preintermediate (21-30)	11	8
B2-Intermediate. (31-40)	0	0
C1-Upper intermediate. (41-50)	1	0
C2-Advanced. (51-60)	0	0

3.3 Procedures:

The researcher started by looking for and reading those thesis and dissertations and published articles, which discussed and explored this issue. The process of data collection was followed by identifying the research's tools. The OPT was then finished. Before gathering data, a pretest was undertaken to assess the learners' writing proficiencies. Two titles for the writing test were distributed to both groups of students. The course was designed by the researcher who also selected the syllabus,

tasks, and writing tests for the participants. The course was taught in a high school for 10 weeks until it completed. The pretest was then graded. Following that, the posttest was graded by the researcher, using the standards and rubrics for evaluating writing. The outcomes of these two (pre-post) tests were then compared.

3.4 Data Analysis:

The gathered data for this study was employed to demonstrate the impacts of traditional and blended learning, as well as to figure out the ideal method for teaching English writing skills to EFL students in high schools. It was also to tackle the thesis' research questions and hypotheses. Hence, to compute the averages of the two groups, controlled and experimental students, the researcher used the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to examine the data (blended and traditional). Then the pre-post- outcomes and OPT results were also inputted into this program.

4. Findings:

The purpose of this study was to investigate how blended learning affected EFL students' capacity to write better. To assess the data gathered for this study, a number of statistical methods, including the Independent-Samples t-test, Paired-Samples test, and One-Way ANCOVA, were used. The fundamental tenet of these statistical approaches is the regularity of the data that was evaluated using the skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios to their standard errors. First, to demonstrate the performances of the participants before the course, a placement test has been taken by the students. To assess if the two groups were comparable in terms of their general language proficiency previous to the course, an Independent-Samples t-test was applied to compare the means of the blended and traditional groups on the placement test. The results demonstrated that the means on the placement test for the blended was ($M = 18.93$, $SD = 4.89$) and traditional was ($M = 18.43$, $SD = 3.98$) therefore both groups were extremely similar.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics Placement Test by Groups*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Placement Test	Blended	28	18.93	4.891	.924
	Traditional	30	18.43	3.989	.728

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study was to find out and explore the impacts of blended and traditional teachings on students' writing abilities through two research questions and some hypotheses. As for the first research question, does blended teaching has any significant effect on improving EFL learners' writing abilities? To assess this question, a Paired-Samples t-test was used to evaluate the means of the writing pretest and posttest for the blended teaching group. According to the findings in (Table 3) the blended group achieved a higher mean on the writing posttest ($M = 11.55$, $SD = 3.37$) compared to the pretest ($M = 7.37$, $SD = 3.51$).

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics; Pretest and Posttest of Writing (Blended Group)*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	11.55	28	3.373	.637
Pretest	7.37	28	3.518	.665

The findings of the Paired-Samples t-test show that the blended teaching group had a higher average mean on the posttest than pretest writing. ($t(24) = 6.46$, $p .05$, $r = .779$ indicating a significant impact factor) (Table 4). This led to the first null hypothesis being rejected, which stated that “blended teaching did not have any considerable effect on developing EFL learners’ writing abilities.”

Table 4. *Paired-Samples t-test; Pretest and Posttest of Writing (Blended Group)*

Paired Differences									
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
				Lower	Upper				
4.178	3.420	.646		2.852	5.504	6.465	27	.000	

Second research question, is there a significant difference between achievement in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms? The second study question investigated on how blended learning affected the writing of EFL students. After adjusting for the impact of the pretest, the results of the blended and traditional groups on the posttest of writing were compared using a one-way covariance analysis (One-Way ANCOVA).

The statistical null hypothesis that stated, the link between both the writing posttest and pretest was not straight, was refused as a consequence of the impressive findings ($F(1, 57) = 9.66$, $p .05$, $n^2 = .531$ indicating a significant effect size). Additionally, there was a straight correlation between the writing tests taken before and after the treatment. Next, One-Way ANCOVA makes the assumption that the linear connections between both the pre- and post - tests are approximately equivalent among the two groups, or that the slopes of regression are homogeneous. Lastly, One-Way ANCOVA follows the assumption that the groups possess similar variances. Consequently, after adjusting for the impact of the pretest, the one-way ANCOVA findings revealed that the blended group considerably exceeded the control group on the posttest after completing blended teaching. This led to the rejection of the second null- hypothesis, which held that “there was not any significant difference between achievements in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms”.

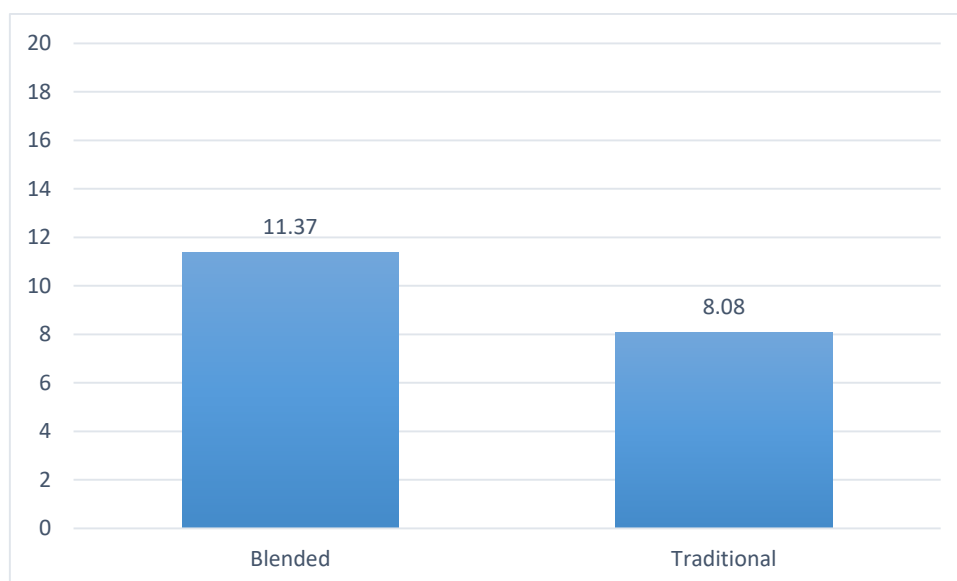


Figure 1. *Posttest of Writing by Groups with Pretest*

5. Conclusions:

This article investigated how EFL students in Kurdistan evaluated blended teaching or traditional teaching for enhancing their English writing abilities. In accordance with the data, EFL students claimed that blended learning increases their interest in studying and improving their English writings. Additionally, based on the current study there is significant development in the writing skills of participants in the blended teaching group (experimental). Moreover, regarding the research questions, indicated that the blended teaching group achieved higher means in the posttest than the traditional group. Therefore, the first hypothesis that stated “blended teaching did not have any considerable effect on developing EFL learners’ writing abilities” was rejected. Furthermore, the second research question, ~~which was~~ “is there a significant difference between achievement in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms?”, the study revealed that the blended group outperformed the traditional group through One-Way ANCOVA after completing the course in the posttest. Thus, the second hypothesis was discarded which states “there was not any significant difference between achievement in writing of learners taught in blended versus traditional classrooms”.

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