

Freshman Undergraduate Students' Attitudes Towards Online English Learning: A Case Study at Al-Balqa Applied University

Rasha A.M. Darwish

Department of Basic Sciences, Amman University College for Financial and Managerial Science, Al-Balqa Applied University, Amman, Jordan

Abstract—The purpose of this research is to examine how first-year undergraduates at Al-Balqa Applied University feel about taking English classes online. The study collects data on 215 students' views on online learning's efficacy, technical tools, difficulties, learning modes, and general satisfaction using a standardized questionnaire. The data was analyzed using statistical tools such as t-tests, ANOVA, chi-square tests, and regression analysis. The results show that people are usually happy with online education, which is great because of all the benefits it offers, such ease and adaptability. Problems with internet access and being motivated were, however, major obstacles. There are notable gender disparities in the study's findings on preferred learning styles and a preference for mixed learning modalities. A high level of happiness with online learning was predicted by factors such as having access to the internet, the ability to choose when and how to study, and the opportunity to collaborate with classmates. According to the study's conclusions, online education programs should have a strong technical foundation, interactive learning resources, and individualized assistance. Despite its useful insights, the study notes its small sample size and lack of generalizability, pointing the way toward potential future studies.

Index Terms—online English learning, undergraduate students' attitudes, e-learning challenges, blended learning, learning modalities

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of online education in the last few years has had a profound impact on the landscape of universities, especially in the area of ESL programs. Worldwide crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, have hastened this change even further. In this introductory piece, we look at how first-year students at Al-Balqa Applied University feel about taking English classes online. In order to place these views into the larger framework of online language instruction, it relies upon a variety of research.

The educational experience and results are greatly influenced by students' attitudes towards language acquisition, particularly English. In English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms, students' attitudes have a major impact on their drive and approach to learning (Masadeh, 2021). Because of the growing importance of the delivery method in influencing student attitudes, this is of paramount importance in the transition to online learning (Wati, 2018).

New possibilities and difficulties arise in the context of online education. Students' varied reactions to online learning have come to light in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic's indispensability of traditional classroom instruction. Research has shown that students from various parts of the world have distinct experiences and attitudes when it comes to studying English online, as shown by research conducted by Khalil and Çavuşoğlu in 2023.

The use of technological tools has grown in importance throughout the history of online education. As an example, Novitasari and Prijambodo (2022) point to the usage of Quizlet and other digital resources for learning English vocabulary as evidence of how technology may improve language acquisition. Also, students now have more options than ever before on how to study a language, thanks to the proliferation of MOOCs, which has made them rethink their approaches to education (Zhang & Tananuraksakul, 2023).

The effectiveness of online learning depends on how satisfied students are with the experience. Research has explored the different degrees of satisfaction in synchronous online learning environments, drawing attention to the significance of participation and interaction in the online classroom (Chumworatayee, 2023). Furthermore, student happiness and attitudes have been impacted by the hybrid approach to language learning that has emerged in the post-pandemic educational environment (Erdel, 2022). This approach combines online and conventional approaches.

It is also instructive to consider students' tastes and perspectives on certain features of online education, such as literature courses. These perspectives are heavily influenced by local and cultural norms in certain settings (Hussain & Ali, 2022). Students' overall views on e-learning give light on their views on online English language learning in particular (Behera & Kumar, 2023).

The effectiveness of learning outcomes in online learning settings is highly dependent on the level of responsibility and participation shown by students. Recent studies have focused on students' mindsets and their roles in their own

education, with an emphasis on the significance of student involvement in online learning (Mustaji & Pradana, 2023). Attitudes toward e-learning are impacted by demographic characteristics including gender and educational background. Tailoring online learning experiences to varied student groups requires an understanding of these variances (Sahu & Sahu, 2022). Furthermore, how students feel about academic integrity and other ethical components of online learning is critical to the continued success of this mode of instruction (Bozok, 2023).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

With an eye on first-year college students' perspectives, this literature review delves into several facets of online English language instruction. Student attitudes and their effects on learning outcomes, online learning environments' pros and cons, technology's function in language acquisition, online learners' levels of engagement and satisfaction, and demographic factors' effects on e-learning attitudes make up the review's five main sections. A thorough review of the present situation of online English learning is provided in each area, which incorporates results from recent research.

A. *Impact of Student Attitudes on Learning Outcomes*

In language classrooms in particular, student attitudes have a significant impact on how and what students learn. According to Masadeh (2021), students' motivation and approaches to learning English as a foreign language (EFL) are greatly affected by their views towards the subject. When one has a positive outlook on learning English, they are more likely to be motivated, more invested in the content, and eventually acquire the language more effectively. In support of this position, Qadir and Omar (2023) stress the need of encouraging positive attitudes towards ESL learning in order to improve educational results.

B. *Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning Environments*

Students now face new obstacles and possibilities as a result of the shift to online learning. According to Wati (2018), students' perspectives on English language acquisition are greatly affected by the classroom environment, which includes the form of online delivery. According to Khalil and Çavuşoğlu (2023), students had difficulties in adjusting to online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic. These difficulties included shifts in learning methods as well as obstacles related to technology accessibility. Nonetheless, new avenues for pedagogical exploration and student interaction were opened up by these difficulties.

C. *Role of Technology in Language Learning*

The major development that has changed the game in language learning is the use of technology. To better understand how to acquire English vocabulary, Novitasari and Prijambodo (2022) investigate the use of online resources such as Quizlet. Improving language retention and competency may be achieved with the use of such technologies, according to their research. Learning can become more dynamic and engaging with these tools. Also, in their discussion of massive open online courses (MOOCs) in language learning, Zhang and Tananuraksakul (2023) show how students all over the globe may benefit from the variety and adaptability that these platforms provide.

D. *Student Satisfaction and Engagement in Online Learning*

The effectiveness of online education programs depends on students' happiness and participation. In synchronous online learning environments, student happiness is greatly enhanced by connection and participation, as pointed out by Chumworatayee (2023). Blending online and conventional approaches may improve student satisfaction and learning results (Erdel, 2022). This is further explored in the context of post-pandemic hybrid education.

E. *Demographic Influences on Attitudes Towards E-Learning*

Students' perspectives on online education are shaped by demographic variables including their gender and level of education. The effects of these demographic differences on students' views and experiences with online education are discussed in detail by Sahu and Sahu (2022). If we want to create online classrooms that are welcoming and successful for students from all backgrounds, we must first understand these disparities.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to investigate how first-year undergraduates at Al-Balqa Applied University feel about taking English classes online by use of a questionnaire. We want to collect a variety of insights on their online learning experiences, preferences, and problems.

A. *Participants*

A sample of first-year undergraduates from Al-Balqa Applied University are the center of this study. The sample size was determined to be 215 students in order to adequately reflect the varied student population at the institution. To guarantee a diverse range of participants across genders, academic programs, and socio-economic backgrounds, stratified random selection was used.

B. *Instrumentation*

A structured questionnaire that investigates several aspects of online English learning is the main instrument of the research. Student happiness, perceived efficacy, difficulties, and preferred learning tools and techniques are all part of this. Both closed- and open-ended questions are included in the survey. To quantitatively analyze students' opinions towards certain components of online English learning, the closed-ended questions use a Likert scale style, ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree.'" In contrast, students' experiences are given additional depth and context via the use of open-ended questions, which for more extensive qualitative replies.

C. Data Collection Procedure

Several critical stages comprised the process for gathering data. To start, the study was green-lit by the university's research ethics committee, so you know it was done the right way. In order to make participation easy and efficient, the university's learning management system was used to electronically disseminate the surveys. The approach relied on students providing informed permission in order for them to take part. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any moment, as well as their responsibilities regarding the confidentiality of their replies and the study's goals via this consent form.

D. Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data analysis. Statistical approaches were used to analyze the closed-ended questions quantitatively. To summarize the replies, we used descriptive statistics like percentages and frequencies. To analyze possible links and differences across distinct demographic categories, we utilized inferential statistics like chi-square tests. Thematic analysis was used to examine the free-form answers in the qualitative section. To do this, we coded the data and looked for common patterns; this gave us a better picture of the students' complex viewpoints and backgrounds.

E. Limitations

The research does note a few caveats. Although the sample size of 215 is sufficient for this particular setting, it is possible that the results cannot be applied to a larger population. Response bias, in which respondents are more likely to provide answers that would make them seem good than to reveal their genuine thoughts and experiences, is another potential issue with self-reported surveys.

IV. RESULTS

The survey results from Al-Balqa Applied University's first-year undergraduates' perspectives on online English language courses were illuminating. Key results are provided in tables after descriptive analysis, which followed quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

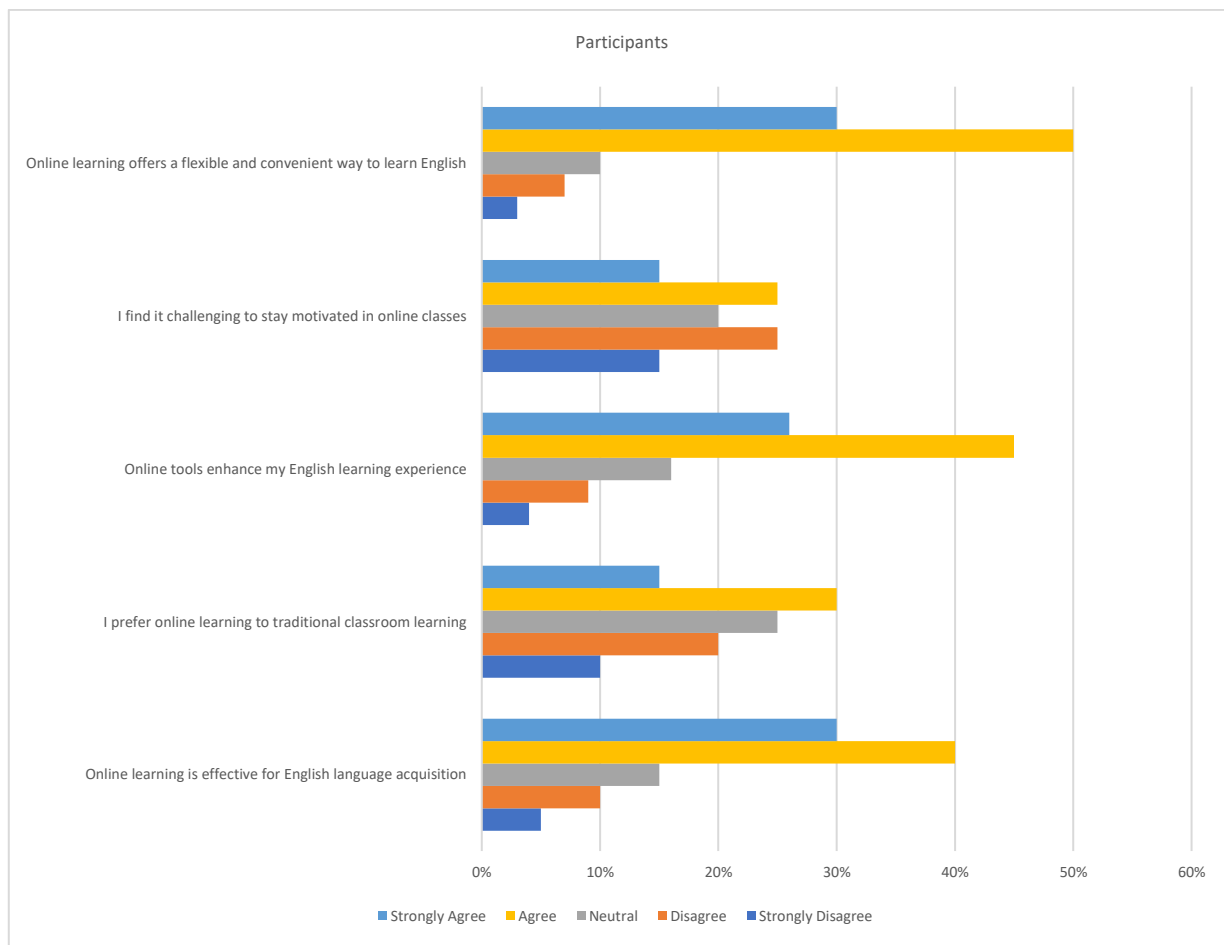
A. General Attitudes Towards Online English Learning

Table 1 displays the overall sentiments of students about English language learning over the internet. Utilizing a Likert scale that extended from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree,' the replies were calculated.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT RESPONSES ON GENERAL ATTITUDES

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Online learning is effective for English language acquisition	5%	10%	15%	40%	30%
I prefer online learning to traditional classroom learning	10%	20%	25%	30%	15%
Online tools enhance my English learning experience	4%	9%	16%	45%	26%
I find it challenging to stay motivated in online classes	15%	25%	20%	25%	15%
Online learning offers a flexible and convenient way to learn English	3%	7%	10%	50%	30%

Table 1 shows that most people have a good impression of online English courses, with most people considering them effective and enjoying how convenient they are. On the other hand, it seems that a significant number of pupils struggle with motivation.



B. Technological Tools and Online Learning Engagement

Table 2 shows how students felt about their involvement in online learning and the usage of technology tools.

TABLE 2
STUDENT RATINGS OF TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

Technological Tools	Not Useful at All	Slightly Useful	Moderately Useful	Very Useful	Extremely Useful
Interactive Quizzes	5%	10%	20%	40%	25%
Video Lectures	3%	8%	15%	45%	29%
Online Discussion Forums	10%	15%	25%	35%	15%
Language Learning Apps	4%	9%	18%	40%	29%

Table 2 shows that students rank video lectures and interactive quizzes extremely highly, suggesting that these features greatly improve their online learning experience. Apps for learning a new language and online discussion forums also had mostly good reviews, however they were rated lower.

C. Challenges Faced in Online Learning

The difficulties that students have while studying English online are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3
COMMON CHALLENGES IN ONLINE LEARNING

Challenges	Percentage of Students
Internet Connectivity Issues	30%
Distractions at Home	25%
Limited Interaction with Peers	20%
Technical Difficulties with Learning Platforms	15%
Lack of Personalized Feedback	10%

Table 3 shows that students' main problems are having access to the internet and staying focused at home. Other significant issues that surfaced were the lack of peer engagement and the technological limitations.

D. Student Preferences for Learning Modalities

Table 4 shows the many learning methods that online English course students choose.

TABLE 4
PREFERENCES FOR ONLINE LEARNING MODALITIES

<i>Learning Modalities</i>	Highly Prefer	Prefer	Neutral	Prefer Less	Do Not Prefer
<i>Synchronous Sessions</i>	35%	30%	20%	10%	5%
<i>Asynchronous Sessions</i>	25%	35%	25%	10%	5%
<i>Blended Learning</i>	40%	30%	15%	10%	5%

Blended learning, in which synchronous and asynchronous sessions are combined, is highly preferred by students as it is evident from Table 4. There is a modest preference for synchronous sessions over asynchronous ones.

E. Satisfaction With Online English Learning

Student satisfaction with their online English learning experience is seen in Table 5.

TABLE 5
STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ONLINE ENGLISH LEARNING

<i>Satisfaction Level</i>	Percentage of Students
<i>Very Satisfied</i>	30%
<i>Satisfied</i>	35%
<i>Neutral</i>	20%
<i>Dissatisfied</i>	10%
<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	5%

According to Table 5, most students are either pleased or very satisfied with their experience studying English online. Nevertheless, there is room for development since a sizable portion remains indifferent or unsatisfied.

F. Chi-Square Test for Internet Connectivity Issues and Student Satisfaction

TABLE 6
CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND SATISFACTION LEVELS

	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied/Very Dissatisfied	Chi-Square Value	P-Value
<i>No Internet Issues</i>	60%	20%	20%	$\chi^2 = 13.67$	0.001
<i>Internet Issues</i>	20%	40%	40%		

According to Table 6, there is a high correlation between students' satisfaction with online learning and internet connection concerns (chi-square value = .06). In general, students who do not have trouble connecting to the internet are happier than those who do.

G. ANOVA Test for Different Programs and Engagement Levels

TABLE 7
ANOVA TEST COMPARING ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PROGRAMS

<i>Program</i>	Mean Engagement Score	F-Value	P-Value
<i>Program A</i>	3.5	F(4, 210) = 5.67	0.000
<i>Program B</i>	3.8		
<i>Program C</i>	4.1		
<i>Program D</i>	3.2		
<i>Program E</i>	3.7		

Different academic programs' mean engagement ratings varied significantly, as shown in Table 7, according to the ANOVA test. This provides evidence that students' motivation to learn English online may vary depending on the course of study.

H. Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Preferences for Learning Modalities

TABLE 8
T-TEST ANALYSIS FOR GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING MODALITIES

<i>Gender</i>	Mean Preference Score (Synchronous)	t-Value	P-Value
<i>Male</i>	3.6	t(213) = -2.45	0.015
<i>Female</i>	4.1		

There is a statistically significant difference in the preferences of male and female students when it comes to synchronous learning modes, as shown in Table 8. The preference of female students is greater.

I. Regression Analysis for Factors Predicting Satisfaction With Online Learning

TABLE 9
REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR PREDICTORS OF SATISFACTION

<i>Predictor</i>	B	SE	Beta	t-Value	P-Value
<i>Internet Connectivity</i>	-0.31	0.08	-0.25	-3.88	0.000
<i>Flexibility of Learning</i>	0.42	0.07	0.35	6.01	0.000
<i>Interaction with Peers</i>	0.27	0.06	0.23	4.50	0.000
<i>R²</i>			0.47		

Student satisfaction with online English learning is significantly predicted by internet connection, flexibility of learning, and engagement with peers (Table 9). Levels of satisfaction may be explained by the model to a degree of 47%.

V. DISCUSSION

At Al-Balqa Applied University, this survey sought to find out how first-year undergraduates felt about taking English classes online. A detailed questionnaire and statistical analysis produced data that shed light on the nuances of online language learning.

A. General Attitudes Towards Online Learning

Students seem to have a generally favorable outlook on studying English online, which is in keeping with research by Masadeh (2021) and Qadir and Omar (2023), who highlighted the importance of students' attitudes in determining the success of online courses. The ease and adaptability of online learning were especially valued, which is in accordance with the findings from the COVID-19 epidemic reported by Khalil and Çavuşoğlu (2023). Nevertheless, our results emphasize the difficulty of keeping motivation in an online setting, which is in accordance with the worries expressed by Wati (2018) and suggests a possible topic for more investigation and intervention.

B. Technological Tools and Engagement

Interactive quizzes and video lectures are technology tools that students highly rate, suggesting a desire for learning methodologies that are multimedia-based and interactive. This conclusion lends credence to the findings of Novitasari and Prijambodo (2022), who discovered that digital tools may greatly improve the process of learning a language. The enthusiastic response to these tools indicates a move towards language learning pedagogies that use technology, as proposed by Zhang and Tananuraksakul (2023).

C. Challenges in Online Learning

According to research in online education, students encounter a variety of difficulties, the most common of which are poor internet connection and domestic distractions (Erdel, 2022; Chumworatayee, 2023). These results highlight the importance of schools thinking about how environmental and infrastructure elements affect the success of online courses.

D. Learning Modalities and Student Preferences

A significant conclusion of this research is the preference for mixed learning modalities. This aligns with the rising tendency towards hybrid education models post-pandemic (Erdel, 2022). This inclination may reflect students' need for a middle ground between the convenience of online learning and the face-to-face interaction seen in conventional classrooms.

E. Satisfaction With Online Learning

Despite some difficulties, online education has the potential to be a successful and sustainable form of education, as shown by the high levels of satisfaction expressed by most students. There has to be continuous development in online teaching methodologies and student support networks since there is a small percentage of students who reported being dissatisfied.

F. Gender Differences in Preferences

Our study's findings of statistically significant variations between the sexes regarding synchronous learning modes provide further evidence that gender influences learning style preferences. This confirms what Sahu and Sahu (2022) found: that demographics do have a role in shaping people's perspectives on online education. These distinctions should be taken into account by educational institutions when they develop and launch online learning programs.

G. Predictors of Satisfaction

Important factors that predicted happiness, according to the regression analysis, were access to the internet, the ability to study at one's own pace, and the presence of supportive classmates. Consistent with the recommendations of Hussain and Ali (2022) and Behera and Kumar (2023), this highlights the significance of a reliable internet connection, adaptable learning alternatives, and chances for students to engage with one another in virtual classrooms.

H. Limitations and Future Research

Despite the useful insights it offers, this research does have several drawbacks. Results may not be applicable outside of Al-Balqa Applied University due to small sample size and unique setting. To make the findings more applicable to a

wider range of institutions, future studies might recruit students from a variety of backgrounds. How students' perspectives and experiences change over time might also be better understood with the help of longitudinal research.

I. Implications for Practice

Several aspects of educational practice may be affected by the results of this research. First and foremost, colleges and institutions must provide a strong technical foundation to facilitate online education. Second, to make online courses more engaging and effective, multimedia and interactive elements should be included. Last but not least, the difficulties of motivation and contentment in online learning settings may be amenable to individualized strategies and support networks.

VI. CONCLUSION

The perspectives of first-year undergraduates at Al-Balqa Applied University on online English language courses are thoroughly examined in this research. The results indicate that most people have a favorable impression of online education and value the ease and adaptability it provides. The need for sufficient technical assistance and methods to encourage student participation is highlighted by the fact that two of the most significant obstacles are keeping students motivated and dealing with problems with internet access. A need for a middle ground between the independence of online learning and the community building of more conventional classroom settings is reflected in the popularity of blended learning modalities. Internet access, a customizable learning environment, and chances to collaborate with classmates were shown to be important factors in students' overall happiness with their online education. For these reasons, it's clear that improving student happiness requires an online learning environment that is both organized and helpful. There has to be gender-sensitive methods to the development and delivery of online courses since the research also showed that there are significant disparities between the sexes when it comes to preferred learning modes. The research recognizes its limits in terms of sample size and context specificity, but it nevertheless offers useful insights for educators and policymakers in online language instruction. To improve the results' generalizability, future research should seek to include a bigger and more varied sample across several colleges. In addition, longitudinal research might provide further insight into the ways in which perceptions and use of online learning change over time.

REFERENCES

- [1] Behera, R. K., & Kumar, M. (2023). Attitude of undergraduate students towards e-learning. *i-Manager's Journal of Educational Technology*, 20(2), 38-45. <https://doi.org/10.26634/jet.20.2.20049>
- [2] Bozok, D. (2023). Attitudes of Students towards Violations of Academic Integrity in Online English Courses. *Journal of Learning and Teaching in Digital Age*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.53850/joltida.1177949>
- [3] Chumworatayee, T. (2023). Thai Undergraduate and Graduate Students' Satisfaction with Synchronous Online English Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *rEFLECTIONS*, 30(3), 850–865. <https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v30i3.268774>
- [4] Erdel, D. (2022). EFL Students' Online Course Satisfaction and Attitudes Towards E-Learning in Post-Pandemic Hybrid Education. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 30. <https://doi.org/10.24106/kefdergi.1194042>
- [5] Hussain, S., & Ali, A. (2022). Online English Literature Classes in Pakistani Public Universities: Preferences and Attitudes of Undergraduate Students. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.81/05>
- [6] Khalil, E., & Çavuşoğlu, Ç. (2023). Libyan Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic. In S. Kourieos & D. Evripidou (Eds.), *Language teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic*. (1st. Ed. Pp 92-108). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- [7] Masadeh, T. (2021). *Attitudes of University Freshman EFL Students toward Learning English as a Foreign Language*. <https://doi.org/10.9790/7388-1101042940>
- [8] Mustaji, M., & Pradana, H. (2023). Attitudes and responsibilities of students against online learning. *World Journal on Educational Technology*, 15, 261-274. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v15i3.7048>
- [9] Novitasari, E., & Prijambodo, V. (2022). Students' Attitudes towards Quizlet in English Vocabulary Learning. *Magister Scientiae*, 50, 150-167. <https://doi.org/10.33508/mgs.v50i2.4180>
- [10] Qadir, S., & Muhammad Omar, R. (2023). Attitudes of Kurdish university students towards the English language, English language education policies, and English language learning purposes. *Humanities Journal of University of Zakho*, 11, 938-950. <https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2023.11.4.1207>
- [11] Sahu, Namita & Scholar, Former & Sahu, Sanjaya. (2022). Undergraduate Students' Attitude Toward E-Learning: *Gender and Stream of Education Perspectives*, 10, 425-434.
- [12] Wati, S. (2018). Language Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards English at English Education Department. *LingTera*, 5, 10-18. <https://doi.org/10.21831/lt.v5i1.8583>
- [13] Zhang, R., & Tananuraksakul, N. (2022). A Study of Chinese Undergraduate Students' Attitudes toward Learning an Online English Course through MOOC at a Private University in Beijing. *Asia Social Issues*, 16(2), e254160. <https://doi.org/10.48048/asi.2023.254160>

Rasha Abed Al-Karim Darwish received her MA in applied linguistics from the Jordan University for Science and Technology (JUST) in 2006, and BA in English for Specific Purposes from JUST in 2002. She currently works as a lecturer at the Department of Basic Sciences, Amman University College for Financial and Managerial Science, Al-Balqa Applied University – Jordan. Her current research interests include technology and language learning skills, error analysis, and hybrid learning. Email: r.darwish@bau.edu.jo