

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Libyan Schools: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract: *Teaching English as a foreign language, particularly in public schools is not an easy task. Various hurdles pose serious challenges to EFL teachers while imparting an effective teaching process. In Libya, many EFL teachers face various challenges and difficulties while teaching English as a foreign language. In order to explore and understand these challenges, the present study seeks to investigate the major problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers. Questionnaires, observation and informal discussions with the teachers were used as the basic resources for data collection. Findings revealed that most Libyan EFL teachers encounter different problems including the lack of teacher-training and development of profession skills, lack of co-ordination among the teachers-school authorities and quality inspection authorities, shortage in the basic educational infrastructure, teaching and learning aids and materials, in addition to the lack of motivation among most of the students. The findings also show that most of the schools do not have ideal teaching and learning environment as undisciplined student behaviour was also reported as a common challenge that impacts the teaching.*

Key Words: *School Teachers, EFL, Challenges, Libya, English Education*

Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language, particularly in public schools, implies different issues and challenges for many teachers. The situation is more critical and delicate in the countries where English is taught as a foreign language. For instance, many Libyan EFL teachers face various challenges and difficulties while teaching English as a foreign language. In this respect, the present study aims to explore the most common problems, difficulties and challenges faced by the Libyan EFL teachers while teaching with an objective to make some pedagogical suggestions which could be helpful to resolve these problems.

Thus, the main objectives of the study are two folds: First, it explores major problems faced by the Libyan EFL teachers so that the issue of the Libyan EFL school teachers' problems and difficulties emerges as the topic of academic and research discussions and forces all those concerned with this problems to ponder upon and take necessary steps in their capabilities to help overcome this problem. This is because the nature of the problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers is very significant one and deserves considerable attention from all those who are in decision-making position and are capable enough to take necessary steps to overcome this problem as the whole idea of incorporating English language education in schools is at stake due the problems faced by the Libyan EFL teachers. If proper steps are not taken, the aim and

objectives of teaching English to the Libyan learners may not be achieved despite spending considerable amount of money for improving it.

Second, the paper would offer the exploratory nature of the problems, difficulties and challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers so that the nature and scale of the problems become clearer. Hence, it could offer some pedagogical suggestions which may be practical steps to overcome these problems of the Libyan EFL school teachers.

Background to Teaching English in Libya

In the 21st century, English has become an important language of higher and scientific education, technology, research, business and commerce. As the boundaries of the countries are shrinking and the world is emerging as a global village, English is playing a very important role in this process. English, as a language of globalization, has necessitated changes in the language education policies of many countries around the globe making itself as an important subject of education system from school level. Nations are attempting to incorporate the teaching of English language in their school system so that their younger generations can keep pace with the global developments seeking and exploring knowledge, and developing themselves better through the education of English and grow to learn to respect and appreciate others' cultures, societies, and ideologies and, thus, become open-minded and more responsible and law abiding citizens of this culturally diverse world we live in. Similar have been the policies of Middle East and North African countries. According to Al-Khatib (2008), "Teaching English in particular is gaining importance at an accelerated rate in the region, not only because the language has been regarded as a valuable resource for the people's modernization drive, but because it has a great impact on all aspects of their daily life" (P. 233-34).

With this objective of being a part of this dynamic global village of today, Libyan government has also adopted a policy to introduce the education of English language in schools for Libyan children so that they emerge as a successful global citizens. Though the efforts started as early as "1940s after the end of the World War II under the British administration in the northern part of Libya" (Mohsen, 2014, p. 58), it lacked a systemic approach at the beginning. The successive governments adopted the well-planned policy to introduce English language education from school level; however, it also suffered various setbacks due to various political reasons. Though Libya is oil-rich country and has adequate financial resources, English language education in the country has not been as efficient and productive as expected. Partly, it may be because of the western sanctions the country had to go through for long period of time and partly because of the mismanagement and lack of well-designed, result-oriented policy to achieve the aims and objectives of the English language education.

The country has centralized school education system whereby all the schools in the country follow the same syllabus, same textbooks and course materials and all the students are assessed at the same time. This helps in maintaining the uniformity in schooling and education system in the country as all the Libyan children study the same syllabus and same course material and textbooks though they may be in/ from different regions of the country. The criteria

for recruiting the school teachers is also almost the same. However, this phenomenon also implies the uniformity in the problems faced by the Libyan school teachers.

All the Libyan learners start learning English around the age of eleven, in the fifth stage of their primary schooling. The textbooks of English studied by the learners are not prepared and developed by the Libyan teachers or pedagogues but by a British firm. This has many implications in the problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers as well as by the learners as the textbooks are out of the local needs, levels and socio-cultural touch and contribute to the problems faced both by the teachers and learners as they are something which is imposed on them and lack the localization of syllabus in its socio-cultural settings.

In Libyan schools, most English language teachers are Libyan nationals and passing Bachelor in English from any university or institute is sufficient to qualify for the post of English language teacher in school without any requirement of special training /diploma in teacher training. Thus, most of the EFL teachers lack specific training in teaching. The schools do have basic infrastructure but lack advanced, and much required facilities like functional language labs and other audio-visual aids to make teaching effective, interesting and dynamic. In addition, most of the Libyan schools have large numbers of students of an average 40-50 students in a class. With this basic background, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

What are the most common problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers in Libya?

How are these problems hindering the achievements of the aims and objectives?

What are the main sources of the problems and difficulties faced by the Libyan EFL teachers and what needs to be done to overcome these problems so that the aims and objectives of teaching English in Libyan schools are achieved?

Is English language education becoming successful in achieving its set aims and objectives?

Previous Studies on EFL Teachers' Problems and Difficulties

Teaching English as a foreign language in schools is not an easy task and various factors contribute to difficulties faced while imparting effective foreign language education. Therefore, this has been the topic of research investigation for various scholars around the globe. Hindi (2012) has argued that teaching English as a foreign or a second language is a challenge for every teacher whether beginner or experienced, yet rewarding career choice. The role of appropriate methodology in EFL teaching has also been investigated and it has been found that one of the causes, of the teachers' failure to help their students to use English as a tool of self-expression and achieve their communicative goals, has been the methods of teaching (Mukattash, 1983, P. 69). Studies conducted by Zughoul (1983), Mukattash (1983), and Suleiman (1983) have confirmed this finding with regard to Arab EFL learners asserting that the Arab EFL learners face difficulties because of the ineffective teaching methodologies. The similar results were also shared by Aktas (2005) stating that the use of the instructional method contributes to EFL learning difficulties among the Arab learners. This may be because of the overuse of Grammar Translation method in schools by the EFL school teachers. As Khan (2011, P. 71) has rightfully argued that most studies have noted that Arab students' problems in learning English

usually spring from reasons like the dreadful teaching methodology and problems with proper language environments.

Various studies have also related failure in effective EFL teaching to the lack of training of EFL teachers. As it has been acknowledged, the effective English language teaching mostly depends on training of the EFL teachers. However, in many cases, EFL school teachers do not receive any effective, meaningful training in teaching. Similar study by Shehdeh (2010) has reported that the lack of authentic environment and lack of professional training are the challenges confronting teachers in most of the Arab countries. And as Allen (2008) pointed out, "The majority of primary school teachers have an insufficient command and training of English to be able to teach it effectively and teachers with insufficient subject knowledge have very little if any confidence" (p. 2).

Alkhaldeh (2010) has also reported that Jordanian English language school teachers lack professional training as well as training in using modern technologies inside the classrooms which has negative impact on the teaching and learning process. Al-Seghayer (2014, p.21) has also reported that Saudi English language teachers have received almost no in-service teacher-training although they have been teaching English in public schools for over a decade. Salahuddin's (2013) study also reported that EFL primary teachers in Bangladesh complain of "the lack of training in English teaching and the unavailability of language skills learning tools" (p. 50). Similar findings were reported by Noom-ura (2013) about the Thai EFL teachers.

The lack of different materials, technologies and teaching aids is also problematic aspect for many EFL school teachers as noted by Al-Seghayer's (2014) study which found that the teachers of English complained, specifically, about the absence of any teaching aids on the walls and the learners' low proficiency level in English which remains inadequate and below expectation. Furthermore, according to Shehdeh (2010), schools in most of the Arab countries are not provided with relevant teaching resources, including wall charts, flash cards, posters, audio and visual aids, language teaching and learning softwares, e-learning resources, well-equipped language as well as computer laboratories and other facilities. Similar findings were also reported by Kizildag (2009) about the Turkish schools arguing that the Ministry of School Education in Turkey has failed to support the English language teachers in providing the basic infrastructure and the resources that are supplied, such as posters and audio cassettes, are either in poor condition, of low quality, or are outdated and do not match those in the current textbook.

Studies have also reported other challenges including the big classroom sizes, low achievement in English by students, covering the EFL curriculum within the given time for lessons regardless of students' level in English (Alkhaldeh, 2010; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Yu, 2004), lack of intrinsic motivation for learning and speaking English (Liton, 2012; Hindi, 2012; Maherzi, 2011).

Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature as it aims to investigate and identify issues and challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers in Libya. The teachers' questionnaires, informal discussions, and observation formed the primary techniques of data collection.

Thirty five EFL Libyan teachers from twelve different schools (primary, preparatory and secondary levels), from different regions of the country formed the participants for the questionnaires data. They were 8 males and 27 females and their ages were ranged between 22 to 49 years old. The number of their teaching experience years varied from 1 to 28 years. Though the survey was limited to 12 schools; these schools were chosen randomly from different parts of the country (Tripoli, Sebha, Taraghen, Obari, Zawila, Al-Shati and Ghodwa) and reflected the general situation and scenario of teaching English in different Libyan schools. Most of the teachers held Bachelor of English language degree and were graduated either from the faculty of Arts or Faculty of Education.

Thirty Libyan EFL teachers were chosen randomly for informal discussions on their common problems and challenges faced while teaching. These discussions took place in randomly chosen schools in Sebha as well as with some individual teachers in the department of English of Sebha University, Libya. Teachers were visited in their schools and informal discussions were held with them to gain deeper insights into the common problems faced by them in their teaching. They were asked to discuss most common problems faced during teaching and their responses were noted down. The choice of informal discussions was with intention of making them feel free to express themselves. Some teachers were also interviewed individually to know any other personal problems faced by them which they could not discuss in front of all due to various reasons.

Five randomly chosen schools in Sebha were also observed in order to gain insight into the availability of various teaching aids and infrastructures for effective teaching of English as a foreign language. Besides, the students studying in the department of English also became a source of information on various aspects of issues related to English language teaching and learning issues.

Procedures of data collection

One hundred questionnaires were sent to different schools in different parts in Libya to complete and return. Only 55 filled-in questionnaires were received. Out of the 50 questionnaires, only 35 were selected as they were complete and 20 were discarded as they were not filled-in completely. The received questionnaires were analysed in line with the aims and objectives of the study to explore the various problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers. Then, some schools in Sebha region of Libya were visited and informal discussions were arranged with the English language teachers with permission from the heads of the schools. The aim of the informal discussions was to gain thorough understanding into the most common challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers while teaching. They were asked to talk

about their problems related to teacher-training, assessment and testing, exams, managing classrooms, learners' levels, habits and behaviours, Syllabus and textbooks, teaching materials and aids, cooperation and expectations from school authorities and quality inspection committees etc. their responses related to most common challenges were noted and were analysed together with the data of questionnaires.

Some schools were also observed to check the availability of various teaching and learning aids and materials and infrastructures using the observation form. All the data were analyzed to draw the findings and conclusions of the study.

Data Analysis and Discussions

The data were analyzed descriptively and analytically to explore the most common problems and challenges the Libyan EFL school teachers face while teaching English. These problems were then categorized under five main thematic sections. These included- 1] Issues related to Academic Qualification and Professional Development 2] Issues related to Syllabus and Textbooks 3] Issues related to Learners 4] Issues related to assessment and testing 5] Issues related to Infrastructure.

Issues related to academic qualification and professional development

The most common problem faced by most of the Libyan EFL teachers is the issue of professional training and development. Most of the Libyan EFL school teachers hold bachelor's degree as after completing their graduation, they immediately join as school teachers without any special training in teaching English as a foreign language to school children. This lack of professional training in teaching English affects their performance and expected outcome. Most of the teachers who were given questionnaires responded that they possessed only bachelor's degree. Hardly any teacher completes any special diploma in teaching English as no such programs exist in Libya. This adds to the problem as effective teaching can not take place as the teachers are hardly aware of effective teaching practices and nuances. All they have to do is learn from their experiences and devise their own strategies of teaching which may yield or may not yield the expected outcome. Besides this, very few faculties of education exist in Libya and those which teach this course do not give importance to practical teaching practice. Practice teaching, by taking the teacher-trainees to schools, is largely missing.

Thus, lack of professional training and development has resulted in the use of inappropriate and ineffective teaching methodology by the Libyan EFL school teachers. The data collected through the questionnaires revealed that 25% of the participants used Grammar-Translation Method and basically focused on Grammar, Vocabulary and Reading. On the other hand, Writing, Speaking and Listening were neglected citing the limitation of time for the lesson and to practice all the language skills. It was also observed that in most of the lessons, the teachers preferred to write the new words on the board in English and Arabic (though sometimes

they asked students to guess the meanings). It was also found that 20% of the teachers dominantly used L1 in EFL teaching and constant translation into Arabic was used as they believed that this helped their students to gain the largest amount of vocabulary. Therefore, they encouraged their students to translate the lessons from English into Arabic most of the times. 20% of teachers believed that they use the communicative method as their focus was on communication to encourage the students to use the language orally. In addition, 17% of teachers mentioned variety of strategies like visual aids, puzzles, group work activities, drawing, songs, competitions (some games), pictures, cards and simple plays to improve the speaking and listening of their students. Teachers also tend to use variety of strategies to motivate students and to help their students enjoy learning and think in English. 11% of the participants mentioned (the direct method) while teaching because they believed that it made students understand fast. 6% of the teachers replied that method they used was mostly a Teacher-Centered because they aimed to help their students to receive as much information as they can through direct instructions in most of the lessons. They added that this way helped students to gain a lot of information in shorter time, Figure 1 shows the most common English language teaching methods and approaches used by the Libyan EFL teachers.

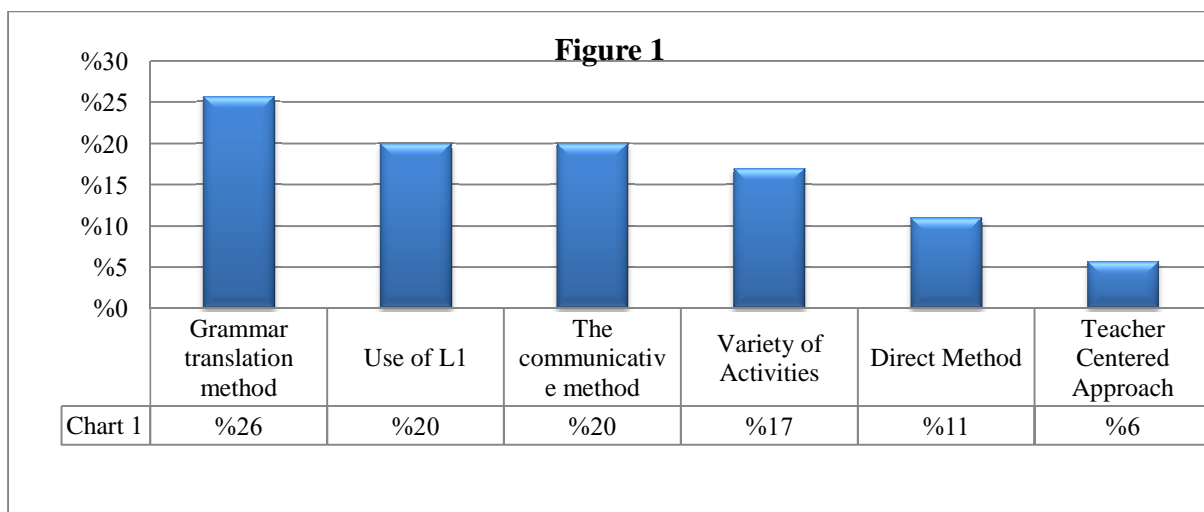


Figure 1: The common teaching methods and approaches used by the Libyan EFL teachers

In this regard, to address and overcome the issues related to professional development and training of the Libyan EFL teachers, a step needs to be taken. Colleges and institutes teaching education related courses should make these courses teaching oriented and focus should be on preparing teachers for teaching. They should be given maximum practice in teaching by asking them to teach in schools. Also, specializations in TEFL are required. A step in this direction has been taken by Sebha University, Department of English by launching a complete specialization in TESL. The courses and focus should be completely on teaching and teacher training. Thus, the students who graduate with this specialization will be effective teachers equipped with theories, knowledge, and skills of teaching as well as first hand experience in

practice teaching in different schools. Other students, who complete B. A. in Linguistics or General English should be given compulsory training for one year in teaching after completing B. A. along with practice teaching before they join as school teachers. Special institutes for this purpose needs to be established with specialized teacher trainers and goal oriented syllabus that not only formulates and addresses the practical TEFL needs but also outlines the detailed means for achieving the aims.

Continuous professional development, which is required through different in-service training courses, refreshment courses, diplomas, workshops, seminars and conferences is also missing and required steps should also be taken by the concerned authorities to make arrangements for the same. It is very hard to find such training completed by any Libyan EFL school teachers as the institutes, which are supposed to do this, are missing and/ or are very rare in Libya if any. Though the government policy requires EFL teachers to complete some in-service teacher training, professional development in order to get promoted/to get additional allowances, hardly any teacher does this due to the lack of facilities available for this purpose.

Issues related to Syllabus and Textbooks

Outcomes of teaching English as a foreign language to a large extent depend on effective teaching methodology as well as equally on the syllabus and material selected for teaching. If the material meets and addresses the needs of learners, matching their level, maintaining their interest and making them feel that the syllabus is related to them, nativised, localized making them feel that they are studying something which they already know and are connected emotionally, culturally. Alien syllabus, focusing on alien culture, may not be effective for the learners who have never heard of these cultures. Focusing on this issue, and its role in the problems faced by the teachers and learners, the Libyan EFL teacher were asked their view on different issues related to syllabus and the following answers were received.

First, they were asked if the syllabus they teach is easy and suitable for their students and why they thought so. To this, only 9% of the teachers replied positively saying yes and they were the primary school teachers. They believed that the syllabus is very easy as focus is on simple vocabularies and there is not much focus on grammar, writing, reading, speaking and listening skills. Remaining 91% of the participants (preparatory and secondary school teachers) replied negatively saying no. the reasons given for their disagreements included-

- The syllabus is not suitable as time is not enough to complete the tasks and activities in the lessons which forces teachers to ignore listening, speaking and writing activities and the focus is only on reading and grammar.
- The syllabus contains lots of lessons and activities but it lacks interesting and challenging activities.
- The texts are long and the topics are boring for most of the students.
- The syllabus needs more organization from the simplest to the more complicated language tasks.
- There are mistakes in the students' books as well as in the teachers' books.

- Syllabus contains materials which are not related to the learners' culture and sometimes, they are very odd. It is also very difficult to teach and explain certain culturally sensitive issues included in the syllabus. The syllabus is biased and certain aspects show bias and racism towards particular type of people as it is prepared by the British people and not by the Libyans so they have tried to show the superiority of their culture and inferiority of the local culture which is not good for learners and in forming their attitudes, opinions and characters.

They were also asked if the syllabus they teach is relevant to students' needs and is appropriate to Libyan culture and why they thought so. To this, 31% of the teachers replied that the syllabus is relevant to the students' needs because it is rich with the basic vocabularies that the students need. On the other hand, 69% of the participants replied negatively saying that it is not organized well and does not focus on some important language skills such as teaching pronunciation. One of the reasons given for the Libyan EFL learners' failure to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom was the syllabus. All the participants agreed that the syllabus is not designed especially to suit the Libyan culture because there is not much focus on the way of life in Libya, food, religion, etc. which makes it out of local cultural touch.

To gain further insight into the issues related to the syllabus and textbooks, they were further asked if the syllabus is appropriate to the aims and objectives of teaching English in schools in Libya. To this question, 17 of the teachers replied positively saying that there is description to the program of study with each book (what is to be learnt). Each unit contains detailed information of the language focus and the aims of each unit. While majority of the participants thought that the course content is not related with their real goals of learning English, "helping students to communicate in English". The aims and the objectives are still not clear because it does not give an expectation of the students' performance at the end (or what students will learn after the end of the course of study i.e. the end product of language learning). The syllabus needs to specify both process and product objectives.

When they were asked if the syllabus is suitable to their qualification, 43% of the participants replied that the syllabus was not suitable to their qualification while the other teachers (57%) said the opposite. So they were further asked if they received any training in how to teach this syllabus to their students. To this question, 20% of the teachers replied by "yes" but unfortunately, the majority of the participants (80%) replied negatively as they did not receive any training on how to teach the syllabus. Stressing on this, they were asked if they felt that they should be given some training in how to teach this syllabus to their students. Only 9% of the teachers did not feel the need for training while remaining participants (91%) agreed that they needed extensive training courses on how to teach the syllabus to gain more ideas on the new methods of teaching this generation. Teachers wanted to be more innovative and creative while teaching. They also wanted to know how to deal with different problems in the class-like controlling class, managing class with large number, managing different activities inside the class successfully etc.

Other problems and challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers included- time management (94%) as they complained that the time allowed for each lesson was not enough to complete the tasks and exercises. In addition, they were forced to complete the syllabus in time which further restricted their choices of giving any practical activities for students to practice language rather than just learning lessons. It was observed that the quality assurance committees did not give importance to real aims and objectives of teaching English- developing language skills of the learners. Rather, they demanded teachers to complete the syllabus in time without bothering real language learning. Thus, teaching became just for the sake of teaching or completing syllabus in time, rather than helping learners learn.

Teaching writing was another challenge faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers as 49 % of teachers were unable to help their students to write in English. Thus, the result is the students fail to write accurately even a single sentence at the end of the year. Many teachers (23 %) did not know how to incorporate various real time activities inside the class and manage them without letting the class go out of control. Time restriction to complete the syllabus also forced the teachers not to give much priority for making students read passages in the class as it would take a lot of time of the class. So, the teachers preferred to read the lessons themselves rather than giving students chance to read and develop their reading and pronunciation skills. 14% of teachers had problems with teaching lessons which were related to sciences like chemistry, physics, etc. as they contained specialized vocabularies and expressions which the teachers did not know. Teachers also complained that they needed functional language labs for teaching the listening, speaking and pronunciation lessons. But, unavailability of functional English language labs in most of the schools forced the teachers to cancel various lessons and activities related to listening, speaking and pronunciation neglecting these important skills in foreign language.

Issues related to Learners

The Libyan EFL teachers also faced various problems related to learners. When they were asked about the levels of their learners, the following answers were received:

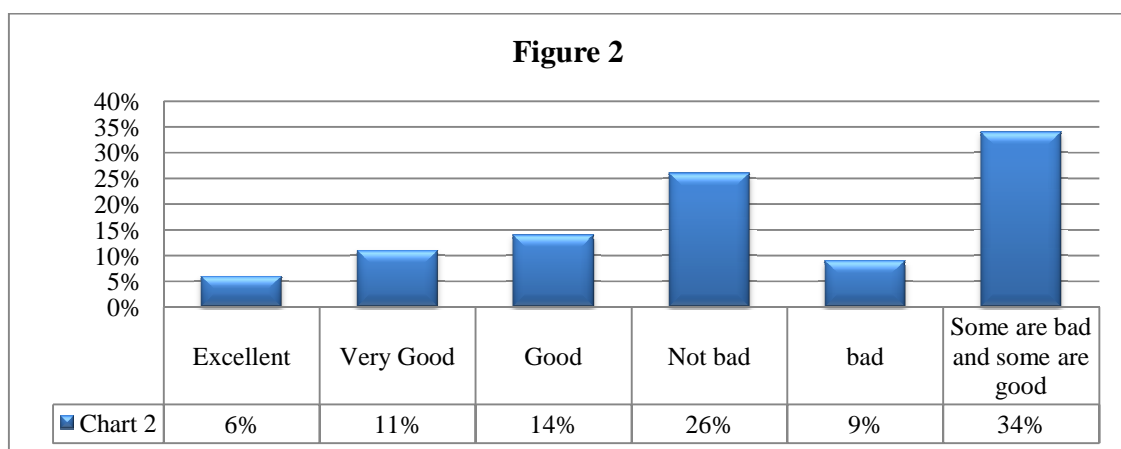


Figure 2: The overall levels of Libyan EFL school learners

Further, they were asked if they were happy with the level of their students and why they thought so. Although teachers tend to use variety of strategies to motivate students, to help their students enjoy learning and to think in English, it was found that 80% of the teachers were not happy with the level of their students. Only 20% of the teachers were satisfied with their students' level. Some teachers argued that the students have various problems which are listed in Figure 3 below:

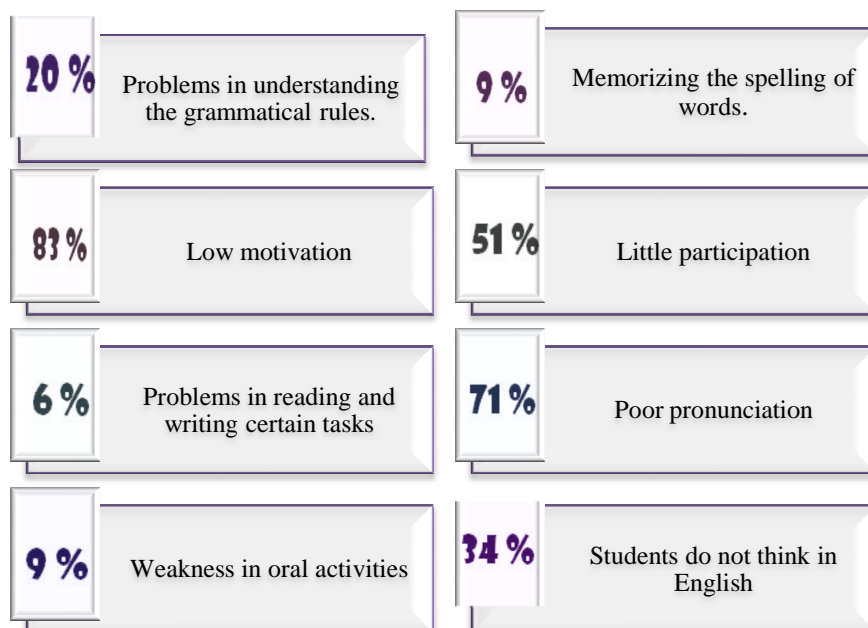


Figure: 3 Libyan EFL learners' major problems

While asked if their students were motivated to learn English, 17% replied that their students are motivated to learn English because they tend to use many visual aids, songs, games and different tasks to motivate students. While 83% of the teachers replied that their students were not motivated. The reasons given for lack of learner motivation included:

- English is a new language for them.
- The material provided for teaching English does not contain interesting activities and tasks.
- The texts are boring for students.
- Students do not have strong aims for learning English.
- The class environment is not suitable for teaching for example: the large number of students, the noise caused and lack of modern teaching technologies and aids (such as computers, OHPs, Language Labs, CDs- visual aids-charts etc.)

While asked about the most common problems encountered by them in relation to learning habits of the learners, the following answers were received-

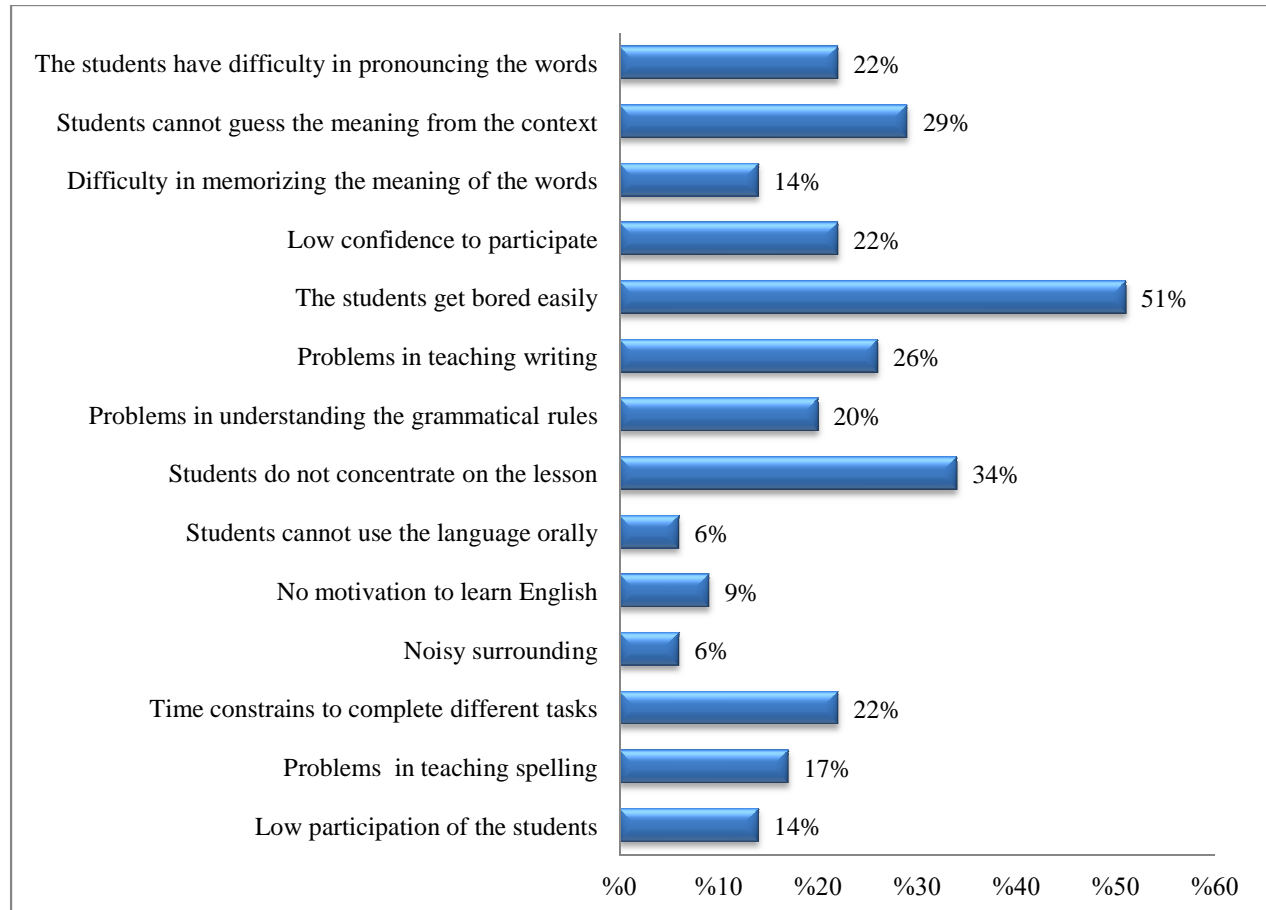


Figure: 4 Libyan EFL students' overall challenges

Constant degradation in cultural values, good manners and respect for the teachers were also noted as dominant issues related to learners' behaviours. Teachers complained that their students showed very little respect for them and their manners of behaving were reported degrading everyday as they are becoming rude and impolite. The instability in the country has a large part to play in this as teachers are also afraid that the learners may create problems for teachers and this misbehaviour of learners sometimes can be even life-threatening for the teachers as some learners carry dangerous weapons with them and correcting them forcefully on their manners can be real threat to the teacher herself.

These are not only the learners who are rude and impolite towards the teachers but sometimes even the parents of teachers are seen behaving in rude and impolite manner and demand to pass their pupils forcefully in their courses though they might have failed and do not deserve to pass. Particularly after the declaration of the results, parents keep visiting schools and teachers and ask them, sometimes forcefully, to pass their pupils against the will of the teachers and teachers also have to do that as they do not want any social problems created for them by

such parents. Thus, the respect for teachers is disappearing and the quality of education is also degrading with different malpractices during and after exams by the learners.

Misappropriate learning habits among the Libyan EFL learners are also one of the issues faced by the Libyan EFL teachers. The learners do not study to LEARN language but to PASS the course. Therefore, they demand teachers to give them questions and answers which they would memorize and reproduce in exam without bothering to really learn the language. So their whole aim of attending classes has become to get questions and answers from the teachers to pass the course. The parents have joined their pupils in private learning centers outside the school which claim to prepare the students to pass and gain high marks. Thus, the whole aim of learning has become passing the course with high marks at any cost without bothering to LEARN the LANGUAGE. Thus, result is, students pass course with high marks with misappropriate learning habits but can not speak even about themselves in English as their aim was not to learn the language and language skills but to pass the course. To conclude, the whole aim of teaching English has been misunderstood and misinterpreted both by the learners and by their parents and the Libyan EFL teachers hardly can do anything to change these habits and face various challenges and issues.

The issue of large number of students in a class is another challenge and affects teaching and learning negatively as teacher finds it difficult to control the class as well as to focus on individual student during teaching process. Foreign language teaching requires individual attention to assess the progress of the EFL learner and assist him/her in his/her learning process. The smaller the number of class, better the opportunities and chances of individual attention and better the learning and effective the teaching to achieve the expected aims of teaching English as a foreign language. Having large classes also raises issue of not being able to establish rapport with individual learner and implies not being able to establish eye contact with all which is essential for letting every student know that they are being watched and must pay attention and can be asked, thus preventing diversion of their attention. Large number of learners also means having pair and group work difficult, tiring, difficult to manage, and difficult to control. It also creates challenge of classroom communication. Teacher's voice may not reach to the last student and similar other oral tasks would be difficult. Having large classes also means difficulties and challenges in administering tests and correcting home works/assignments and exam paper.

Besides, it requires great efforts to manage and control the classes particularly in situation where problems of indiscipline is quite prevalent. Large classes also prevent a teacher from using tests, creative, dynamic aids and strategizes as managing them would require a lot of efforts and may result in class getting out of control. Thus, the unpleasant idea of large classes results in ineffective teaching outcomes.

Issues related to assessment and testing

Lack of training in teaching and assessing makes the Libyan EFL school teachers face various difficulties in assessing their students in the courses taught by them. To gain an insight

challenges faced by them in testing and assessing, they were asked how they assessed their students. To this, different answers were received, they are summarised in Figure 5.

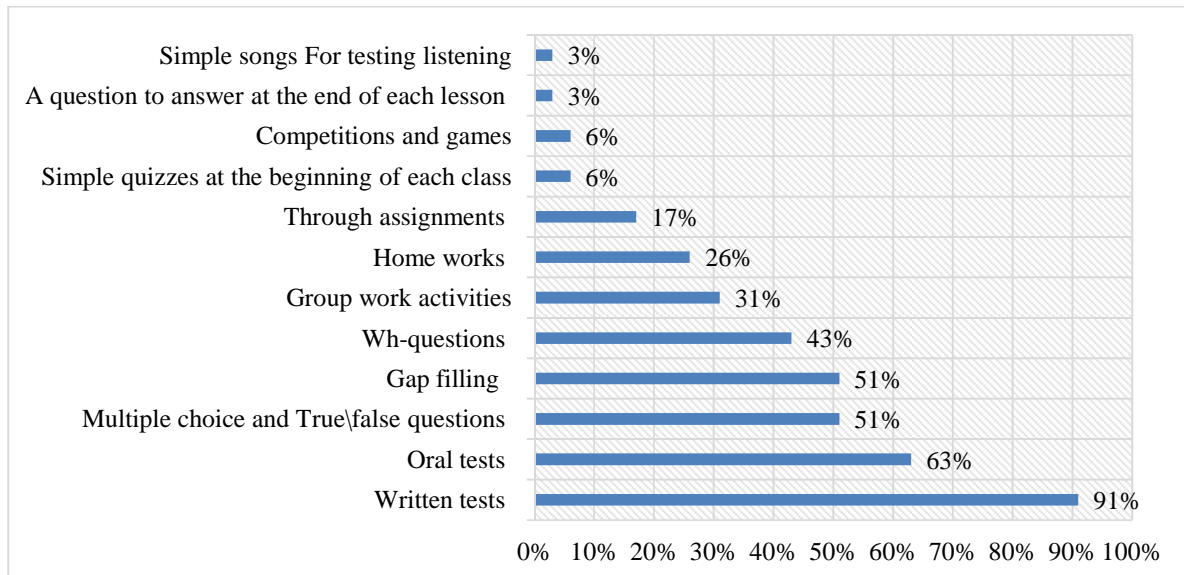


Figure: 5 Common assessment and evaluation methods used by the Libyan EFL school teachers

While asked about if they received any training in assessing and testing, only 11% of the participants responded positively while 89% of the participants responded that they did not receive any formal training in testing and assessment. This shows the need for professional development and training of the Libyan EFL school teachers in all the aspects of English language teaching including language skills assessment and testing.

Lack of training in designing tests as well as in assessing other language skills results in various challenges. Almost all the teachers responded that they did not prepare separate questions based upon a lesson but selected some questions already given under the lesson by the textbook authors. This implies rote learning and easy cheating and other malpractices by the learners as they would predict that questions in the exam would be only from those which are listed under the lessons and would not require any creative thinking on the part of the learners to answers as they would memorize or cheat these answers. Upon asked why they did not prepare their own questions from the lessons taught, they responded that students and parents demand that questions must be only from the given questions under the lessons and not prepared by the teachers. This implies the importance given to rote learning both by the learners and parents as they memorize answers to all the questions given under the lessons or cheat these answers using various astonishing techniques. This learning habit does not develop any language skill but on the other hand, develops wrong learning habits encouraged by the parents which is exam and passing oriented rather than language learning oriented.

Issues related to infrastructure

Attempt was also done to gain insights into the issues and challenges the Libyan EFL school teachers face due to the lack of teaching and learning related aids, materials and infrastructure. Teachers were asked if their schools had Language Labs. To this, 20 % of teachers responded positively whereas 80% of the participants responded negatively. Observing some randomly chosen schools, it was found that most of the schools do not have any functional language labs as well as computer labs equipped with internet. Even the very few language labs, which were noticed were not functional and lacked the very basic instruments required for teaching language skills. The schools also lack much required teaching aids and materials as they are not equipped with the modern teaching aids which ease the process of teaching English as a foreign language. While asked about this issue, 26% of the teachers answered that their schools provided them various educational technologies to ease teaching English whereas, 74% of the teachers replied negatively. While asked about what teaching aids were available for them from their schools, different answers were received which are summarized in the following chart.

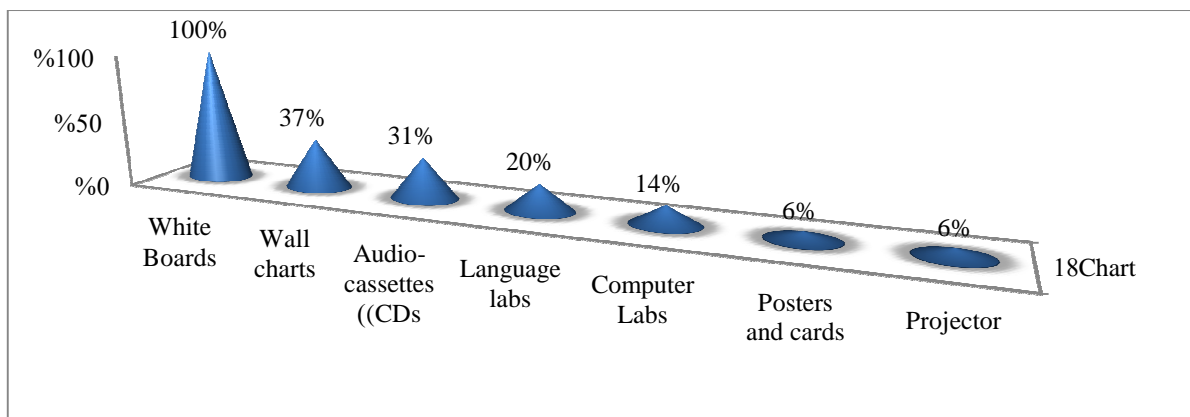


Figure: 6 Commonly available teaching aids in the Libyan EFL schools

The chart reflects the lack of modern educational teaching technologies, aids and materials which forces the teachers to rely on the traditional methods of teaching English. While asked if their classrooms were well-equipped with required educational technologies for teaching English in effective and interesting way, the following answers were received.

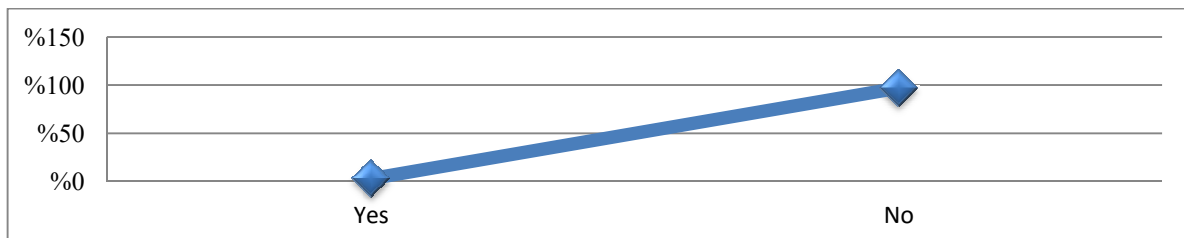


Figure: 7 Status of available educational technologies for teaching English in the schools

To add this, 91% of the participants also responded that the school authorities did not encourage them to use educational technologies while teaching English which shows the lack of interest by the school authorities in the use of such technologies.

Other mentioned challenges are presented in the following chart.

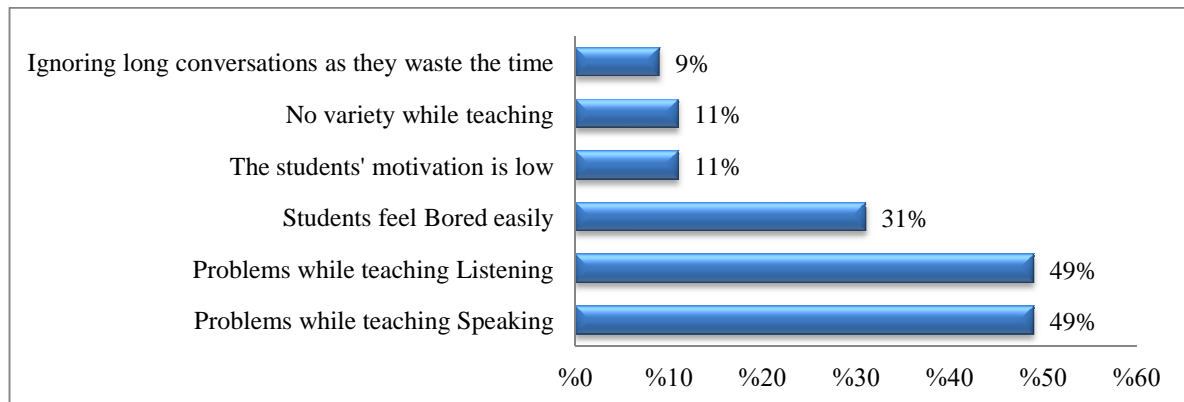


Figure: 8 Other problems related to learners

49% of the teachers mentioned the difficulty in teaching speaking, listening and pronunciation due to lack of functional labs and other required technologies to help students listen to English, watch videos or to have some interesting activities with the help of these teaching aids. 31% of the teachers responded that their students felt bored easily inside the class as nowadays they are used to have laptops, mobiles and internet outside the classroom which are missing inside the classrooms.

Discussion of the Findings

From the above analysis, it was found that the Libyan teachers use many methods of teaching English. But the most used method is the grammar translation method which is not very effective because teachers focus mainly on teaching grammar and vocabularies through memorization. As noted by Khan (2011), and confirmed by the findings of studies like Mukattash (1983); Zughoul (1983); Mukattash (1983); and Suleiman (1983), Arab students' problems in learning English usually spring from reasons like the dreadful and ineffective teaching methodologies which is the result of lack of training to teachers as reported by Shehdeh (2010); Allen (2008); Alkhawaldeh (2010); Al-Seghayer (2014); Salahuddin's (2013) and Noom-ura (2013) etc. In this regard, the findings of this study are in line with the findings of these studies and confirm the need of professional training for effective and dynamic teaching of English as a foreign language.

Though few teachers used different strategies like visual aids, puzzles, group work activities and drawings while teaching in order to motivate their learners, the challenge of time limit as reported by Alkhawaldeh (2010); Al-Seghayer (2014); Yu (2004) also affected the Libyan EFL school teachers' performance. Teaching different skills and sub skills in the syllabus

can be also a real challenge to the EFL teachers because teachers worry about which parts of the textbook material are in need of more attention (and therefore time) than others. The most common challenge reported by the Libyan preparatory and secondary school teachers was the time constrain as time was not enough for giving the whole lesson and they were forced to complete the syllabus rather than teach the syllabus. This resulted in neglecting many important skills and affected the expected outcomes as the other studies have reported the similar findings. Therefore, the issue of time constrain needs to be addressed in teaching English a foreign language scenario.

Effective teaching and learning also depends largely on the syllabus and textbooks. Well devised textbooks can be the source of interest and motivation for the learners and best companions for teachers to achieve the aims and objectives of teaching English. In the Libyan context, the textbooks seems to be one of the reasons for not achieving the stated aims and objectives of English language education. The Libyan EFL school teachers complained that the syllabus provided in the textbooks is not related to the Libyan culture. It was found that teachers needed training to teach the syllabus and the textbooks as agreed by Mohsen (2014). In addition, the study by Mohamed, M. A. S. (2015) on the English language school textbooks in Libya has concluded that the linguistic and socio-cultural features used in the English language textbooks in the Libyan secondary schools have been biased and racist and that the language structures used by the textbook writers indicate a positive picture of white people and those nonwhites are presented in a negative way. This implies the need for preparing the syllabus and textbooks by the local writers as they understand not only the culture but also the real needs and levels of the learners better.

Teaching technologies and aids are beneficial for imparting effective EFL teaching. According to Sariçobana (2010), it is 'a must for the school to provide foreign language teachers with the necessary technical and non-technical materials such as OHPs, projectors, computers, photocopy machine, flash cards, and etc' (p.117). Though the Libyan teachers preferred to use various teaching aids and technologies, the unavailability of such facilities also contributed to their challenges and issues. Thus, the findings of this study are in line with that of Kizildag (2009); Al-Seghayer's (2014); Allen (2008); Alkhawaldeh (2010) which have reported that foreign language teachers in Arab countries face various challenges due to lack of much needed teaching aids inside the school classrooms. However, the challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers in this respect are more serious as many, very basic educational technologies and teaching aids are missing in the Libyan schools. The issues of the Libyan learners' inappropriate learning habits and their undisciplined behaviour can be considered unique to the Libyan context only and are the results of the instability in the country which requires serious attention for better education in Libya and to stop the degradation of the quality of education due to various misbehaviours and malpractices.

Suggestions

If English language education is to succeed in the schools in Libya, different serious steps are needed to be taken by all those who are directly and indirectly connected with the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Libya. A radical change is required in the school education policy by the Libyan government. The ministry of higher education and research spends a considerable amount on higher education providing various facilities, bringing even teachers from other countries. A similar serious attention is required at the school level as it is at the school level where the base of the language education is formed. If it is done in better way at the school level, remaining /later progress at the university is easily guaranteed. Therefore, focus should be on transforming the school education so that the schools produce better students who would surely excel easily in university education and thereby emerging as valuable assets for the country.

Special teacher training colleges/institutes are required. The qualification of the school teachers needs to be reviewed. A teacher must have completed a compulsory one year teacher training course in teacher training colleges/institutes after completing B.A. The existing teacher training institutes need to be reviewed and rather than producing students by just passing them for the sake of passing, the serious training needs to be given by actually making students visit different school and practice real life teaching which is almost missing in Libyan context. They should be given training in teaching various language skills effectively, using modern educational technologies and teaching aids inside the classrooms, managing classes, motivating students, assessing and testing as well as dealing effectively with the textbooks provided. Much required educational technologies and teaching aids must be made available by the authorities for the school teachers so that the effective teaching of foreign language takes place.

Teachers needs to be encouraged in doing action research on their teaching and other related problems and submit them at the end of year as a report to the school administration so that the administration takes necessary required steps in overcoming these problems. Similarly, teachers may try various methods of teaching, motivating and if became successful, the results should be shared so that the others may look at them as alternative strategy to teach. Rather than becoming just a teacher, they should become researcher-cum-teacher who researches a problem and finds solution for making teaching effective. For this, interschool, intercity, state level, national level special programmes, seminars, conferences, workshops, training sessions are needed for in-service teachers where they share their problems, researches, and achievements and upgrade their teaching and other professional skills.

A well-designed, result oriented, localized educational policy and planning is required. The text-book and course materials require completely new perspective as they need to be locally written understanding the local needs, levels of teachers and students, socio-cultural dimensions of the Libyan society involving the experienced teachers who are involved in teaching English rather than imposing textbooks from someone who have a very little understanding of the Libyan education system, students' and teachers' levels and capabilities, availability of the required teaching and learning infrastructure and no understanding of the local Libyan culture at all which

make the teaching and learning materials out-of-touch/context phenomenon affecting the desired language education outcome.

Attempts must also be done to change inappropriate, faulty learning habits of the learners who learn the language for passing purposes rather than to master it. Students' behaviour, which may create problems for EFL School teachers in controlling and managing classes, can be sometimes nightmares for EFL school teachers. Serious attempts must be done by the school authorities to provide school teachers with fear-free atmosphere where they can teach, assess and test their students without the influence of anyone.

Summary

To conclude, the Libyan EFL school teachers face various problems and challenges while imparting their duties effectively in teaching English as a foreign language and different factors contribute to these challenges encountered by them. Problems exist in teaching on daily basis and a conscious teacher remains aware of it and attempts to confront them in a planned and organized way with positive attitude about its outcome. In addition to the suggestions specified in the section above, the Libyan EFL school teachers should reflect on the problems encountered and adopt a systematic, skillfully devised approach to confront and overcome the problems. They also need to theories on their teaching as reflecting on teaching experiences helps teachers grow and develop. The study has limitations also which need to be mentioned. The data, the number of participants included, do not help in generalizing the findings on the problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers however they are common enough for most of the Libyan EFL school teachers. More studies are required on specific problems involving more schools from different parts of the country to gain more specific, thorough, understanding of the nature and causes of the problems faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers. However, the study will initiate, it is believed, more academic debates, researches on various problems, issues and challenges faced by the Libyan EFL school teachers, which was one of the objectives of this research.

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