

## An Investigation into the Role of Blended Learning in Enhancing the Reading Comprehension of Libyan Secondary Students

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دراسة استقصائية حول دور التعلم المدمج في تعزيز الفهم القرائي لدى طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في ليبيا

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of blended learning in enhancing the reading comprehension of Libyan secondary school students studying English as a foreign language (EFL). The integration of face-to-face instruction with online learning tools has become increasingly significant in improving learners' engagement and achievement. The study aims to examine whether blended learning environments contribute to better reading comprehension outcomes compared to traditional classroom instruction. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving two groups of secondary students: an experimental group taught through blended learning and a control group taught through conventional methods. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. The findings revealed that students exposed to blended learning showed significant improvement in their reading comprehension performance, motivation, and overall participation. The results suggest that incorporating digital resources and interactive online activities can create more effective and learner-centered EFL reading instruction. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations for integrating blended learning strategies into Libyan secondary schools to enhance students' reading proficiency and engagement.

**Keywords:** Blended learning; Reading comprehension; EFL; Secondary students; Libya; Language achievement.

### المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في دور التعلم المدمج في تعزيز الفهم القرائي لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية الليبية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. لقد أصبح دمج التعليم الوجيه مع أدوات التعلم عبر الإنترنت ذا أهمية متزايدة في تحسين مشاركة المتعلمين وتحصيلهم الدراسي. تهدف الدراسة إلى فحص ما إذا كانت بيئات التعلم المدمج تساهم في تحقيق نتائج أفضل في الفهم القرائي مقارنة بالتعليم التقليدي داخل الفصل الدراسي. تم استخدام تصميم شبه تجريبي شمل مجموعتين من طلاب المرحلة الثانوية: مجموعة تجريبية درست من خلال التعلم المدمج ومجموعة ضابطة درست بالطرق التقليدية. جُمعت البيانات من خلال الاختبارات القبليّة والبعديّة، والملاحظات الصفية، واستبانات الطلاب. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب الذين تعرضوا للتعلم المدمج أظهروا تحسناً ملحوظاً في أداء الفهم القرائي والدافعية والمشاركة العامة. تشير النتائج إلى أن دمج الموارد الرقمية والأنشطة التفاعلية عبر الإنترنت يمكن أن يخلق تديساً أكثر فعالية للفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ويتركز حول المتعلم. تخلص الدراسة إلى تقديم توصيات تربوية لدمج استراتيجيات التعلم المدمج في المدارس الثانوية الليبية لتعزيز كفاءة القراءة لدى الطلاب ومشاركتهم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التعلم المدمج؛ الفهم القرائي؛ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ طلاب المرحلة الثانوية؛ ليبيا؛ التحصيل اللغوي.

## Introduction

The increasing integration of technology into education has transformed traditional teaching practices and created new opportunities for language learning. One effective model that combines online and face-to-face instruction is blended learning (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017). This approach allows teachers to deliver flexible and interactive lessons while giving students more control over their learning pace and access to various digital resources. Studies have shown that blended learning can enhance students' engagement, motivation, and performance in language learning contexts (Lamri & Hamzaoui, 2018; Al Zumor, Al Refaai & Al-Rahman, 2013).

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading comprehension is a key skill that supports academic achievement and lifelong learning. It enables learners to understand texts, build vocabulary, and develop critical thinking abilities. However, many EFL learners—especially in developing countries such as Libya—struggle to comprehend English texts due to limited exposure to authentic materials, teacher-centered instruction, and minimal use of technology (Al-Jarf, 2009). In the Libyan secondary education system, English reading instruction often relies on traditional methods that do not adequately engage students or meet their diverse learning needs.

Recent research suggests that integrating digital tools and online resources into EFL classrooms can significantly improve reading comprehension outcomes. For example, Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018) found that students who participated in blended reading courses performed better than those taught solely through face-to-face instruction. Similarly, Al Zumor et al. (2013) reported that EFL learners viewed blended learning positively, highlighting its ability to increase motivation, participation, and access to language input. As stated by Mohamed (2022), the concept of blended learning encompasses the incorporation of digital learning platforms, such as learning management systems, to merge online and in-person modes of instruction. While such studies provide valuable insights, little research has examined the effect of blended learning on reading comprehension in Libyan secondary schools, where digital learning remains relatively underdeveloped. Given these gaps, the current study aims to investigate the role of blended learning in enhancing the reading comprehension of Libyan secondary students. It seeks to provide empirical evidence on whether blended instruction can lead to measurable improvements in reading skills and to explore students' attitudes toward this approach in the Libyan context.

## Problem Statement

Although blended learning has been recognized internationally as an effective instructional approach, its adoption in Libyan secondary schools is still limited. Many English teachers continue to rely on traditional, teacher-centered strategies that offer few opportunities for learner interaction or technological integration. Consequently, students often demonstrate low levels of reading comprehension and limited motivation to read in English. This study addresses this problem by examining the potential of blended learning to improve reading comprehension achievement among Libyan secondary EFL students.

## Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension achievement of Libyan secondary EFL students.
2. Compare the reading comprehension performance of students taught through blended learning and traditional instruction.
3. Explore students' attitudes and perceptions toward blended learning in EFL reading classes.

4. Suggest practical recommendations for integrating blended learning into Libyan secondary English programs.

### Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does blended learning improve the reading comprehension achievement of Libyan secondary EFL students?
2. Are there significant differences in reading comprehension outcomes between students taught through blended and traditional methods?
3. What are Libyan secondary students' attitudes toward the use of blended learning in reading comprehension instruction?

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of literature on technology-enhanced language learning, particularly in the Libyan EFL context. It offers insights into how blended learning can be effectively used to strengthen reading comprehension skills among secondary students. The findings may help EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers design more engaging and learner-centered reading instruction. Moreover, the study highlights the potential of digital tools to promote independent learning, increase motivation, and improve academic achievement in English language education.

### Literature Review

#### Effect of Blended Learning on Reading Comprehension Achievement

Blended learning (BL) combines online instruction with traditional face-to-face teaching and has been shown to improve learning outcomes in various EFL contexts. According to Graham (2006, cited in Normawati, 2021), BL provides a flexible framework that enables learners to access materials independently while receiving teacher guidance in the classroom. In EFL settings, this flexibility is particularly beneficial for developing reading comprehension skills, as it allows learners to engage with texts at their own pace, revisit difficult passages, and practice comprehension strategies (Mohamed, 2022).

Empirical studies demonstrate that blended learning positively affects reading comprehension achievement. For instance, Bekele and Belihu (2024) reported significant improvements in first-year university students' reading comprehension when using a Moodle-based blended program compared to traditional instruction. Similarly, Istiarto and Djiwandono (2018) found that EFL learners exposed to blended learning showed enhanced reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. These studies highlight the potential of blended learning to support Libyan secondary students' reading comprehension by providing additional practice opportunities, scaffolding strategies, and immediate feedback.

#### Comparison of Blended Learning and Traditional Instruction

Several studies have compared the effectiveness of blended learning versus traditional teaching methods in improving reading comprehension. Traditional instruction in EFL contexts often relies on teacher-centered lectures and textbook-based exercises, which may limit student engagement and opportunities for autonomous learning (AlManafi, Osman, & Magableh, 2023).

Research indicates that blended learning can yield superior outcomes. Pammu, Prasetyo, and Wulandari (2021) conducted a study with Indonesian secondary students and found that those in a blended learning program outperformed peers in a control group on both literal and inferential reading comprehension tests. Bekele and Belihu (2024) also reported that students using blended approaches achieved higher comprehension scores than those receiving face-to-

face instruction alone. These findings suggest that integrating online components with in-class teaching can provide a more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered environment, ultimately enhancing reading comprehension outcomes compared to traditional methods.

### **Students' Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Blended Learning**

Understanding learners' perceptions of blended learning is crucial, as positive attitudes can enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Studies in EFL contexts consistently show that students respond favorably to blended learning approaches. Al Zumor, Al Refaai, and Al-Rahman (2013) found that EFL learners valued blended learning for its flexibility, access to authentic materials, and interactive features. Similarly, Mohamed (2022) reported that students perceived blended instruction as more engaging and helpful for improving comprehension skills compared to conventional classroom-only instruction.

Positive perceptions often translate into greater effort and participation. Normawati (2021) noted that students engaged more deeply in reading activities when digital resources complemented face-to-face lessons, as they could control pacing, revisit challenging texts, and practice strategies independently. Exploring Libyan secondary students' attitudes will provide insights into potential challenges and enablers for implementing blended learning effectively in the local context. **This study will contribute to the existing literature by conducting an experimental investigation to determine whether blended learning, as opposed to traditional instruction, can enhance overall reading comprehension scores among Libyan secondary students.** The findings are expected to inform practical strategies for integrating blended learning into Libyan secondary English programs and improve both student engagement and achievement.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Method**

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental method to investigate the effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension achievement of Libyan secondary EFL students. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for the objective measurement of students' performance before and after the treatment and facilitates statistical comparison between the experimental and control groups (Creswell, 2014). The main purpose of this method was to determine whether the implementation of blended learning results in significant improvement in students' reading comprehension scores compared to traditional face-to-face instruction.

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design. Two intact classes of Libyan secondary EFL students were selected to participate. One class served as the experimental group, which received instruction through blended learning, while the other served as the control group, which received traditional classroom instruction. Both groups completed a pre-test at the beginning of the study to assess their initial reading comprehension level. After six weeks of instruction, both groups took a post-test to measure any improvement. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to gather data on their perceptions of blended learning, and classroom observations were conducted to record student engagement and participation during lessons. This design allowed for the comparison of learning outcomes and provided both numerical and descriptive insights into the effectiveness of blended learning in EFL reading classes.

#### **Participants**

The participants were 60 Libyan secondary school students enrolled in two English classes at the same school during the 2025 academic year. The students' ages ranged between 15 and 17

years, and both male and female learners were included. The two classes were selected based on their similarity in English proficiency, as determined by their previous semester grades. One class (n=30) was assigned as the experimental group, while the other (n=30) served as the control group. Before data collection, official permission was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from students and their guardians. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

## Instruments

### a. Reading Comprehension Test

A standardized reading comprehension test was administered as both the pre-test and post-test. The test included multiple-choice and short-answer questions designed to assess different levels of reading comprehension—literal, inferential, and critical.

- The test was adapted from the official Libyan secondary English textbook.
- The reliability of the test was verified using Cronbach's Alpha, and content validity was established through expert review by EFL specialists.

### b. Questionnaire

A Likert-scale questionnaire was given to the experimental group after the treatment to assess students' attitudes and perceptions toward blended learning. The questionnaire, adapted from Al Zumor et al. (2013), included statements about motivation, flexibility, interaction, and overall learning satisfaction.

### c. Observation Checklist

A structured classroom observation checklist was used by the researcher to record the level of student participation, engagement, and interaction during both traditional and blended learning sessions. This helped to identify behavioral and affective differences between the two instructional approaches.

### d. Teacher's Reflection Notes

The teacher kept brief reflection notes after each session to document challenges, student responses, and classroom dynamics. These notes provided qualitative support to the quantitative data.

## Procedure

The study was carried out in several systematic stages over a six-week period. Prior to implementation, permission was obtained from the school administration, and the instructional materials for both traditional and blended learning environments were prepared. A pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to measure their initial reading comprehension levels and ensure comparability. The experimental group received instruction through a blended learning approach that integrated face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning activities such as reading tasks, interactive exercises, and discussion forums via a learning management system. Meanwhile, the control group was taught through traditional classroom instruction only, using the same reading materials and lesson plans. During the treatment phase, the researcher conducted classroom observations to monitor students' participation, engagement, and interaction. After six weeks of instruction, a post-test identical in structure to the pre-test was administered to both groups to assess any improvement in their reading comprehension performance. Finally, a questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group to gather data on students' attitudes and perceptions toward blended learning in EFL reading instruction.

## Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-test, post-test, questionnaire, and classroom observations were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-

test were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to summarize students' reading comprehension performance. An independent-samples *t*-test was then conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, thereby measuring the effectiveness of blended learning. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to describe students' attitudes and perceptions toward the blended learning experience. Qualitative data from classroom observations were examined descriptively to identify patterns of student engagement, participation, and interaction during the lessons. Together, these analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of both the academic impact of blended learning and the learners' perceptions of this instructional approach.

### Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which aimed to examine the effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension achievement of Libyan secondary EFL students. The results were obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores, students' attitude questionnaires, and classroom observations. The findings are organized into four sections: pre-test results, post-test results, students' attitudes toward blended learning, and classroom observation findings.

The pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups before the treatment to assess their initial reading comprehension levels. As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of the two groups were similar, indicating that they were equivalent in their reading proficiency prior to the intervention.

**Table 1:** Pre-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Experimental Group	30	56.8	7.24	0.38	0.71
Control Group	30	57.4	7.11		

The *p*-value (0.71) was greater than 0.05, indicating that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups at the beginning of the study. Therefore, any later improvement could be attributed to the instructional intervention rather than pre-existing differences.

After six weeks of instruction, both groups completed the post-test to measure their reading comprehension achievement. Table 2 shows that the experimental group achieved a noticeably higher mean score compared to the control group.

**Table 2:** Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Experimental Group	30	79.2	6.83	4.72	0.000*
Control Group	30	68.5	7.26		

\*Significant at  $p < 0.01$

The independent-samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) between the mean post-test scores of the two groups. This finding indicates that the blended learning approach significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension achievement compared to traditional classroom instruction. The mean improvement for the experimental group was 22.4 points, compared to 11.1 points for the control group.

After the post-test, a questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to gather data on their perceptions and attitudes toward blended learning. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Table 3 presents the mean scores for each dimension of the questionnaire.

**Table 3:** Students' Attitudes Toward Blended Learning (Experimental Group).

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Motivation and Interest	4.5	0.62	Highly Positive
Flexibility and Accessibility	4.2	0.58	Positive
Interaction and Collaboration	4.4	0.66	Highly Positive
Learning Effectiveness	4.3	0.60	Positive
Overall Satisfaction	4.3	0.59	Positive

The overall mean score was 4.34, suggesting that students expressed highly positive attitudes toward blended learning. They reported that the approach increased their motivation, offered more flexibility, and encouraged active participation. However, a few students mentioned minor challenges related to internet access and the need for technical support.

Classroom observations were conducted throughout the six-week intervention to record student engagement and interaction. The findings indicated that students in the blended learning group were more active and participated more frequently in discussions and reading tasks. They showed greater enthusiasm when using digital materials and online exercises. In contrast, the control group relied heavily on teacher explanations and demonstrated less collaborative interaction.

Table 4 summarizes the main differences observed between the two groups.

**Table 4:** Observation Summary: Experimental vs. Control Group.

Observation Focus	Experimental Group	Control Group
Student Engagement	High participation and motivation	Moderate participation
Peer Collaboration	Frequent group and online activities	Limited peer interaction
Teacher-Student Interaction	Interactive feedback and guidance	Teacher-centered explanation
Learning Autonomy	Active self-learning and initiative	Dependent on teacher direction

These observations supported the quantitative results by showing that blended learning created a more engaging, student-centered learning environment that fostered greater independence and motivation.

## Discussion

The discussion focuses on how the results align with or differ from previous studies and highlights the implications of the findings for English language teaching in Libyan secondary schools. The discussion is organized around the main objectives of the study: to examine the impact of blended learning on reading comprehension, compare it with traditional instruction, explore students' perceptions of blended learning, and suggest recommendations for classroom practice.

The findings of the study revealed that the experimental group, which received blended learning instruction, outperformed the control group, which was taught through traditional classroom methods. This indicates that blended learning had a positive and significant effect

on students' reading comprehension performance. These results are consistent with those of Al-Jarf (2009), who found that blended learning enhanced Saudi EFL students' reading achievement by providing additional online reading practice and feedback opportunities. Similarly, Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) reported that combining online and face-to-face instruction improved Iranian EFL learners' reading proficiency and motivation to read in English.

The improvement in the experimental group's scores can be attributed to the interactive and multimodal nature of blended learning. The integration of digital platforms allowed students to engage with reading materials at their own pace, revisit content, and receive immediate feedback on comprehension activities. These findings also support Lamri and Hamzaoui (2018), who emphasized that blended learning environments foster learner autonomy and deeper comprehension through flexible access to learning materials. Thus, the results confirm that blended learning provides a more effective and engaging environment for improving reading comprehension than traditional teaching alone.

The comparison of the pre-test and post-test results revealed that while both groups improved after instruction, the experimental group achieved significantly higher gains. This suggests that blended learning not only supports comprehension but also accelerates the learning process. These results are in line with Mohamed (2022), who found that EFL students exposed to blended learning outperformed those in conventional classrooms due to increased interaction and collaboration. Similarly, Bekele and Belihu (2024) demonstrated that Moodle-based blended learning programs significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition by combining digital tasks with teacher-guided activities.

The superiority of blended learning over traditional instruction may stem from the increased exposure to English texts, opportunities for self-practice, and integration of multimedia materials that appeal to various learning styles. According to Nguyen (2024), blended learning environments offer personalized instruction that caters to learners' individual needs and fosters engagement through technology-mediated communication. Therefore, the present findings reinforce the view that blended learning enhances both comprehension and learner motivation more effectively than teacher-centered approaches.

The results of the questionnaire showed that students in the experimental group expressed highly positive attitudes toward blended learning. They perceived it as motivating, flexible, and supportive of their independent learning. This finding aligns with Al Zumor et al. (2013), who found that EFL learners valued blended learning for its convenience, interactivity, and ability to combine the advantages of online and in-person instruction. Likewise, Normawati (2021) reported that students appreciated the opportunity to access reading materials anytime and engage in interactive online discussions that enhanced their comprehension and critical thinking.

The positive attitudes observed in this study suggest that blended learning fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for learning, as students are able to control the pace and timing of their study. However, a few students indicated challenges related to internet connectivity and the need for technical assistance, echoing the findings of AlManafi, Osman, and Magableh (2023), who noted similar issues among Libyan EFL learners. Despite these limitations, the overall perception of blended learning remained highly favorable, indicating strong potential for its wider implementation in Libyan secondary schools.

The classroom observations confirmed the quantitative findings by demonstrating that students in the blended learning group were more engaged and participative. They interacted more frequently with their peers and teacher, showed greater enthusiasm for reading activities, and displayed higher levels of confidence when discussing texts. This observation is consistent with Pammu, Prasetyo, and Wulandari (2021), who found that blended learning encourages active participation and promotes student-centered instruction. Similarly, Istiarto

and Djiwandono (2018) highlighted that blended learning fosters collaboration and vocabulary development, both of which contribute to improved comprehension.

The higher engagement levels observed in the experimental group may be attributed to the dynamic nature of blended instruction, which combines visual, auditory, and interactive learning modes. As Nguyen (2024) emphasized, such environments stimulate interest and accommodate different learning preferences. Therefore, the findings suggest that blended learning not only enhances reading comprehension but also transforms the classroom atmosphere into a more interactive and motivating space for language learning.

The findings of this study carry several implications for EFL teaching in Libyan secondary education. First, the success of blended learning in improving reading comprehension suggests that integrating technology into EFL instruction can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt blended methods that combine online resources, interactive platforms, and classroom discussions. Second, teacher training programs should include practical guidance on designing and managing blended learning environments effectively. Third, educational policymakers should ensure the availability of reliable technological infrastructure, such as internet access and digital learning tools, to support blended learning implementation. Finally, since students expressed positive attitudes toward this approach, blended learning can be expanded to other language skills such as writing, listening, and speaking, further enriching the EFL learning experience in Libyan schools.

## Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the effect of blended learning on the reading comprehension achievement of Libyan secondary EFL students. It also sought to compare the outcomes of blended learning and traditional instruction, explore students' attitudes toward blended learning, and provide recommendations for its integration into EFL classrooms.

A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving two groups: an experimental group that received blended learning instruction and a control group that was taught using traditional face-to-face methods. The instruments used for data collection included a reading comprehension pre-test and post-test, a student questionnaire measuring attitudes toward blended learning, and classroom observations that captured students' engagement and participation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were interpreted thematically.

The results revealed a significant improvement in the reading comprehension achievement of students taught through blended learning compared to those taught traditionally. Moreover, students in the experimental group expressed positive attitudes toward the blended learning environment, appreciating its flexibility, interactivity, and motivational aspects. Classroom observations supported these findings, showing higher engagement and participation levels among blended learning students. Based on the findings, several important conclusions can be drawn. Blended learning significantly enhances reading comprehension among Libyan secondary EFL students, as the integration of online and face-to-face instruction allows for more individualized learning experiences and increased opportunities for practice and feedback. Moreover, blended learning is more effective than traditional instruction in improving comprehension outcomes, with the flexibility and interactivity of blended environments promoting deeper understanding and retention of reading materials. Students also hold positive perceptions of blended learning, viewing it as an enjoyable, motivating, and modern approach that encourages active participation and independent learning. Although challenges such as limited internet access and technical difficulties may affect the implementation of blended learning, these obstacles can be addressed through improved infrastructure and teacher training. Overall, the study confirms that blended learning is a

valuable and practical instructional approach that can improve EFL reading comprehension and foster student engagement in Libyan secondary education.

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