

## **Exploring Pedagogical Effectiveness in Teacher Education: Insights and Challenges from Kurdish EFL University Lecturers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the perceptions, practices, and challenges of Kurdish EFL university lecturers in implementing effective pedagogy within teacher education. Forty lecturers from Iraqi Kurdistan completed surveys and semi-structured interviews. While participants viewed problem-based and collaborative learning as most effective, lecture-based instruction predominated, indicating a gap between beliefs and practice. Challenges included limited resources, insufficient training, political interference, and inadequate integration of technology. Proposed solutions emphasized learner-centered approaches, enhanced teacher training, improved infrastructure, and greater use of educational technologies, including AI tools. Findings highlight the need to align pedagogical beliefs with practice, strengthen pedagogical content knowledge, and integrate technology to improve teacher education quality. Implications extend to policymakers, teacher educators, and institutions in similar EFL contexts.*

**Keywords:** Effective teaching methods, Kurdish EFL lecturers, pedagogy, teacher education, technology and L2 teaching

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the critical components of an effective and successful educational system and the learning process is teacher education and pedagogy. However, it has been reported that teacher education is in trouble (Foster & Shah, 2020; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the relationship between teacher education and pedagogy, as they are intertwined. Loughran and Hamilton (2018) stated that one of the main goals of teacher education is to enhance and improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, Korthagen and Kessels (1999) used the term 'teacher training' as it referred to teacher education in the 1980s. Teacher education encompasses the strategies and protocols established to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, mindsets, actions, and competencies to carry out their responsibilities proficiently within educational institutions and the learning environment (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; Loughran, 2006). For Loughran (2006), three main components are crucial for understanding: *development*, *pedagogy*, and *teacher education* (p.1); in this context, pedagogy refers to all these teaching procedures, practices, and instructions utilized during the teaching process. Hence, pedagogy extends beyond imparting information through teaching alone, as it can be mistakenly perceived. Instead, it emphasizes the interplay between teaching and learning and how their symbiotic relationship fosters the development of knowledge and comprehension through purposeful and engaging experiences (Loughran, 2006). On the other hand, as far as teacher education is concerned, it was previously referred to as preservice teacher preparation (Bullough et al., 2004; Bullough & Gitlin, 2013; Foster & Shah, 2020); that is, student teachers have attempted to develop their teaching and learning skills and knowledge and how to apply it practically. Therefore, teacher education centers around two crucial aspects: acquiring knowledge about the act of teaching and imparting knowledge about teaching itself. Both dimensions require intricate skills, expertise, capabilities, and competencies (Koster et al., 2005). The last concept that needs to be explained is *development*. Loughran (2006), interestingly, stated that with this term, developing, there is no beginning or end. The whole purpose is to improve and move forward, as he described, to a more advanced state. Therefore, it can be inferred that effective teaching methodologies should be provided in every teaching context. First, a better understanding of teacher education and the utilized pedagogical approaches is crucial. Furthermore, on the basis of published previous studies, research has been conducted for decades, as has teaching and learning. However, this disconnect exists between theory and practice, findings and applications, beliefs and implementations, and words and actions, irrespective of the country or context. However, it is

more prevalent in third-world countries or developing countries. Therefore, the gap between pedagogy and teacher education has not even been addressed through academic research. In Iraqi Kurdistan, where the English language has been offered for more than four decades, to the researcher's knowledge, no study has investigated university lecturers' perspectives on pedagogy and education and the obstacles that teachers face during the teaching process. Therefore, the current study is the first attempt to address this iceberg and unravel issues in the EFL context. To fill this knowledge gap, the following research questions are addressed:

1. To what extent do Kurdish EFL university lecturers have adequate knowledge of the effectiveness of pedagogy in teacher education?
2. Do Kurdish EFL university lecturers implement what they believe in their classrooms?
3. What obstacles and challenges do Kurdish EFL university lecturers face when implementing practical pedagogical approaches?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study attempts to explain the topic under research in light of two theories: the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) model, which emphasizes integrating subject knowledge with pedagogical knowledge to increase effective teaching (Shulman & Richert, 1987). According to Shulman (1986), PCK is a distinct form of knowledge that is specific to teachers. It involves how teachers connect their pedagogical knowledge (i.e., what they know about teaching) with their subject matter knowledge (i.e., what they know about the content they teach). PCK essentially involves the combination and blending of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and subject matter (Backman & Barker, 2020). Another theory that sheds light on this topic is the constructivist theory of learning. This theory highlights the importance of learner-centered approaches, active engagement, and the construction of knowledge by students (Bremner et al., 2023; Dewey, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). The fundamental concepts of effective pedagogy in teacher education are differentiated instructions, formative assessment, collaborative learning, and technology integration (Backman & Barker, 2020; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Tomlinson, 2017). According to the frameworks used, personalized instructions, continuous feedback, social interaction, and effective technology use are necessary to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

## **Pedagogy and Teacher Education**

It is essential to ask whether pedagogy plays a role in developing teacher education. To educate teachers, there are several particular pedagogical principles (Dengerink & Lunenberg, 2020). Since the 1980s, and particularly after 1990, there has been a notable shift in the focus of teacher education programs toward fostering reflection skills among teachers (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Korthagen, 2014; Schon, 1991). The core idea behind this approach is to empower teachers to learn from their specific teaching experiences, allowing them to take charge of their professional growth with a reasonable level of autonomy. Thus, it can be inferred that teachers can educate themselves through practice and reflection. Nevertheless, the question is as follows: can all teachers educate themselves? Or what other factors impede or enhance teacher education? Furthermore, Dengerink and Lunenberg (2020) believe that reflection can effectively make knowledge explicit for teachers and even within institutions. Several researchers have supported the idea that reflection can lead to teacher education (Ingvarsdóttir, 2014; Loughran, 2006).

One way of educating teachers is to learn about the problematic nature of teaching (Loughran, 2007). Therefore, learning about teaching is essential because it shapes the pedagogy of teacher education. In this context, Munby and Russell (1994) stated that teachers can learn from their personal experiences of practice, known as the ‘authority of experience.’ Similarly, there is a greater chance of teacher development when there is a connection between practice and theory. Kosnik (2007) stated that not understanding the theory might harm learners because having some teaching resources and good classroom management is insufficient for a successful learning experience and process. In this context, Bullough et al. (2001) stated that “Teaching is a relationship, a way of being with and relating to others, and not merely an expression of having mastered a set of content-related delivery skills (p.3). Therefore, it is crucial to think like a teacher becomes a teacher (Crowe & Berry, 2007). Mason (2002) suggested that thinking as a teacher is done through “being awake to, and aware of, their practice, not just immersed in it” (p.15). For this purpose, Crowe and Berry (2007, p. 33) developed five principles for teachers to think like a teacher:

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| <i>Principle One</i> | Thinking like a teacher involves learning to see teaching from the viewpoint of the learner. Experiencing the role of the learner is an important means of developing an understanding of the learner’s viewpoint. |
| <i>Principle Two</i> | Prospective teachers need opportunities to see into the thinking like a teacher of experienced others  |

<i>Principle Three</i>	Prospective teachers need opportunities to try out thinking like a teacher to develop their thinking as a teacher
<i>Principle Four</i>	Prospective teachers need scaffolding (guidelines, questions, structures) to support them as they begin thinking like teachers.
<i>Principle Five</i>	Developing responsive relationships is at the heart of learning to think like a teacher and at the heart of supporting our students (relational support)

Therefore, a logical interpretation of the principles is that the relationship between pedagogy and teacher education is inseparable. Hence, it is crucial to understand teachers' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of pedagogy and teacher education. As Lovat et al. (2011) stated, learning can be accomplished solely through mastery instruction and testing, without considering the environment in which learning takes place, including the learner's emotions, social context, and self-confidence, which is viewed as a hindrance rather than a help in the learning process. Therefore, it is vital to learn to think as a teacher and consider all the other perspectives because the sole purpose of pedagogy is not only teaching but also including learners and teachers as a whole person, not as "separably cognitive" (p.60). Similarly, Osterman (2010) there is evidence that delivering quality content alongside effective pedagogy and building solid relationships with their students is crucial for teachers, and these effectively affect the learning ambiance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship between teacher education and pedagogical approaches is intertwined and mutually influential.

### **Learning about Teaching**

One of the first ways to achieve effective teaching is to learn about teaching, also known as pedagogy. It is crucial to comprehend how students perceive learning about teaching, as this knowledge informs the development of effective methods for teacher education (Kessler, 2007). Research has distinguished between experienced and expert teachers (Berliner, 2001). He further stated that while novices are often equated with inexperience in a particular field, gaining experience does not necessarily guarantee expertise. Furthermore, Berliner (2001) the proposed several prototypical features of expertise, including extensive pedagogical content knowledge, which encompasses deep representations of subject matter knowledge, and superior problem-solving strategies. Additionally, the experts were expected to demonstrate enhanced abilities in adapting and modifying goals for diverse learners, as well as improvisation. They were anticipated to excel in decision-making

processes, set more challenging objectives, foster a better classroom climate, and exhibit a heightened perception of classroom events and adeptness in student reading cues. Moreover, expertise was predicted to manifest in greater sensitivity to context, improved monitoring of learning, and provision of feedback to students. Experts were also expected to frequently test hypotheses, demonstrate greater respect for students, and display a deeper passion for teaching. In that context, Loughran (2006, p. 102) states:

It is not sufficient for students to uncritically accept (or reject) the teaching approaches used in their teacher preparation programs. They need to be sensitive to how the teaching they experience is conducted and to be constantly cognizant of the link between the teaching they experience and how it influences their learning.

Therefore, it can be inferred that teaching involves more than just following and implementing a teaching approach. It is crucial to, as Kessler (2007, p. 8) stated, “Be a student of teaching.” This can be interpreted as developing oneself as a key to delivering effective teaching practices. This is an essential aspect of teacher education and pedagogy. Implementing this element of teacher education pedagogy increases the likelihood of promoting active and intentional cultivation of personal and professional growth (Kessler, 2007). Therefore, implementing a pedagogy of teacher education extends beyond merely presenting the curriculum associated with teacher education. Engaging in teaching alongside students necessitates profound and thoroughly conceptualized insights into pedagogy, which are cultivated, articulated, critiqued, and refined through practical experience itself. Hence, understanding teacher education and their perspectives can offer effective pedagogical approaches and learning processes. Therefore, this study is necessary, as it is one of the first to explore this topic via a mixed research approach.

### **Significance of the study**

The current study's outcomes and findings have both theoretical and pedagogical significance and implications. The theoretical significance lies in its investigation of effective pedagogy in teacher education programs and its influence on professional development and student learning outcomes. By exploring the perspectives of Kurdish EFL university lecturers, this study aims to provide insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding pedagogical practices in teacher education.

This study offers pedagogical significance by examining pedagogical approaches, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and challenges that teachers face in educational programs, especially when teaching an L2. The findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of pedagogy in teacher education, especially within the context of Kurdish EFL university lecturers in Iraqi Kurdistan. A unique contribution of this study is the transfer of pedagogical implications to other similar contexts. Additionally, the study contributes to the continuous discourse on pedagogical practices and offers recommendations for enhancing teacher education programs. These findings can help policymakers, teacher educators, and educational stakeholders enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A mixed-method approach was used in this study. This approach is widely used to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to understand research problems comprehensively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach enabled the researcher to collect data from survey questionnaires and semistructured interviews. Therefore, implementing this approach expands our understanding of Kurdish EFL university lecturers' perceptions, challenges, and strategies regarding effective pedagogy (Fetters et al., 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

### **Participants**

Forty Kurdish EFL university lecturers were recruited as participants from Iraqi Kurdistan for this study. At the time of this study, they were all actively engaged in teacher education programs. Most (75%) were teacher educators and faculty members, and 25% were in-service teachers.

Regarding teaching experience, a significant portion of the participants (65.6%) had over ten years of teaching experience. Moreover, 9.4% reported having 1--5 years of teaching experience, and 25% indicated that they had 5--10 years of experience in the field. This variety of profiles underscores the diverse backgrounds and extensive expertise of the participants involved in the study. The participants were selected randomly; when the questionnaire was shared on an online platform (WhatsApp), in one section, they were asked if they wanted to be interviewed after the survey. The researcher then contacted and interviewed those who were willing.

## **Data collection**

As the data were quantitative and qualitative, they had to be collected in two phases: the quantitative data were collected through the survey questionnaire, and then the researcher contacted those who were interviewed to set up the interviews. Ethical approval was obtained before the data were collected, and all participants provided informed consent. Data collection took place over two months to ensure sufficient participant engagement and response time.

### *Survey Questionnaire*

The quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire to assess participants' perceptions of effective pedagogy, familiarity with teaching methods, and challenges in implementing pedagogical strategies. The survey was distributed electronically to all participants. This approach to data collection provided an equal chance of participation.

The survey questionnaire used in this study was designed to gather information about the participants' perceptions of effective pedagogy in teacher education. It consists of closed-ended and Likert-scale items, allowing the participants to indicate their agreement or disagreement with specific statements. The questionnaire covered various aspects related to pedagogical approaches, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and challenges encountered in teacher education. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of a review of the literature on effective pedagogy in teacher education and was tailored to the context of Kurdish EFL university lecturers in Iraqi Kurdistan. It underwent a pilot testing phase to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of the items. The final version of the questionnaire was then administered to the participants to gather their perspectives and insights into pedagogical practices in teacher education.

### *Semistructured interviews*

The qualitative data were collected through semistructured interviews with 20 participants selected to ensure diversity in teaching experience, institutional roles, and pedagogical practices (Etikan et al., 2015). Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was conducted via video calls. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to ensure confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted after the survey questionnaire. The participants were asked about potential strategies for standardization

and monitoring within teacher education and suggestions for enhancing and advancing pedagogical effectiveness. Furthermore, the participants were asked to articulate their needs for addressing the issues related to L2 teaching. These questions aimed to identify specific requirements or resources that lecturers considered essential for overcoming challenges and enhancing language teaching practices within their educational contexts. These discussions aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions, providing valuable insights for the study.

## **Data analysis**

The data were analyzed via a combination of descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The quantitative data collected from the survey, including the mean values and standard deviations, were analyzed descriptively. These statistical measures provided insights into overall trends and the dispersion of participants' perceptions regarding pedagogical practices and their effectiveness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Field, 2024).

The qualitative data from the semistructured interviews were analyzed via thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reading and rereading the interview transcripts to identify potential patterns. Initial codes were subsequently generated inductively to capture meaningful features of the data relevant to the research questions. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected participants' insights into effective pedagogy, challenges encountered, and proposed strategies for improvement. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence, alignment with the research questions, and dataset representation. Finally, the themes were defined and named, and the findings were presented with illustrative quotations from participants to support the analysis and enhance the credibility of the interpretations.

To ensure reliability, two independent coders analyzed the interview data. Inter-coder agreement was calculated via Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa = 0.85$ ), which indicates substantial agreement according to Landis and Koch's (1977) benchmarks. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached, strengthening the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings.

## **RESULTS**

### **Survey Results**

The following sections present the results from the survey questionnaire, which asked participants questions regarding pedagogical implications, technology, and teacher education.

One of the aims of the current study was to investigate the degree of familiarity with pedagogical approaches among Kurdish EFL teachers; this question was purposefully asked to investigate the next question, which was about the pedagogical approaches that the participants had used or encountered during the teaching process. The analysis in Table 1 shows that most respondents reported being moderately familiar (32.5%) and quite familiar (30.0%) with various pedagogical approaches. A smaller proportion indicated being somewhat familiar (15.0%), whereas 22.5% reported being very familiar. Overall, these findings suggest varying degrees of familiarity among the participants with pedagogical approaches in teacher education. The statistical values revealed that the mean familiarity score was approximately 3.05, indicating a moderate level of familiarity overall. Furthermore, the standard deviation is approximately 0.89, suggesting a relatively consistent spread of familiarity scores among the participants. Based on these results, participants should be more familiar with various pedagogical approaches, as this is a critical component of professional and pedagogical development.

**Table 1 How familiar are you with different pedagogical approaches in teacher education?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat familiar	6	15.0	15.0
Moderately familiar	13	32.5	47.5
Quite familiar	12	30.0	77.5
Very familiar	9	22.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	

Furthermore, the participants were asked to express their opinions regarding the most effective pedagogical approaches for preparing teachers for the classroom. As presented in Table 2, the data reveal that lecture-based instruction was perceived as the most effective approach by a significant portion of the respondents, with 42.5% indicating its efficacy. Problem-based learning and collaborative learning were also considered effective by 17.5% of the participants. Inquiry-based learning and online or blended learning received the lowest endorsement, with (7.5%) of the

respondents selecting each as the most effective. Field experiences/practicums were identified by (5.0%) of the participants, whereas reflective practices garnered the least support, with only (2.5%) of the respondents considering them the most effective approach. The statistical analysis indicates that lecture-based instruction is the most effective approach, followed by problem-based and collaborative learning. The mean effectiveness score is approximately 3.68, with a standard deviation of 1.86, suggesting considerable variability in opinions among the participants regarding the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches. These results indicate that teachers in that EFL context still follow a traditional teaching approach. Therefore, it is necessary to provide more pedagogical training on the use of different teaching approaches to ensure more effective teaching approaches and better learning outcomes.

Another crucial aspect of the questionnaire was the approach(s) that the teachers used during their teaching experience. The data in Table 2 indicate a predominant reliance on lecture-based instruction, constituting 62.5% of the responses. Following this, problem-based learning represents a notably smaller proportion at (7.5%), with inquiry-based learning slightly less at (5.0%). Collaborative learning was reported by (10.0%) of the respondents, whereas field experiences/practicums and reflective practices each accounted for (2.5%) of the experiences. The data also show the utilization of online or blended learning approaches by (10.0%) of the respondents.

**Table 2 Which pedagogical approaches have you encountered or experienced during your teacher education?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lecture-based instruction	25	62.5	62.5
Problem-based learning	3	7.5	70.0
Inquiry-based learning	2	5.0	75.0
Collaborative learning	4	10.0	85.0
Field experiences/practicum	1	2.5	87.5
Online or blended learning	4	10.0	97.5
Reflective practices	1	2.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	

Notably, these data suggest a preference for traditional lecture-based instruction, with other approaches being less frequently encountered or experienced during teacher education. This result suggests that teachers in that context still adhere to a more traditional teaching methodology. In

addition, this study explored teachers' opinions regarding the most effective pedagogical approaches for preparing teachers for the classroom. As presented in Table 3, the data reveal varying preferences among participants, with lecture-based instruction being the most selected approach, chosen by 24 out of 40 participants (60%). Problem-based and collaborative learning were also popular choices and were selected by 18 participants each (45%). Field experiences/practicums and reflective practices were selected by 12 (30%) and 11 (27.5%) participants, respectively. Inquiry-based learning and online learning or blended learning received the lowest endorsement, with 10 participants (25%) and 7 participants (17.5%) selecting each. Statistical analysis indicates that lecture-based instruction is preferred, followed by problem-based and collaborative learning. The mean number of selections per participant is approximately 1.95, with a standard deviation of 0.85, suggesting some variability in participant preferences regarding the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches.

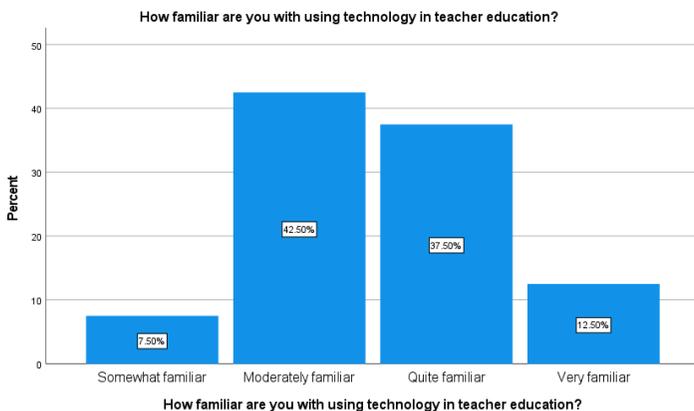
After exploring which teaching approaches the participants implemented in their classes, it was essential to explore their beliefs regarding the most effective approaches. Table 3 presents data on the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches in preparing teachers for the classroom. Among the respondents, problem-based learning and collaborative learning emerged as the most highly regarded methods, each cited by 27.5% of the participants. Lecture-based instruction was mentioned by 12.5% of the respondents. Inquiry-based learning and reflective practices are considered adequate by (7.5%) of the participants each. Field experiences/practicums received recognition from 10.0% of the respondents.

A smaller proportion of participants (2.5%) viewed online or blended learning as effective. Additionally, 5.0% of the respondents believed that a mixed or integrated approach was most effective. This distribution underscores a diversity of perspectives on effective pedagogical strategies, with problem-based and collaborative learning standing out as particularly valued methods among those surveyed. Surprisingly, the results in Table 2 and Table 3 indicate that teachers do not use what they believe is the most effective teaching approach. For example, in Table 2, most have used lecture-based instruction. In contrast, with respect to their belief regarding the most effective teaching approaches, the results showed that problem-based learning and collaborative learning emerged as the most highly regarded methods.

**Table 3 In your opinion, which pedagogical approaches are most effective in preparing teachers for the classroom?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lecture-based instruction	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
Problem-based learning	11	27.5	27.5	40.0
Inquiry-based learning	3	7.5	7.5	47.5
Collaborative learning	11	27.5	27.5	75.0
Field experiences/practicum	4	10.0	10.0	85.0
Online or blended learning	1	2.5	2.5	87.5
Reflective practices	3	7.5	7.5	95.0
Mixed/integrated	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

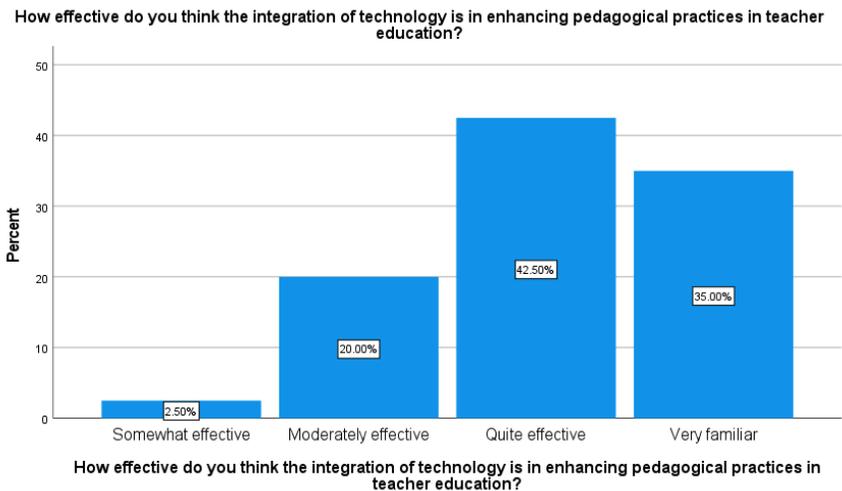
According to the reviewed studies, technology is vital in L2 education to enhance effectiveness and engagement. Therefore, the participants in this study were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with using technology. As shown in Figure 1, 7.50% of the participants reported being somewhat familiar with using technology in teacher education, whereas 42.50% indicated moderate familiarity.



**Figure 1 Distribution of Participants' Familiarity with Technology in Teacher Education**

Additionally, 37.50% stated that they were familiar with technology in this context, and 12.50% claimed to be very familiar. It can be inferred that the participants were not informed about recent technological advancements and global changes in the educational system, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, pondering and discussing these results in more detail is essential

In addition to exploring the level of familiarity with technology among the participants, they were required to state their opinions on how much technology can enhance pedagogical practice in teacher education. As shown in Figure 2, interestingly, most of them (42.50% = quite effective and 35% very effective), whereas 20% stated that technology is moderately effective in pedagogical practice. However, (2.50%) stated that technology is somewhat effective. These results suggest that although participants believe that technology effectively enhances pedagogical practice, a notable discrepancy exists between their perceptions of effectiveness and their familiarity with technology integration into their pedagogical practices. This finding highlights the importance of providing adequate training and support to educators to increase their proficiency in using technology for teaching and learning purposes.



**Figure 2 Participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of technology in teacher education**

### Interview Results

Following the survey, 20 participants were interviewed and asked follow-up questions on various aspects of teacher education. These questions explored the challenges of implementing effective pedagogy,

the level of support and opportunities for continuous improvement provided by their institutions, strategies for standardization and monitoring within teacher education programs, and the participants' requests for additional resources and time. Each response to these questions was analyzed thematically to extract critical insights and patterns.

### ***Challenges in Implementing Effective Pedagogy in Teacher Education***

The participants reported the complexities of classroom management, with one remark being particularly notable: "Classroom management and the perception of students as clients rather than learners." Another echoed concerns about motivation, stating, "Lack of student motivation." Moreover, the inadequacy of classroom facilities was vividly described, with a participant lamenting, "Lack of space and modern classroom facilities."

With respect to student-related challenges, the participants highlighted the influence of diverse backgrounds on the classroom atmosphere. One participant expressed, "Students' background and the classroom atmosphere." Additionally, the strain of large class sizes was articulated, with a participant noting, "A large number of students in a class." Moreover, concerns were raised about students' deficiency in critical thinking skills, as one participant emphasized, "Lack of critical thinking and problem-solving awareness." Furthermore, technological limitations were underscored, with participants flagging issues such as inadequate tools and limited access. One participant articulated, "Inadequate technological tools and facilities," whereas another lamented, "Limited access to effective use of technology." On the other hand, external factors were deemed significant hurdles, as participants highlighted the disruptive influence of political instability and unplanned regulations. "Political situation and instability affecting teaching practices," voiced one participant. Another added, "Unplanned rules and regulations impacting instructional planning." Financial constraints compounded these challenges, with one participant stating, "Lack of financial support and weak digitalization process." Previous studies also reported this (Kaminskienè et al., 2022); technology can challenge teachers and teacher education.

As also found in the survey questionnaire, training deficiencies and communication gaps were prominent concerns. The participants expressed frustration over the scarcity of training courses, with one noting "Limited availability of training courses." Ineffective communication among stakeholders was also bemoaned, as one participant remarked, "Insufficient communication among stakeholders." In addition, administrative shortcomings were vividly described, with participants

flagging issues such as limited infrastructure and missed opportunities for international exposure. "Limited contact service and poor infrastructure," noted one participant. Another highlighted issue is the "lack of opportunities for travel abroad."

### ***Proposed strategies and initiatives to address these issues.***

Although the participants reported several challenges and issues, they also proposed several strategies to solve these problems. For example, one stated, "Implementing strict rules on attendance and results in creating a focused atmosphere," another emphasized the importance of policy and the classroom environment. Another advocated for "preparing qualified trainers and raising teachers' awareness about the importance of pedagogical knowledge," underlining the significance of teacher training and awareness. The participants suggested learner-centered strategies and critical thinking skills in student engagement and approaches. For example, "Implementing learner-centered approaches and focusing on 21st-century language skills" was suggested by one participant. Another emphasis was "Promoting group work, peer review, and reflection (critical thinking skills)."

Infrastructure improvements were also emphasized as an essential solution, with participants calling for "improving teaching facilities and ensuring advanced training courses." Government support and collaboration were also emphasized, with participants advocating for "long-term government support for university development, including infrastructure and overseas training opportunities."

### ***Support and Continuous Improvement***

The participants underscored the importance of institutional support and encouragement amidst the challenges encountered in the classroom. One participant remarked, "Emphasis on the need for departmental support and encouragement despite classroom challenges." Moreover, there was a call for ongoing progress and updates in pedagogy, emphasizing the necessity of robust planning and practical training. Another participant articulated, "Call for continuous progress and updates in pedagogy, highlighting the importance of robust planning and effective training." The significance of student-centered teaching and the pivotal role of motivation in achieving success were also highlighted. One participant emphasized, "Focus on student-centered teaching and the key role of motivation for success." Additionally, the participants recognized the effectiveness of technology in enhancing pedagogy and advocated for its integration into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. One participant expressed, "Recognition of the effectiveness of technology in enhancing pedagogy, encouraging its integration in EFL classes."

Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on developing pedagogy in higher education to align with learner and marketplace needs, including the imperative of familiarizing teachers with new technology and providing educational tools. One participant stated, "Emphasis on developing pedagogy in higher education to meet learner and marketplace needs, including familiarizing teachers with new technology and providing educational tools."

### ***Standardization and Monitoring***

The participants proposed measures to standardize, internationalize, digitize, verify, and regularly practice pedagogy in teacher education. One participant stated, "Suggestion to standardize, internationalize, digitize, verify, and practice pedagogy in teacher education regularly." Moreover, there was a strong emphasis on monitoring and controlling to ensure high-quality performance. One participant emphasized, "It is important to monitor and control to ensure high-quality performance."

### ***Request for Resources and Time***

The participants articulated the need to provide necessary facilities and resources as integral components of effective pedagogy. One participant stated, "There is a great demand for providing necessary facilities and resources as an inherent part of effective pedagogy." Additionally, there was an awareness of the time and effort required to suggest and implement changes in the curriculum. One participant acknowledged "Awareness of the need for time and effort to suggest and implement changes in the curriculum."

## **DISCUSSION**

The current study investigated the effects of pedagogy on teacher education. The study was conducted in an EFL context among Kurdish EFL university lecturers. After data collection and analysis, a very detailed analysis has been provided in the results section of this study. Therefore, this section emphasizes the main points that need to be discussed through the theoretical framework and previous literature. According to the results, Kurdish EFL teachers have a good level of understanding as teachers; that is, one of the necessary components of effective pedagogy and teacher education is learning to be a teacher (Bullough & Gitlin, 2013; Bullough et al., 2001; Kosnik, 2007). In the introduction section, I asked two crucial questions: Can all teachers educate themselves? Or what other factors impede or enhance teacher education? The answers might not be entirely

provided through the data results, but the majority of the participants (62.5%) still use lecture-based instruction. In contrast, one of the ways for pedagogy to be effective in building a solid and positive relationship with learners and directing the classroom orientation from a teacher-centered classroom to a learner-centered classroom, as only (10.0%), stated that they use a collaborative learning approach (Dewey, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Surprisingly, the participants were asked to give their opinions on the pedagogical approaches that are the most effective in preparing teachers for the classroom. The majority of them (27.5%) stated that “problem-based learning and collaborative learning.” This tells us that the participants have not applied what they believe in their classrooms, as 62.5% of them still use lecture-based instruction. Therefore, disconnection between theory and practice does exist among Kurdish EFL teachers, yet having a solid connection between the two leads to compelling pedagogical implications and teacher education (Glover & Stewart, 2024; Kosnik, 2007; Koster et al., 2005; Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021; Matsumoto-Royo & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021; Mutton, 2020). Therefore, it can be inferred that the participants have general knowledge of educating themselves and implementing more effective pedagogical approaches. However, they are still in the realm of teaching with some good resources and are unaware that following this belief might be harmful to learners rather than teaching them (Kosnik, 2007). In addition, these results clearly show that to be more effective and use more effective teaching approaches, teachers need to have adequate pedagogical content knowledge, as the framework has proposed. As mentioned, this model emphasizes integrating subject matter and pedagogical knowledge to promote effective teaching (Backman & Barker, 2020; Popielarz, 2024; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020; Shulman & Richert, 1987). This can be achieved through integrated teaching approaches, which were used the least among the teacher participants. Therefore, these teachers need pedagogical training on various teaching methods; previous studies have also confirmed this finding (Calderón et al., 2021; Eid & Al-Senaidi, 2025; Florian & Camedda, 2020), as effective teachers need to use various and mixed methods of teaching.

To answer the final research question, the participants provided the obstacles and challenges they faced while implementing pedagogical approaches. The main findings can be discussed based on internal and external factors such as a lack of student motivation, a lack of teaching aids and advanced teaching facilities, political factors, limited availability of training courses, and insufficient communication among stakeholders.

The strategies the participants proposed to overcome these challenges are worth discussing. The participant teachers stated that several vital areas need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of

pedagogy in Kurdish EFL university classrooms. First, policies and the classroom environment should focus on creating a disciplined atmosphere through strict attendance and performance rules while ensuring the availability of necessary facilities. Measures should be taken to address issues related to nepotism (i.e., political interference). Second, teacher training and awareness play crucial roles, including preparing qualified trainers and raising teachers' awareness of the importance of pedagogical knowledge. Involving teachers in professional development programs and encouraging collaboration with renowned educational institutions can further enhance their skills. Third, student engagement and approaches should prioritize learner-centered methodologies and the development of 21st-century language skills (Almazroa & Alotaibi, 2023; Baek et al., 2024). Promoting group work, peer review, and critical thinking skills, and incorporating task-based strategies can be effective. Finally, improving infrastructure and resources, such as teaching facilities, advanced training courses, enhanced internet services, and easy access to professionals, can significantly improve pedagogy. Additionally, long-term government support for university development, including infrastructure and opportunities for overseas training, is crucial. Establishing specific approaches to address crises in the educational environment and implementing strict monitoring and control mechanisms are also essential for success. In this regard, one of the participants stated that “*Despite all the shortcomings and difficulties we face in our classrooms, the department support and encouragement is necessary in this case as well,*” and another stated that “*Teachers need continuous progress and update in their pedagogy. Therefore, more robust planning can be implemented to make training more effective and efficient*”.

Finally, regarding technology and its classroom implementation, one participant stated, “*The pedagogy used in higher education should be developed to meet the needs of learners and the marketplace. Teachers should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with new technology in teaching and learning. New educational tools should be made available for both teachers and students*”, and another reposted that “*The process of pedagogy in teacher education needs to be standardized, internationalized, digitalized, verified, and practiced every five years, even for those who are in-service teachers.*” Therefore, it can be concluded that an effective method for improving pedagogy and teacher education is thorough technology utilization, especially with the current situation around the world and with the outbreak of COVID-19 (Zakrzewski & Newton, 2022). However, this study revealed that Kurdish EFL teachers were unfamiliar with incorporating emerging AI tools, such as ChatGPT, into their lesson plans. Nonetheless, previous studies have revealed the positive potential of using AI tools to improve learners’ L2

skills, especially writing (Al-khresheh, 2024; Dehghani & Mashhadi, 2024; Mohebbi & Mahmood, 2025). However, teachers need to be more cautious of overreliance on these tools (Al-khresheh, 2024). Furthermore, it is practical to provide training courses for language teachers, especially in the EFL context, because integrating technological tools, such as AI, can substantially affect pedagogical implications, curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the effects of pedagogy on teacher education among Kurdish EFL university lecturers. The findings indicate that while the participants understood effective teaching practices, there was a disconnect between theory and practice. Most teachers still rely on lecture-based instruction despite acknowledging the benefits of student-centered approaches. (Bremner et al., 2023). The study identified various obstacles and challenges teachers face, including student motivation, limited resources, political interference, and inadequate training opportunities. Several strategies have been proposed to address these issues, such as creating a disciplined classroom environment, improving teacher training and awareness, prioritizing learner-centered methodologies, and enhancing infrastructure and resources. Furthermore, technology has been recognized as a valuable tool for improving pedagogy, particularly considering the global COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, this research highlights the need for comprehensive efforts to bridge the gap between theory and practice, enhance teacher training, and leverage technology to enhance pedagogy and teacher education.

This study has several limitations. For example, the number of participants was small, which has not affected the generalizability of the results to other EFL contexts worldwide. Second, the data were collected through an online survey questionnaire, which could have been administered through a more effective methodology, such as an interview or classroom observation. This limitation invites future researchers to consider conducting more practical studies to investigate the unanswered questions in this study, such as the extent to which teachers implement theories and practices in their actual classrooms.

The findings of this study have several theoretical and pedagogical implications. The theoretical implications suggest that there is a need for a stronger connection between theory and practice in teacher education. Despite having a good level of understanding as teachers, there is a significant gap between what Kurdish EFL teachers believe in effective pedagogical approaches and what they implement in their classrooms. This highlights the importance of bridging this disconnection and ensuring

that teachers know the potential harm of not aligning their beliefs with their teaching practices.

This study highlights the obstacles and challenges that Kurdish EFL teachers face in implementing effective pedagogy. These challenges include a lack of student motivation, limited resources, political interference, limited training opportunities, and insufficient communication among stakeholders. Strategies such as creating a disciplined classroom environment, improving teacher training and awareness, prioritizing learner-centered methodologies, and enhancing infrastructure and resources are recommended to address these challenges. Future research should consider larger sample sizes and employ more comprehensive methodologies, such as interviews and classroom observations, to further explore the relationship between theory and practice in different EFL contexts.

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