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The present paper entitled 'Kurd University English Teachers' Problems and Challenges in Applying Online Classes' aims to hint at the most obvious problems and difficulties of the online teaching process that is worldly concerned due to the pandemic situation. The purpose of the paper is to raise awareness of the issues and determine the best approach to change the problems into creative and practical solutions. The methodology used by the researcher is a combination of primary and secondary resources. A qualitative method using an online questionnaire created using Google Form serves as the main source for data collection. In order to easily reach the participants, the questionnaire's data collection technique is done online. Moreover, the secondary source for data collection is the literature review. The findings of the study state that university lecturers, particularly the EFL teachers at the English Department of the College of Basic Education at the University of Sulaimani as a sample; have certain problems with the online teaching system. The results revealed significant reflection positively on teaching online. Based on the findings, online teaching cannot effectively be used in the Kurdistan region Universities to enhance the students' background knowledge.

Keywords: Online Classes, Kurd EFL Teacher, Problems and challenges, teaching Online

#### \,\Introduction

Every language is worth knowing because the number of languages that one individual can speak shows the number of personalities that people have. The world's number one language is English and it is an international language that is used worldwide to communicate between individuals. Nowadays, people's demand for learning English is increasing day by day as it becomes a trend because of its necessity in the world of different languages. English becomes a part of human beings' existence due to its many advantages and usage. In the majority of educational systems of the countries, the design of syllabus, lesson plan, examination, and even script evaluation requires. Moreover, teaching English is a significant point to consider in countries where English is not their mother tongue language. Worldwide, there are different institutions and organizations to teach people and students the English language for their various purposes in life. The case of university students is the concern of the present paper because students who study at the university are the majority of people of want and have to learn the English language to complete their studies and get the qualification in their majors. Teaching English involves different challenges and problems especially in the present situation when it is hard to study indoors because of the rapid increase in Corona cases for university students. The problems that are faced in the teaching process can be of two sides; the students' problems as well as the teacher's problems. The present paper will focus on the teachers' problems in the process of applying online classes in teaching English as well as finding the best possible solutions throughout the research.

## \,\Troblem Statement and Research Questions

The problem of the present study is to study and find out the main problems faced by the teachers in applying online classes concerning teaching English in the universities of Kurdistan. Many challenges can be seen in the process of teaching English and the present study sheds light on the problem as well as finding a proper solution. Moreover, the questions of the study are about hinting certain questions to be answered within the body of the research by the researcher. The research questions include;

- . What are the problems related to teaching English through online classes at the university level?
- . YHow do students react toward online class activities?
- . What are the solutions to the problems the students and teachers are constantly facing in the process of teaching English?
- \,\"The Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the present study is to assess the problems of teaching EFL classes through online classes. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the best ways for Kurd University lecturers to overcome the difficulties associated with e-learning. Another objective is to help the lecturers by showing the best strategies to improve their ways of teaching and the materials they use to ease the process of e-learning in general. Therefore, the development of the educational system to cope with the recent developments in foreign language teaching and e-learning is another point of the study. So, the considerable aims of this study help Kurd EFL university lecturers in particular, and university lectures, in general, to enable teaching English most easily and effectively through online classes .

The Significance of the Study ر



The present study is significant because it sheds light on a topic that is not tackled too much previously. As the study aims to point out the most dominant problems and challenges of teaching English through online classes at the university level, this study seeks to investigate the perspectives of Kurd EFL teachers regarding teaching online EFL classes and finding a proper solution. This shows the significant differences in teachers 'perceptions of performing online teaching. Moreover, the study is also significant for both University teachers and students because it investigates and provides information about the problems and challenges of teaching online at the university level in Kurdistan and shows the effective ways to overcome the problems and difficulties faced during online classes. The study has a significant reflection on teaching online on whether online teaching can/cannot effectively be used in the Kurdistan region Universities to enhance the students' background knowledge.

Y, "Effect of Online Learning System on Students' Mental Health

After the widespread of the online system in education, research has been conveyed to determine the state of students' mental health. It has been presented that their emotions frequently change during online classes both positively and negatively whether due to the classes or outside factors and this change influences their concentration and studies. The more students understand the lesson and grasp ideas, the more they enjoy them which leads to positive emotions. While the more they face difficulty and boredom, the more they dislike the lesson and it leads to negative emotions (Dziuban et al., 2015).

Taking a whole course through the online system has been a different experience for many students since the pandemic of Covid-19 last year. The learners are going through a challenging time full of tension and stress which affect their performance in online classes. A survey of The Boar Features website declared that online learning has been negative and disfavored by 55% of university students and this result might be due to the lack of sufficient preparation and teaching materials. Students state that they feel isolated, anxious, and unmotivated during classes and they need support from academic institutions and their colleagues. The situation is tougher for those students who are freshmen and it is their first year in the course because they don't know any friends and teachers also they didn't have any social interaction with them. Students know that no matter what, they need to continue taking online courses so that they won't miss their academic year. These thoughts create more pressure and stress for learners in the world (Martin, 2020).

Based on an article by BBC, the process of online learning can be facilitated through the use of the audio system, but the brain faces difficulty while dealing with the video system. Therefore online classes through Zoom and other online applications which are a new system of learning create a chaotic and tiredness mind state for students. The discussions between students and lecturers don't feel real and natural, there are no strong relationships and interactions during classes, and turning on the camera can be a huge distraction for students because they focus more on how they appear rather than what they are studying. Together these factors affect the process of learning in general and the well-being of students' mentality in particular (Pietrewicz, 2020).

One of the major harm to students' mental health is the disorder in sleeping, due to online classes some students need to be awake and listen to their teacher in a different geographical place; therefore their time zone is different. It drains students' energy and they may not be able to perform well during the lessons and do their homework and tasks properly. Also due to the online system, students have to use laptops and other smart devices more than before which will create a negative impact on the conditions of students physically and mentally. Jennifer Katzenstein as a psychological specialist has stated that the number of time students spend on their screens could lead them to several mental issues such as anxiety, lack of concentration, and depression. In particular for those students who force themselves to go with the course and always attempt to catch up with classes and assignments which need a proper and healthy environment (Balram, 2020; Venkataraman, 2020).

7, ¿Students' Satisfaction with Online Class Activities

Technology has a high role in the educational system of this century. Students are in a rapid development era, they easily connect with their friends and their teachers through the same digital way, and therefore, they demand the same development in their educations. That is why for them, an active system of studying and learning is preferred over a passive and traditional one. Creative activities and cooperative relationship between students and the instructor is what learners are seeking (Dziuban et al., 2015).

A great number of researches are not available on the satisfaction of students with the online system of studying although, for schools and universities, it is recognized as a crucial concern (Sultana & Khan, 2019; Zulfiqar et al 2020). It has been stated that the rate of quitting schools is higher in online classes in contrast







with the traditional classroom system. So some educational centers focus on the causes of students' disinterest in online classes and how these classes can affect their level of knowledge. These causes include the value of the course which is related to the quality of the materials, the management, organizations, and clear objectives of lessons. The second element is the characteristics of the student, which is significant since students who have particular computer- and technology-related anxieties could not be satisfied. Also, research has proved that students who are argumentative and have a rough personality might not be suitable for studying online (BISHWAS et al 2020). The interaction between teachers and students is the final factor. Students with good social relations with the instructor perform better in their online classes and it affects their path to success. Also, the connection and interaction between students themselves affect their satisfaction with the online process (Ghaderizefreh & Hoover, 2018; Sultana & Khan, 2019). Students have given positive and negative feedback on the online learning process, for some of them, it is encouraging and supportive to continue studying and learning even in challenging situations. According to scientific research, the audio system has a great impact on students and makes them learn more especially those who study English as their second language. Through the online system, they can write and read better also their selfconfidence has been boosted. According to research conducted in an institution of KSA, students has declared that they enjoy the various tools and techniques that are used to teach them including group discussions, online presentations, and a project that have fundamental differences from the classroom environment. This can be due to the preparations of the courses, the encouragement students have received from teachers, and the informative activities of lessons (Almusharraf & Khahro, 2020).

7, The Problems Faced by English Teachers in Applying Online Classes

With the development of the internet, the online system has been a major way of teaching in schools and universities. In the past ten years, more than 6 million students have attended at least one online course, according to research (Darby & Lang 2019). It has been a useful tool for students and also teachers that facilitate teaching and learning processes. However, it is challenging and teachers encounter some issues when attempting to educate through online platforms (Zulfiqar et al 2020).

The online system has suddenly merged into the education system and it has brought several issues that are difficult to be identified and solved. Scholars have different opinions on the major issues of online education, Brooks (2003) states that the main issue can be the attitudes and the behavior of the teacher himself. While Arbaugh (2005) believes that modern technology and digital devices, the teacher's style of teaching, and the students too are the barriers to successful online teaching. Jacobs (2014) presents that the evaluation of learners is the major challenge for teachers, and Yueng (2001) believes that the issues are diverse. They can be the encouragement of the teacher and also students, the changes and structure of the courses alongside the estimation of the academic institutions. So, these various opinions have made the process of identifying the major issues harder, therefore the solutions may take more time than expected (Kebritchi et al., 2017).

According to the research of the University of Phoenix, four challenges can be considered the main ones which face teachers and instructors while applying to online classes. The first one is Role Changing which is related to the various roles a teacher should perform during online classes from educators to a relationship establisher then a manager and the last role is the technician. The second issue is the change from a face-to-face traditional teaching environment to a screen where lessons should be taught effectively and academically and many teachers may not be well acquainted with the development of technology. The third problem is the amount of time online classes take from the preparation and planning to the actual performance of the lesson. An economics teacher has declared that a course in the face-to-face environment has taken 62 hours while the same course in the online system has taken 155 hours of his overall time. The last major problem is the style of the teacher teaching because it needs to be changed. Online classes require the teacher to use various tools and materials which can be difficult and make the process problematic (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Ekawati, 2017).

The teachers attempt to serve and teach students through online classes the same way they have done in the physical traditional classrooms. This has brought some issues for teachers:

.\Technology: many teachers, and especially those who are old, have never used the internet and digital devices in their lessons. So, learning the usage and the features of the new technology are taking most of their time and can be a difficult task for them.

. Netiquette: refers to performing good behaviors on the internet. In online classes, teachers face some students who have difficulty using the internet and they might not know how to mute their devices. During



the lessons, teachers need to endure listening to various background sounds, even personal discussions, and the sound of the TV.

- . Parents: they are the main trouble for some teachers because most of the time they attend classes with their children and even try to take notes and help their students. Some parents comment and argue with the teacher while lessons need to be explained and it creates an uncomfortable situation for the teachers.
- . Discipline: keeping teachers and school disciplined is somehow hard during online classes. Students take the opportunity of using smart devices and the internet to explore and watch other stuff while ignoring their classes. They might log in to their classes but play video games and talk with their friends (Fernandes, 2020). Thow to Overcome the Difficulties of Online Learning?

In today's digital world, online learning is an important system that students can get benefit from anywhere and at any time. The problems of this system sometimes can be an obstacle to its success. But collaboration between teachers and students and supporting each other can solve these issues. Also understanding the process and setting a proper and clear course with its materials by the instructor can make way for an effective and easier process (Higley, 2014).

With the emergence of the online learning system, many issues have appeared that are challenging for some students and teachers to solve. These problems are explained below:

- . Issues related to technology: In the technological world, problems happen frequently. During online classes, chances are odd that students and teachers face technical issues related to the internet connection, laptops, audio, or camera. But being calm and trying to solve the issue is the key to success. Students need to inform their instructors about their difficulty in joining the classes so that they might be able to watch the recorded video. The case is the same for teachers because if the issue could be fixed soon, they also need to tell students to make them stay online and doesn't leave the class .
- .YDistraction: is a major issue in students' and even instructors' homes and for that, a lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis presents a solution, she says that the ones that are involved in online learning, need to prioritize their time and set a schedule, then sharing it with the other family members is crucial. It helps them in reducing background noises and distractions in the house. And students also need to arrange a quiet and healthy environment for themselves to study and take their lessons .
- . Motivation: students need to stay motivated to continue with their course. For that issue, experts suggest that students and teachers set a list of goals for the day, and at the end of the day checking them and observing the great works they have done will give them hope and power. Also despite being away from friends and their teachers, they still need to keep in touch to give each other positive energy and motivate each other.
- . Lack of interaction: being away from classmates and group workings to study through a screen is a touch for those who got used to face-to-face learning and social interactions. So students need to stay connected and interact with each other and their teachers. They can use digital features such as video calling and meetings frequently to share ideas and get help from their instructors and friends (Friedman, 2020).
- .° Isolation: being in a classroom with dozens of friends has been such a relief for many students and now being away from them is tough. Solving this mental issue is mostly the duty of the teacher who should show support and kindness toward students and inform them about the challenges they need to overcome and boost their mental health .
- .7 Time management: this can be a problem for both learners and teachers because they have to be online nearly ten hours a day to catch up with updates, new lessons, instructions, and meetings. The best solution is scheduling time properly and they should improve their time management skill with little help and more practice.

Some other minor issues negatively impact online learning. This includes the need of sharing the electronic devices between family members, this needs to be discussed and with a proper schedule, each member will get time to use and conduct the duties. Also, there are students with a disability of hearing who need special care and teaching. The lecturer has to provide them with the necessary tools such as the script of the lessons and the videos. There might be some other issues in various places but both students and teachers need to adapt to the situations and seek for solutions to make the process successful (Plitnichenko, 2020).

#### T, Methodology

The data of the present study is collected through both secondary and primary sources. The secondary data is collected through a review of the literature. The researcher reviews certain articles related to the present title so to back up the information mentioned here. Also, the researcher depends on the results of the questionnaire as data to be analyzed throughout the evaluation process. Moreover, the qualitative method is



used to collect the data. The data were collected through a questionnaire to find out the problems of applying to online classes concerning the English language at the university level. To reach the participants easily Google Form is designed by the researchers and the link of the form is sent to the participants to answer the questions .

### ۳,۲Sample of the Study

The participants of the present study are fifteen lecturers in the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Sulaimani who completed the questionnaire. All the participants were volunteers and all of them are Kurdish and English is a foreign language for them. The lecturers have a great background in teaching in the traditional as well as E-learning processes as their responses are highly valuable to enrich the content of the study. Concerning the lecturers' biographies, their ages are between 30 to 50 years old. They all hold Master's or Ph.D. degrees as they are university lecturers and it is one of the requirements of being a part of the university staff. Each of the lecturers teaches certain lectures at the University of Sulaimani- College of Basic Education — English Department. Their background in teaching helps the researcher to get precise responses for the questionnaire and the data to be analyzed then .

### T, The Instrument of the Study

The research tool used for collecting data for this study is a questionnaire. The researchers prepare Google Forms because the situation is not normal in Kurdistan due to the pandemic situation of Covid-19. There are ten well-formed statements on each form which goes along with the title of the study. Moreover, the format of the options for the statements is different based on the question. There are certain options for the respondent to choose based on the question and his/her point of view. The respondents are allowed to choose the option that matches his/her point of view the most. The options are set in a way that the answers are the most dominant ones concerning the problems of the E-learning process. Based on Ahmad (2012); there are certain reasons behind choosing a questionnaire to collect the data for the present study. It is reliable and valid. Second, it gathers data suitable for and relevant to the research topic. Third, it shows how the ideas related to the study are connected to each other. Fourth, the questionnaire can answer the proposed research questions under investigation. Fifth, it is free from bias and appropriate for the context, diversity of the study site, and culture. Last but not least, it contains clear and definite instructions to use the instrument. However, there are also disadvantages of the questionnaire including the respondents cannot answer the questions in detail because the questionnaire is prepared in multiple-choice and the respondents should stick to those options. Basically, its advantages are much more that's why the researcher uses a questionnaire as a tool to collect the data of the study.

#### ۳, ¿Limitations of the Study

Researchers in the higher education field are under continuous pressure. One of the challenges that the researchers faced when they collected the data for this study is the pandemic situation in Corona as the researcher was not able to have direct contact with the teachers who participated in the present questionnaire. For instance, the researcher emailed all the teachers in her department but only a few of them were able to answer and respond to the questionnaire. Moreover, getting resources was also a bit hard because the libraries were closed and only certain resources are available for the researcher in hand.

### 3.5 Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion

In the present section, the researcher will present the result of the questionnaire as well as each result will be discussed separately to be highly comprehensive for the readers. As it is mentioned previously, the data of the questionnaire is got from fifteen lecturers at the Department of English/ College of Basic Education University of Sulaimani, so the responses are almost fifteen for each question. The participants' genders are %40 male and %60 female. They all hold Bachelor's or Master's degrees and they work at the University of Sulaimani. The result of each question will be presented in the pie chart to be visually easy to understand.

### 3.6 Findings and Discussion

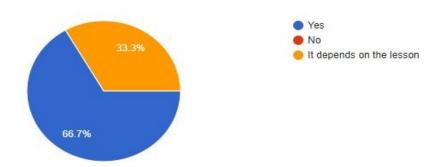
After the process of data collection by the researcher, the following data are adopted that will be presented and analyzed throughout the present section.



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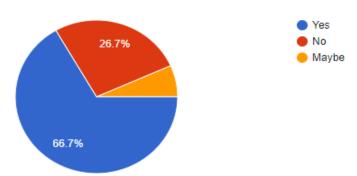
1. Is it challenging to teach through the online system?

15 responses



Based on the result of the first question, the majority of the respondents declare that teaching online is challenging and hard. Their answers are highly regarded because they have a certain background in the 2. Do you have laptops and other necessary tools to teach online classes?

15 responses

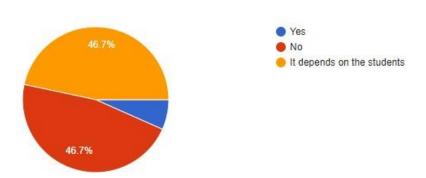


process of E-learning so they answered in this way. Also, a few lecturers, and respondents, declare that the process of teaching online simply depends on the lessons as it can be hard or simply easy for the lecturers as well as the students. So, the average result shows that the process of E-learning is challenging.

The result of the second question concerning having necessary tools for online teaching shows that the majority of the university lecturers have the necessary tools to teach online such as laptops, headsets, network connections, etc. However, only a few teachers do not have certain tools for teaching online. The problem here is their ignorance because, based on the researcher's point of view, having such tools to teach is necessary for the teachers because they teach in the higher education sector. So, this can be a hint about preventing the complaints about online teaching, especially in pandemic situations when having indoor classes are impossible and hard to treat.

3. Do you think online learning can have an important role in enriching student's knowledge?

15 responses



Concerning the effectiveness of online learning, the respondents are divided into two groups. Half of them think that the role of the E-learning process depends on the students and how they pay attention to the classes as well as their cooperation with the teachers. This can simply be done when the students keep in touch with the teachers, pay attention to their duties, and do not miss the online classes that are presented by the lecturers.





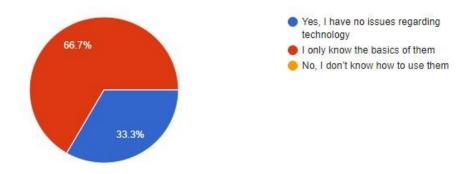






On the other hand, the other half of the lecturers agree upon the role of online learning as it has no role in enhancing the student's background knowledge. This can be related to two factors the students do not pay certain attention to the online classes and the other problems that will be mentioned in the next questions of the section.

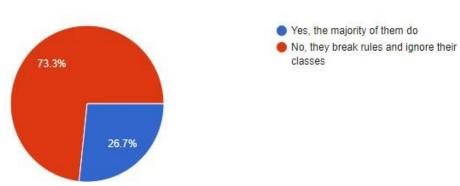
4. Do you have enough information on how to use the platforms for teaching online?
15 responses



In the fourth question, the researcher got the information that the majority of the lecturers only know the basics of using the platforms for teaching online. Only %33.3 of the lecturers have no issues regarding technology and the use of the platforms for teaching. The reason could be interpreted as the lecturers do not pay too much attention to the platforms because their only focus in the process of teaching is teaching indoors rather than depending on the platforms of technology to teach and publish the materials for their students.

Based on the result of the fifth question, the researcher can interpret that the majority of the students break 5. Do your students behave properly and follow rules during the online classes?

15 responses

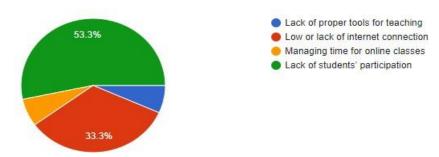


rules and ignore their online classes. This is one of the side effects of using technology for teaching. The students do not pay much attention to attending the online classes compared to the on-campus classes. However, %26.7 of the answers shows that the students behave properly and follow the rules during the online classes that are presented by the lecturers in pandemic situations.

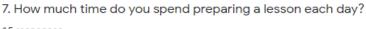


6. In your opinion, what is the most faced problem for teachers?

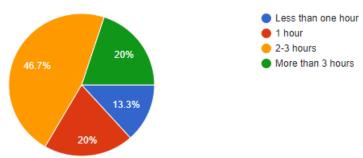
15 responses



Certain problems are faced by university lecturers and teachers in the process of online teaching. Based on the respondents' answers, the majority of the faced problems in the process of E-learning are the lack of students' participation. When the students do not attend the classes, they do not learn and the lecturers will have no students in the class. The second most faced problem is the low or the lack of internet connection in the Kurdistan region. In the majority of the places in Kurdistan, the students cannot have a proper and well internet connection to be connected to the online classes that are presented. The other faced problems with the E-learning process are managing time for online classes as well as the lack of proper tools for teaching. These problems make the students miss classes and ignore the lectures that are presented online.



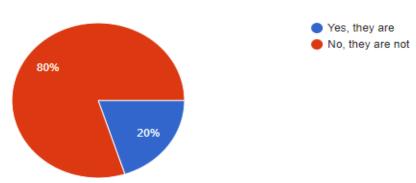




Another issue regarding the E-learning process is the lack of the lecturers' time to prepare lessons each day. Based on the result of the question, the majority of the lecturers spend 2-3 hours preparing a lesson each day. The time is too much as it is related to the background of the lecturers to use the platforms of technology to teach.

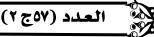
8. Do you find your students satisfied with the online system of teaching?

15 responses



There is no issue without a solution including the issues related to technology to teach online. Based on the respondents' answers, the best possible solution to overcome the challenges of online teaching is to use a couple of platforms for the teaching process by the lecturers. The second most possible solution can be having a technician for the university lecturers to get help from them and

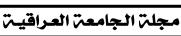










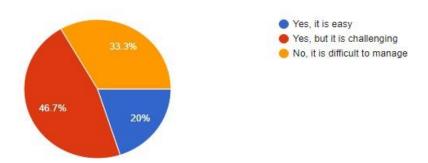




to be well-informed about the classes. The last but not least solution is the delay of the online lessons for another day so does not face any problems.

10. Can you manage your time well while following the online system of teaching?

15 responses



The result of the tenth question is that; it is challenging, but they can manage their time well while %33.3 of the lecturers thinks that; it is difficult to manage time well. Also, %20 of the respondents finds the process of time management for online teaching easy.

To conclude, the overall result of the questionnaire shows that the present E-learning system is not effectively working in the Kurdistan region. Based on the average answer of the participants, the students and the teachers face various problems in the E-learning process including not having access to the internet, lack of student participation, not knowing to use the educational platforms well, etc. The teachers are not able to deliver the lessons effectively because of the problems such as too much time should be dedicated to preparing the lessons, not having a technician to help the teachers out regarding online classes, and not being able to involve the students. As the result, the students are not able to get the teachers' messages well so to get their degrees at college. Finally, concerning the average data of the questionnaire and the online survey, the participants negatively answer

the majority of the questions and they count the E-learning process as a non-useful system for education. The majority of the teachers recommend postponing the classes instead of studying them through an online system.

## Conclusion

The current study is an attempt to explain and discuss the most dominant problems and difficulties that arise during the online teaching process which is a newsworthy topic in today's world. In its simplest definition, teaching can be defined as a form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behavior potential of another person. So, the lecturers have to change the potential of other people. Moreover, another point that the researcher focuses on is the matter of E-learning. It is the use of technology platforms to teach EFL/ESL students when teaching indoors is not possible for any reason. There are many problems and issues regarding teaching English through an online system as the most obvious ones are mentioned and explained in the present study, which include; technology, netiquette, parents, and discipline. These problems and issues have an impact on the University EFL student's mental ability concerning teaching/learning through the online system. According to the findings, the majority of the students are not satisfied with the online system that is currently being used for instruction. Moreover, the findings of the study, the majority of the university lecturers are also dissatisfied with the online system of teaching and consider it problematic because the students do not attend the classes, lecturers must spend more than three hours preparing a lesson, the low or lack of internet connection, and there is not enough technician and assistant to help the lecturers in teaching online. I highly recommend the ministry of higher education and scientific research develop certain courses and webinars for the university lecturers to improve their background knowledge concerning the process of E-learning to make the best possible outcome for both the lecturers and the students.

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