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Democratic Arabie Center
for Strategic, Political & Economic Studies

TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN LIBYAN HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

Edited Book



DR. YOUSSEF ZAGHWANI OMAR
UNIVERSITY OF BENGHAZI

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Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in Libyan Higher Education Setting

Edited by:

**Dr. Youssif Zaghwani Omar
University of Benghazi**

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Preface

As we all know that the world has been shrinking due to globalization. Due to the Internet, the world has become a small village, if not a tent. Hence, people can interact and contact with each other much more easily than they used to. The only challenging that might encounter is the language of communication. Therefore, learning other languages or using a mediator language has become a real must in this globalized world. As it is too difficult, if not impossible, that one learns and uses languages of the users of the Internet, using a mediator language is the remedy to the challenging of intercommunication. This mediator language, which is called *lingua franca*, should be used by the parties under communication. Of course, English, due to its wide spread and dominance, has become the *lingua franca* or international language that parties resort to when they do not each other's language. For that reason, learning and using English in Libya has become a great demand to be part of this globalized world. Literacy, as we all know, used to indicate knowing reading and writing, but nowadays it is used to indicate using of English and using the technology, namely the Internet. So, applying for a position or job, the company or institution inquire about your ability to use English and computer. English in fact has become an indicator to the level of education and prestige one has. It gives power and prestige to its users as it is the language of knowledge and the international language in the era of technology and Internet, the 21st century. Therefore, paying more attention should be occurred towards learning and using English in Libya for the new generations to get fully involved in the new world, the world of globalization.

Introduction

Learning and teaching English in Libyan higher education setting have still represented a challenge and has been considered unsatisfactory by both teachers and learners equally. Several studies and research in the field of English in the Libyan higher education context reveal that Libyan students encounter challenges in learning English in general and using English in communicative situations in specific. These study reveal that Libyan learners of English know about English, but they do not know about using English in authentic communicative situations. Some of these studies attribute such a failure to the methods of teaching English used at higher education settings, such as universities and high institutions. Some of these traditional methods include: grammar translation method, reading method, and audio-lingual method. Of course, such methods focus of teachers rather than learners, and they do not provide enough time and space to learners to interact and use English in communicative situations. The result is that learners are good knowers about English, but they are bad users of English. As we know, there is a huge difference between knowing about language, which is called language knowledge, and using language, which is called language use. Our target as teachers of English should be directed to motivate and encourage our learners not to know about English, but to use it in communicative situations to get involved in the globalized world. Hence, I am collecting various papers from various universities in Libya regarding teaching and learning English in various higher education settings to highlight the challenges the teachers and the students encounter in their either teaching or learning English.

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Dedication

To my family with love and gratitude,

To my teachers and supporters,

To the soul of my late father, mother, my nieces, my friends,

To the authors of the papers in this book,

I humbly dedicate this work.

Oral Communication Fear among EFL Learners at Omar Al-Mukhtar University

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the influencing roles of English language competence, gender, social evaluation, and age on oral communication apprehension of English foreign language learners at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. This study adapts McCroskey (1978) 'Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)'. A questionnaire survey was developed to investigate the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of this study. In accomplishing the objectives of this research, the study used a random sampling of 80 Libyan students learning English. To analyze the collected data, technique of correlation was further applied to the data collected to determine the relationship between language competence, gender, social evaluation, and age on oral communication apprehension (OCA). Findings of correlation reveal that gender has no significant impact on OCA for the period. However, there exists a negative significant influence of age differences on OCA. English language competence and social evaluation are important contributors to OCA. The study suggests that students need to recognize their feelings about their speaking fear related to English.

Keywords: *Apprehension; competence; age; gender; social evaluation*

1. Introduction

Oral communication apprehension (OCA) is a concept that explains the level of fear and anxiety about engaging in oral communication with people. Theorists believe that apprehension cuts across all form of communication and can abate the purpose of oral communication (Rashidi, Yamini, and Shafiei, 2011). OCA can either be high or low, both with distinctive effect on communication competence and communication skills. Logically, high OCA has been found to be hindrance while low OCA aides communication competence and communication skills. It is believed that the one with high OCA has high anxiety and fear in communicating with people or other individuals. High anxiety and fear of communicating is adversely a show of low self-esteem (Alfred, Johari, Rozaimi, and Huzaimah, 2013). The treat of OCA in a person does not signify inability to communicate at all; it basically explains the uneasiness some people undergo before communicating in one-on-one or public speaking.

High level of anxiety has been found to be pervasive among students of second languages. McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, and Plax (1985) found learners of English as a second language with high apprehension towards communicating with the language due to failure experiences and lack of proficiency in English language. They identified seven different possible factors that result in high OCA level of learners of English as a foreign language, the factors include: low intellectual skills, speech skill deficiencies, voluntary social introversion, social alienation, communication anxiety, low social self-

esteem, and ethnic or cultural divergence in communication (Rashidi, Yamini, and Shafiei, 2011).

Inferences from the annals of teaching English as second language in Libya indicate some inherent obstacles faced by both teachers and learners of English language in Libya. One of the most apparent is that both teachers and learners are not original speakers of English. Hence, non-speakers of English teach English to students that do not speak English in an environment and with teaching methodologies that are not similar to original English speakers (Ageila, 2014). Among other consequential obstacles of these challenges is the prevalence of OCA experienced by university students in Libya when communicating with English language.

According to Gadour (2006), cultural diversity and teaching methodology are the two variables abating the effectiveness of teaching English language to Libyan students. Arguably, these effects transgressed on the speaking proficiency of English language by Libyan students. The presence of OCA among university students that are learners of English as a second language is a common challenge according to the findings from previous studies. A study revealed that university students that learn English language as a second language have a very high communication apprehension. This is evident as students detested English language for public speaking and the feeling of anxiety, tense, and nerve to speak English among their peers or in group discussions.

A study by Aini and Normazla (2008) published a consistent finding on the very high OCA level of university students when participating in academic meetings, one-on-one communication with other students and in public speaking presentations. The study concluded that students' personality traits and lack of language proficiency are the major reasons for their high level of OCA.

Invariably, lack of language proficiency is a major predictor of high level of OCA among university students as proffered by Pappamihel (2002), who stressed that students with low level of English language proficiency feel nervous and anxious about learning and speaking English language. Against these unanimous findings from previous studies, this present study aims at investigating the level of OCA among university students in Libya and examining the factors that are responsible for the presence of OCA among university students in Libya.

2. Literature Review

In this part, the researcher is presenting the literature that deals with the topic of the study.

2.1 Oral Communication Apprehension (OCA)

Literally, communication apprehension is synonymous to communication anxiety which can be defined as an individual's level of exercised fear or anxiety resulting from either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey and Beaty, 1984). For instance, this anxiety is significant, because it adds to people

understanding of the cognitive processes behind communication, assumed not to be a mindless behavior.

In the word of the most fervent advocate of communication apprehension, it is defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1978).

However, consistent findings have been published on how anxiety and fear and other forms of OCA can abate learning of language. Alfred, Johari, Rozaimi, and Huzaimah, (2013) claim that anxiety is a psychological function of fear and apprehension that is indirectly associated with certain object. This imply that apprehension is a pseudo-fear that can be corrected with contemplated approach.

Aini and Normazla (2008) found that foreign language learners experienced communication apprehension when participating in interpersonal communication, public speaking, and during meetings. The factors identified by this study are students’ personal treats and language proficiency as the cause of communication apprehension in students. Similarly, a review by Pappamihel (2002) revealed that anxiety is a significant factor that hinders learners of English language to improve in speaking as expected.

Consistently, Shameem, Rafik-Galea, and Yasmin (2006) found that poor language proficiency is the reason why leaners of English language are afraid of speaking the language during communication. This contradicts with what Omar (2019) claims that “as the main function of language is a way of communication among people,

teaching foreign languages should be directed on how to use language, not to know about language” (p. 526).

Alfred, Johari, Rozaimi, and Huzaimah, (2013) studied the factors that contribute to OCA level of English language learners in Malaysia. 38% of their participants dislike presentation and participating in group-discussions that compel the use of English language. The study highlights language proficiency, presentation skills and communication skills as important factors in order to reduce university student level OCA in using English language.

A survey conducted by Noor Raha and Sarjit (2010) found their subjects to be moderate in their apprehension to use English language. The study found that public speaking and oral presentations are the type of communication activities that inflict fear and anxiety on university students. The study concluded that serious attention must be paid to the communication abilities of university student particularly eradicating the apprehension of learners of English language as a foreign speaker. This is so because English language allows students to be well grounded academically and also widens their soft skills.

Against these findings, this study is proposed to examine the OCA level of English language learners in Libya and to determine the possible factors that contribute to students’ OCA level in Libya. The personal report of communication apprehension by McCroskey (1978) serves as the theoretical kernel that this study aims to mount.

Hence, a conceptual framework is proposed and certain variables are included as significant factors responsible for high OCA level of

English learners in Libya. Figure 1 below depicts the proposed conceptual framework, entailing the variables that are intended to be examined.

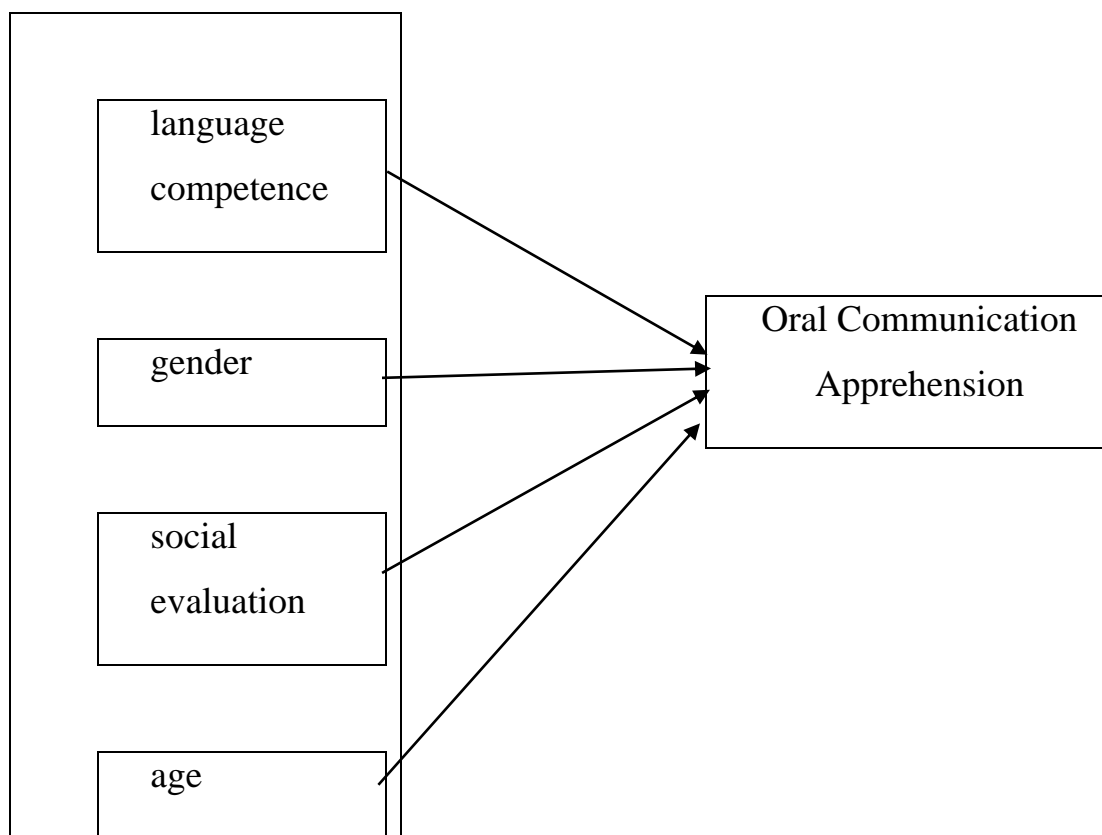


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

2.2 Effect of English Language Competence and Gender on OCA

English language competence simply refers to the ability to use appropriate communication pattern effectively in interaction (Bostrum, 1984). It is evident from extant literature reviewed, however, with early researches producing conflicting result in area of assessing the role of English language competency in the context of language achievement and oral communication apprehension.

Some literature revealed that there is positive relationship between English language competency and speaking with the argument that over-rated self-competence do unknowingly result in speech error, and consequently lead to unexpected anxiety, while other literature reported a negative relationship with a few others revealing neither positive nor negative relationships (Scovel, 1978).

The significance role of gender in the control of speaking anxiety has remained the most controversial as far as previous studies that have beamed their research light in this direction is concerned. Intaraprasert (2000) pinpoints that there is a linear relationship between gender and oral communication apprehension.

To elucidate more, Behnke and Sawyer (2009) documented that female displayed higher anxiety based on gender study. The effect of gender in the experience of speaking anxiety has been seen to be culturally subjective, stressing the fact that the cultural background of the speaker determines the dispositional characters in the control of speaking anxiety.

2.3 Influence of Social Evaluation and Age on OCA

Social evaluation plays a prominent role in the levels of OCA experienced by students, as younger individuals often base their self-evaluations on their imagined audience, which comprises two types, positive and negative (Goossens, 1984; Lapsley, FitzGerald, Rice and Jackson, 1989).

Thus, speakers who are highly anxious do not experience positive feelings related to the context of oral communication. In turn, this is

exacerbated as young students are preoccupied with their perception of their social evaluation and as such they assume that the audience is more concerned with the students' appearance and behaviour rather than the message (Elkind, 1978).

Based on Gaibani and Elmenfi (2016), the findings of the correlation suggested that social evaluation has a significant impact on PSA. It can be concluded that there are a significant number of factors responsible for the causes of anxiety among English language learners. Furthermore, students identified that they found great difficulty in speaking English although some of them understood it, which contributed to their PSA. Overall, the results suggest that student with weak skills and who lack competence in English language are more liable to experience OCA compared to those who have good skills and competence in English language.

Concerning age as a critical period hypothesis in which it has a great effect on learning a language be it first or second language. In the discussion of the factors that cause OCA, previous studies consider age as one of the most influential factors that causes oral communication apprehension. Studies reveal that foreign language anxiety among young learners has an acute relationship with their personal language skill level. Foreign language anxiety that is experienced by the young students who are mostly adolescents is mostly deep due to their age significant, with a relation to their cognitive capability to overcome anxiety.

3. Methodology of the Study

This section provides a description of the methodology used to explore the influence of four factors (i.e. language competence, gender, social evaluation, and age) on oral communication apprehension. It includes the population of the study, the instruments employed, and the procedures followed.

3.1 Instruments

The present study utilizes a mixed (i.e. quantitative and descriptive) method approach. The choice is informed by the fact that quantitative approach provides the researcher with the opportunity to measure social phenomenon, like OCA. Quantitative approach is a research tool that is intended to explain the phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods. The methodology that was used to carry out the study included questionnaires as a primary data collection tool.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study consist of all Libyan undergraduate EFL students at Omar Al-Mukhtar University (OMU), located in Al-Jabal Al-Akhthar, Libya. The sample comprised two groups (selected at random) of 80 Libyan undergraduate EFL students. They were all from the Department of English at OMU, Derna. The respondents were first to fourth year university students (30 males and 50 females) of the academic year 2018-2019. They were all in the age range 18 – 24. On a personal level, the researcher can safely assume that they are of

elementary to upper-intermediate as far as English proficiency is concerned.

3.3 Problem of the Study

Rashidi, Yamini, and Shafiei (2011), in their study which aimed at examining the predictive impact of affective factors (self-esteem and extroversion) on OCA level of English language learners, asserted that OCA is a predominant problem to students' academic performances. Anxiety, fear, and other forms of apprehension experienced by students when communicating their opinion can be detrimental to their educational performance.

OCA can possibly hinder students from participating in classroom as their fear and anxiety hold them back from speaking out their ideas (Woodrow, 2006). There are many factors responsible for OCA level of English language learners. Rashidi, Yamini, and Shafiei (2011) charged researchers to empirically delve deeper on these factors.

The importance of English language as a language of education and business is ever increasing. Therefore, oral communication skills of university students cannot be undermined. Devi and Feroz (2008) noted that lack of communication skills among university students is a universal issue which call for a serious attention. This is because, communication competence is a necessary tool for students to survive both in education and industry.

Fareed and Khan (2014) in a study conducted in Pakistan, affirmed that apprehension is an impediment to university students' communication competence. Meanwhile, there is a paucity of academic

findings on the level of OCA among English language learners at OMU). This is an obvious gap in which this present study proposes to fill.

Alfred, Johari, Rozaimi, and Huzaimah, (2013) espoused the fact that speaking English language can be a difficult task for learners who are native speakers of English language. Learners of English language from teachers that are not English speakers in a culture that is widely different from the English people ordinarily feel nervous and anxious in communicating with English language. This fact is a truism of the Libyan English learners as well.

Ageila (2014) reported that Libyan university students face difficulties in coping with English courses, and invariably they could not communicate well with English language among their peers and in public presentations. Also, Omar (2020) indicates that Libyan learners know about English, but they know how to use it communicatively. Therefore, it would be an invaluable effort to examine the likely cause of OCA among English foreign language learners at OMU.

3.4 Questions of the Study

To fulfil this study, the researcher has posed some questions to be answered as:

1. What is the level of OCA among English foreign language learners at OMU?
2. What are the factors responsible for high level of OCA among English foreign language learners at OMU?

3. Does the OCA of students differ with respect to their levels of English language proficiency?

3.5 Data Collection

Questionnaire was developed and distributed to students. The questionnaire focused on type of communication activities such as meeting, discussions, presentation, and public speaking that incited fear anxiety of student. Level of student OCA was rated on high, moderate, and low. Another section of the questionnaire examined different factors responsible for the level of OCA experienced by students. The personal report communication apprehension from McCroskey (1978) was adapted for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire also examined students' demographic background. The data collected were analyzed using different set of statistical methods from SPSS program.

4. Data Analysis

The objective of this study is both descriptive and a test of the relationship of the variables to one and the other. It involved measuring variable of language competence, gender, social evaluation, and age. This would require using statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variance. For efficiency of analysis, this study employed SPSS 18 for data analysis. By this approach, the study gave descriptive analysis and explanation of the relationship of the variables to each other and to draw possible insights from the findings in accordance with the objectives of the study.

4.1 Analyses of Results

This section discusses the results of the study. It analyses the relationships between oral communication apprehension and the factors that cause fear to English foreign language learners.

4.1.1 Correlation between English Language Competence and OCA.

Table below discusses the findings of the relationship between the independent variable, ELC, and the dependent variable, OCA.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
OCA	English language competence
Pearson Correlation	-0.443***
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
No of Respondents	80

From the table above, the value of Pearson Correlation is negative which implies that the total OCA as (dependent variable) move in the opposite direction with English language competence (independent variable). The value of Pearson Correlation is also shown to be 0.44 implying that there is medium level of correlation between the two variables. Also, the results indicate that $r = 0.44$, $n=80$, $p < 0.05$. Since, $p=0.000$ in the result is smaller than 0.05% it indicates that English language competence has significant effect on the total OCA. This means that there is correlation between the two variables. Learners with insufficient competence in English language seem to be anxious when communicating in English. Therefore, the research assumption that

English language competence has significant influence on OCA is admissible.

4.1.2 Correlation between Gender and OCA

In examining the role of gender among fresh and sophomore on OCA, this article carries out correlation between the variables. The table below displays the results of relationship between the gender and OCA.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
OCA	Gender
Pearson Correlation	-0.131***
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.176
No of Respondents	80

Based on the analysis of the above table, it illustrates that there is a positive relationship between OCA as (dependent variable) with gender (independent variable). The importance of Pearson Correlation is also shown to be 0.13 suggesting that there is minor correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, the findings point out that $r = 0.13$, $n=80$, $p > 0.05$. Since $p=0.18$ in the result is greater than 0.05%, it means that gender has no significant effect on the total OCA. The above table concludes that there is no correlation between the two variables. Therefore, the hypothesis that gender differences have significant effect on OCA is unacceptable.

4.1.3 Correlation between Social Evaluation OCA

In order to investigate the influence of social evaluation on OCA, this current study explores the correlation between the two variables. Table below explains the results of the relationship between the independent variable, social evaluation, and the dependent variable, OCA.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
OCA	Social Evaluation
Pearson Correlation	-0.381***
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
No of Respondents	80

The table above emphasizes that the assessment of the Pearson Correlation according to 80 subjects is negative which suggests that the total OCA contrast to social evaluation (the independent variable). The value of the Pearson Correlation is -0.381 indicating that there is a medium correlation between the two variables. Moreover, since $p=0.000$ (sig. 2-tailed) is smaller than 0.05%, this implies that social evaluation has significant effect on the total OCA. In other word, there is a significant negative correlation between the two variables

4.1.4 Correlation between Age and Public Speaking Anxiety

To study the age factor as an important role in influencing OCA, this study discusses correlation between the dependent and independent

variables. The table below points out the results of correlation between OCA and age.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
OCA	Age
Pearson Correlation	-0.371***
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
No of Respondents	80

*** indicates that correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings of the table above illustrate that there is negative influence of the correlation between age and OCA, which indicates that the whole communication fear goes on the other way with age (independent variable). The value of Pearson Correlation is illustrated to be -0.37 implying that there is medium correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, the results indicate that $r = 0.37$, $n=80$, $p < 0.05$. Since, $p=0.000$ in the result is smaller than 0.05% it implies that age has significant influence on communication fear. Put differently, there is negative correlation between the two variables. Young learners seem to have a high level of communication fear when speaking. For this purpose, the study hypothesis that age variance has significant impact on communication fear.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It can be concluded that there are significant factors responsible for the causes of oral communication apprehension among English

foreign language learners at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. Some of these findings are:

- Significant number of respondents has indicated that they experience OCA for a wider range of reasons which made them to be more fearful, confused, trembling, tense, rigid, their heart beat fast, nervous, make mistakes, and perform poorer when delivering speech, attending interview, or during class room presentation.
- The current results suggested that students with weak skills and who lack competences in English language are more liable to entertain communication fear as compare to those who have good skills and competence in English language. Therefore, English language competence is one of the important factors determining the level of OCA among the students.
- Evidently, the current results reveal that though gender has positive relationship with OCA among the learners, however, no significant impact of gender on OCA is found. This implies that being male or female has not constituted to students to have communication apprehension.
- This study also addresses the issue of what role is played by social evaluation in influencing the occurrence of OCA among EFLLs at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. The results of the correlation suggest that social evaluation has a significant impact on OCA. It can be concluded that there are a significant number of factors responsible for the causes of communication apprehension among English language learners.

- This study also discusses the research question in which examines the influence of age in influencing the existence of OCA among English language learners at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. The results of correlation suggest that age differences among the students who study in English Department at Omar Al-Mukhtar University have significant influence on OCA. This indicates that differences in ages have significant impact on communication apprehension. Also, it identifies that students with lower ages face more communication apprehension when speaking English.
- Additionally, learners faced difficulty in oral speaking. Some learners have the ability in understanding the language, but they find it difficult to speak so they had a high level of OCA as well as they are afraid of making mistakes. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that learners with poor skills face communication apprehension. Over all, it can be pointed out that language competence, social evaluation, and age factors are the most important motivating factors causing OCA.

6. Recommendations

Finally, in order to overcome or lessen the level of OCA faced by the students, some steps need be taken and this study recommends the follows:

- Students need to identify for themselves how they feel about their oral communication fear associated with English language. This will make them to better manage their fear problems.

- Having identified their perceptions towards English language, the students also need to share these feelings with other people.
- Students need to be more aware that they are not the only ones who used to experience communication fear when speaking and that even expert and professional public speakers sometimes feel some kind of oral apprehension when they deliver speech or lecture in public.
- Students need to be aware that feeling of communication apprehension is not a crime but normal and once this is realized by the students.
- Students need to be encouraged to have the tendency to build confidence anytime they want to participate in public speaking.

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Investigation into the Predictive Validity of English Language Assessment at the Technical College of Civil Aviation & Meteorology (TCCAM) in Libya

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the predictive validity of English language assessment of the Foundation Program (FP) at the Technical College of Civil Aviation & Meteorology (TCCAM) in Libya. The study focuses on the students' scores in the FP assessment to predict their scores in First Year (FY) academic courses in the departments: Meteorology, Communication, Air Traffic Control, and Aircraft Maintenance. It also investigated the predictive validity of the assessment of the General English Skills and Academic English Skills. This study shows differences in the predictive validity of the FP assessment across the four departments by gender, specialization, and self-evaluation. The study was carried out over two academic terms, in the first term the test grades of 174 FP students in English courses were obtained, in the second term the test grades of 153 FY students in the four academic courses were obtained. Predictive validity of English assessment regarding academic achievement was found to be $r=0.3$, $p < 0.01$, and the strength of the predictive validity significantly varied among specialization and self-evaluation groups specifically.

Keywords: *Predictive validity; academic programs; aviation; FP.*

1. Introduction

Language proficiency in English language assessment and how it is assessed have been a debatable issue in higher education research since English language is widely used as a medium of instruction and is seen as a conditional requirement for entrance to higher education across the world. It is clear that English language assessment in Libya has not been influenced by some modern approaches and techniques in the field of language testing and assessment. Therefore, there has been an urgent need to investigate the predictive validity of English language assessment, more specifically in the foundation program (FP). In the FP at the technical colleges of sciences and higher technical institutes of science in Libya, all forms of language assessment and tests are used to assess students' language skills.

However, this combination of assessment according to increases the assessment validity and results in better academic achievement. Another aspect that brings about different responses is the correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement or what is known as the predictive validity of language assessment. Research studies on this area have conflicting views towards this degree of effect/correlation and that some researchers pointed out that this sort of effect/correlation is not a fruitful line of research.

Therefore, these arguments are still debatable and are open to investigation in the area of language assessment in higher education and will be the driving force in this study to investigate the predictive

validity of language assessment more specifically in the FP at TCCAM, Tripoli, Libya.

2. Literature Review

With reference to some research articles on English language assessment in EFL higher education, Ross (2008) sees that there is an increasing use of test scores in determining access for admission to higher education, and that proficiency in the English language has also become the key for success in the labor market. Following this phenomenon, proficiency in the English language has been considered a criterion to access most higher education programs in Libya, and the English language assessment plays a critical role in admission to higher education.

However, there is always a question about how predictive student scores in English language assessment affect on student success in future academic study. This paper investigates the predictive validity of student scores in English language assessment in terms of academic achievement in four departments at TCCAM in Libya in the following academic courses: meteorology (M) communication (C), air traffic control (ATC), and air-craft maintenance (ACM).

2.1 Assessment Validity and Predictive Validity

Test validity involves five separate validities (face, content, predictive, concurrent, and construct) which constitute the psychometric characteristics of a test. These validities are sometimes viewed as internal, external, and construct validities. According to (Martuza, 1977), the internal validity of a test includes face validity and

content validity. The external validity of the test reflects its concurrent validity and predictive validity.

Hughes (2003) believes that face validity of a test signifies its suitability for its purposes; content validity means that an assessment is a reflection of the skills and content that is supposed to test; concurrent validity of a test is established when a test correlates well with another test that similarly measures the same constructs and is taken at the same time. Predictive validity refers to the degree to which a test predicts future performance of test takers, and that construct validity indicates that a test assesses the skills and abilities (constructs) that it is supposed to measure.

The content validity of a test deals with determining the relationship between test tasks and specific learned content, while the construct validity of a test is about identifying the relationship between test tasks and theoretical constructs of language proficiency irrespective of learned materials. The reliability of a test is viewed as a distinct quality from validity but both are necessary for a good test. A test's reliability is established if similar scores are obtained when the same test is administered to two groups with the same language abilities or administered to one group at different times (Hughes, 2003).

Also, Harrison (1983) believes that the reliability of a test is its consistency. Messick (1989) confirms that validity is a unitary concept that involved multiple facets, adding that the consequences of a test should be included as an aspect of validity. He stated that the consequences of a test constituted an inherent facet of any evaluative

judgment of the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores.

Test Validity according to Messick (1989) is known as “a unified though faceted concept”, and validation is seen as a “scientific enquiry into score meaning” (p. 6). Also, Bachman (2004) supports the premises of validity in Messick’s view stating that test validity reflects the quality of the interpretation not scores, and that validity is a question of a degree and is not always static. Bachman sees test validity specific to a particular use, and that validity of a test consists of a comprehensive evaluative judgment. In this view, test validation is viewed as the process of collecting information that reflects the appropriateness and correctness of the interpretations of the test scores (Messick, 1989; Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

2.2 Predictive Validity of IELTS and TOEFL Tests.

Although there is a widespread theoretical consensus of the unitary view of validity that consists of several ‘aspects’, research studies on the predictive validity of language assessment and testing are still conducted for their own purposes. In other words, estimating students’ performance by correlating results on two different assessment instruments separated by a specific time difference.

Over the past two decades, the results obtained from predictive validity studies on language tests as inconsistent, and today the same conclusion can be made based on the following summary which consists of some research studies on the predictive validity of

internationally standardized language tests as gatekeepers to higher education universities and colleges, namely IELTS and TOEFL tests.

Table 1: Studies on Predictive Validity of IELTS

Study	Country	Number of the participants	Type of correlation	Correlation strength
Elder (1993)	Australia	32 international students	IELTS & administrator ratings	0.5*
Cotton & Conrow (1998)	Australia	33 undergraduate & postgraduate students	IELTS & GPA -	-0.24*
			IELTS & staff ratings	0.15*
			IELTS & student self-assessment	-0.28*
Huong (2001)	Australia	320 Vietnamese post- & undergrad Students	IELTS & GPA	0.30*
Kerstjen & Nery (2000)	Australia	113 international students	IELTS & GPA	Non-Significant
Feast (2002)	Australia	101 international students	IELTS & GPA	0.39*
Woodrow (2006)	Australia	62 students, 15 teachers in Faculty of Education	IELTS & teacher evaluations	0.40*

Breeze & Miller (2008)	Spain	289 undergrad Spanish students	IELTS & GPA (Humanities)	0.34*
			(Law)	0.28 **
			(Medicine)	0.25*
Yen & Kuzma (2009)	Britain	61 Chinese students (Business)	IELTS & GPA	0.46**

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Table 2: Studies on Predictive Validity of TOEFL

Study	Country	Number of Participants	Type of Correlation	Correlation
Vinke & Jochems (1993)	Netherlands	90 Indonesian students (Engineering)	TOEFL & GPA	TOEFL < 450 = 0.09**
				TOEFL > 450 = 0.5**
Cho & Bridgeman (2012)	USA	2594 graduate & undergraduate students	TOEFL & GPA	Graduate students = 0.16*
				Undergrad = 0.18*
Al-Musawi & Al- Ansari (1999)	86 undergrad students (English Language	TOFEL & GPA/ENGPA** *		GPA = 0.50**
				ENGPA = 0.70**

	Studies)			
Maleki & Zangani (2007)	Iran	50 undergrad students (English Language Studies)	TOFEL & GPA	0.48*

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** Students' GPA in English Language Major

2.3. Effects of the Predictive Validity of Language Assessment Specializations

Several studies have reported a variance in the strength of the predictive validity values of language assessment across different specializations. In a study by Jochems, Sinppe, Smid, and Verweij (1996) showed that the value of the predictive validity varied considerably from $r = 0.32$ to $r = 0.46$ in Computer Sciences and Engineering majors. Their study investigated the correlations between Dutch language proficiency as a second language (Dutch was the medium of study) and academic achievement.

Another study by Lynch (2000) revealed that there was some variance in the correlation coefficient between the English language test used at the University of Edinburgh and students' average scores in the academic courses across the students' different areas of study. For example, the correlation coefficients in the Arts and Veterinary Medicine were non-significant, whereas, the coefficients in Social Sciences, Law, Science and Engineering were $r = 0.23$, $r = 0.32$ and $r = 0.24$ respectively.

Likewise, a correlational study by Huong (2001) who claimed that the correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement in the linguistically demanding disciplines (e.g., TESOL) was stronger than it was in the less linguistically demanding disciplines (e.g., Engineering). Also, Woodrow (2006) found in his study that the correlation coefficient between the students' bands in IELTS and their GPA in TESOL courses to be $r = 0.4$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 62$ in the English language domain. Similarly, Cope (2011) reported the value of the correlation varied between different specializations when he investigated the predictive validity of three types of English language entry programs.

2.4 Self-Evaluation of Language Skills

Few studies on predictive validity have attempted to investigate the potential effect of the students' self-evaluations to the strength of the predictive validity of language assessment (Powers, Kim, and Weng, 2008). In another study by Xu (1991) who investigated the correlation between students' self-evaluations of their language proficiency and self-reported academic difficulties found some correlation between TOEFL scores and self-reported academic difficulties. His finding revealed that the students' self-evaluation was a better predictor of the perceived academic difficulties than were their TOEFL scores. Although Xu's main purpose of his study was on perceived academic difficulties, his findings shed some light on the role of self-evaluation in understanding possible future academic difficulties.

3. Methodology of the Study

According to (Messick, 1989) validation is described as a scientific inquiry into score meaning. This study will, therefore, investigate the score interpretation that assumes a positive correlation between student scores in English language assessment and their scores in academic courses taught in English. Studies on predictive validity are needed to verify the claims and inferences made using test scores (Bachman, 2004; Bachman & Palmer 1996).

In this study, students' grades in the FP assessment at TCCAM are correlated with their grades in the academic courses of the first term of their FY, which actually is in the following academic term. Students started the FP in February 2017 and the FY in September 2017. The predictive validity of FP assessment would be investigated with reference to gender, self-evaluation, and specialization.

3.1 Problem of the Study

Some language teachers claim that students' proficiency in English language has an impact on their academic achievement. Some teachers of academic courses in higher education claim that students' underachievement is attributed to their inadequate English language skills believing a positive correlation between students' proficiency in the medium of instruction (English) and their academic achievement.

Other language teachers argue that gaining higher scores in English may result in a better academic achievement, and that high failure rates of first year students might be attributed to their inadequate English language abilities. As a result, there is a need to investigate the role

played by students' language proficiency in academic achievement at TCCAM as this according to the authors constitutes the driving force of this research study.

3.2 Questions of the Study

This study investigated the predictive validity of FP assessment by correlating students' scores in FP assessment and their scores in four FY academic courses. The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How does students' performance in English language assessment in FP correlate positively with their performance in academic courses assessment?
2. Does the strength of correlation between the language proficiency and academic achievement vary significantly when students' scores in GES assessment or AES assessment only are used?
3. Do the student groups by gender, self-evaluation and specializations show significant differences in the correlations between language proficiency and academic achievement?

4. Data Collection

This correlational study is quantitative in nature. In other words, only tests were used to collect the data about the students' grades over two terms. The sample started out with 174 students on the FP, and then it decreased to 153 students in the FY due to the students' inability to pass the FP. The size of the sample included in the statistical tests to investigate the correlations was about $N=153$. Therefore, the sampling

technique included only 153 students, and that was out of six specializations (departments) at TCCAM, and only four of them were chosen randomly.

Table 3: Assessment Instruments in the Foundation Program Courses

Course	Assessment Instruments	% of course total	% of FP total
General English	Midterm test	40%	50%
	Final test	60%	
Academic English	Presentation	50%	50%
	Report writing	50%	

The FP is a pre-sessional program that consists of two hours of mathematics and/or computer skills courses in each semester. The English language program is divided into two major courses, the General English Skills (GES) and Academic English Skills (AES)

AES assessment includes continuous assessment (i.e., a report and presentation) as shown in Table 3. GES assessment includes tests which were centrally developed, although individual teachers at TCCAM participated in the process of writing, reviewing, and rewriting these tests. The teachers participated in standardization and moderation training sessions before marking the writing component of GES tests.

Though these tests were constructed and reviewed following rigid procedures, they were not trailed before use and their reliability was uncertain. Similarly, AES assessment used rating scales to evaluate student performances in report writing and presentation. However, no sessions in standardizing the implementation of the rating scales in AES were given to teachers. For the purposes of this study, the term (FP) refers to the English component only (i.e., GES and AES). Student scores in Physics, Mathematics, or Computer Skills were not included in this predictive validity study of FP assessment.

4.1 ‘Proficiency’ and ‘Achievement’

Before investigating the relationship between the students’ language proficiency and their academic achievement, it is crucial to explain how the concepts ‘language proficiency’ and ‘academic achievement’ were operationalized. Students’ English language proficiency was represented by their average grades on the two FP English language courses (i.e., AES and GES). Likewise, the students’ achievement in academic courses was represented by their average grades on the FY academic courses in the first semester.

Another point to clarify is how the GPA, used in TCCAM to report students’ achievement, was employed in this study. GPA stands for “the Grade Point Average of the numeric value of the entire results that the student has passed or failed in that semester” (TCCAM, 2017). To calculate the GPA, student scores were transformed from numeric grades to grade points ranging from 0 to 4 using the scale in Table 4, which was also the standard scale for calculating GPA in TCCAM. The

crude GPA form of the FY was deemed to be unsuitable for this study as it included the average results of all of the courses taken in a specific semester. This study investigated only the English language medium courses that were related in content to the students' academic specializations. Therefore, only the grade points of the academic courses that were taught in English and related in content to the students' academic study were included in the GPA used to represent academic achievement.

Table 4: Conversion Table for Scores Used in TCCAM*

Num grade	<50	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-100
Grade point	0	1.0	1.3	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.7	4.0
Letter grade	F	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A

*. from the Registration Office at TCCAM, 2017.

One problem faced here was that the students' scores in the academic courses were only available in a grade point system, while their scores in the FP assessment were available in a numeric system. To solve it, having the grades in two different forms, scores in the FP were converted to grade points using the scale used in TCCAM as shown in Table 4. For example, if a student's score in FP is ranging between 80 and 84, then this score will be converted to a grade point of 3.0.

5. Data Analysis

This part of the study presents the data analysis of this study in order to reach results.

5.1 Statistical Analyses Used with the Student Scores

This research is a correlational study of the predictive validity of English language assessment on the FP. It investigated the correlation between students' English language proficiency on the FP (i.e. their scores in the two English language FP assessment) and their academic achievement in the FY (i.e. their average scores in the first term of the FY assessment). It also investigated whether the strength of the correlation was affected by the different groups of students.

Two types of statistical analyses were used: the correlational analysis using Spearman's rho and the difference in means analysis using Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal Wallis Test. these tests were used to identify significant differences between student scores in different groups when the predictive validity varied amongst the groups.

The distribution of the scores was negatively skewed and the sizes of the group samples were not equal. The students' grades in FP and FY were cross tabulated, and a grade of 2.00 was obtained as an indication of success in FY study.

6. Results

The results of this study are the follows:

6.1 FP Assessment Predictive Validity

Students' grades in the foundation program (FP) English language courses and their average grades in the first year (FY) academic courses were tested for normality of distribution using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk tests. These results revealed that the students' scores were all negatively skewed as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and Skewness of Student Scores in FP and FY Academic Courses Assessment

Courses		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
FP Assessment	AES Assessment	153	1.70	4.00	3.22	.49	-.36
	GES Assessment	153	.00	3.70	2.23	.61	-.72
	(AES +GES)	153	1.0	4.0	2.77	.47	-.62
FY Academic Courses Assessment		154	.50	3.90	2.71	.66	-1.08

First year (FY) academic courses are all English language based and are taken as core courses in the Meteorology, communication, Air-Traffic Control, and Air-Craft Maintenance Academic programs.

As Table 6 shows above, the results showed a high significance, but weak a correlation between the two variables, $\rho=0.31$, $p < 0.01$. Also, the difference in the predictive validity of each of the FP courses (i.e., GES and AES) was investigated. The students' grades in the GES assessment had a weak correlation with their average grades in the academic courses, $\rho = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$. Also, the correlation between the students' grades in the AES assessment and in the academic courses assessment was weaker, $\rho=0.27$, $p < 0.01$. In other words, the students' grades in the FP assessment were clearly a weak predictor of their grades in the academic courses.

Table 6. Correlations between Students Grades in Academic Courses, Foundation Program Assessment, General English Skills Test and Academic English Skills Assessment

Courses	Academic Courses (N =153)	FP (GES +AES) (N =153)	GES (N =153)	AES (N =153)
Academic courses	1.000	.312**	.369**	.271**
FP	.312**	1.000	.806**	.826**
GES	.365**	.807**	1.000	.476**
AES	.271**	.826**	.476**	1.000

Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Student scores in AES assessment were much higher than their scores in GES assessment as Table 5 shows. Also, the predictive strength of GES assessment is higher than AES assessment. The only explanation for the higher correlation between student scores in GES

assessment and academic courses assessment is the kind of assessment instrument used (i.e., tests). Therefore, it is worth saying that at this point the GES assessment like FY assessment contained standardized tests while the AES assessment included performance assessment tasks.

6.2 Differences between Gender Groups

The correlations between the students' scores in the FP assessment and their grades in the FY academic courses assessment did not show a significant difference between the gender groups. So, the Spearman coefficient for the male group was $\rho = 0.31$ and for the female group was $\rho = 0.33$.

Table 7. Correlation between Scores in FP and FY Assessment by Gender

Gender	Correlation	Sig.	N=153
Male students	.31*	.07	51
Female students	.33**	.000	102

*, significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Foundation Program (FP), First Year (FY)

6.3 Differences among Self-evaluation Groups

Here, the students were required to self-evaluate their language proficiency using the descriptors: weak, average, good, very good, and excellent. The Spearman correlation between students grades in the FP assessment and their grades in FY academic courses assessment ranged

from $\rho = 0.17$ for the average group to $\rho = 0.88$ for the excellent group as shown in Table 8.

This indicates that the higher the students self-evaluated their language proficiency, the stronger the predictive validity coefficient of FP assessment was, and that the more their performance in the academic courses assessment was predictable by their performance in the FP assessment.

Table 8. Correlations between Scores in the FP and FY Assessment by Self-evaluation Groups

Self-Evaluation	Correlation	Sig.	N = 163
Average	.17	.59	15
Good	.25*	.02	85
V. Good	.39**	.005	51
Excellent	.88**	.009	12

*, significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*, significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Foundation Program (FP), First Year (FY)

6.4 Differences among Specialization Groups

The strength of the predictive validity of the FP assessment varied depending on the students' specializations. Table 9 shows that the students' grades in Meteorology and Air Traffic Control courses were less well predicted by their grades in the FP assessment than were their grades in Communication and Air-Craft Maintenance courses.

The predictive validity of FP assessment in the specialization groups varied considerably from $\rho = 0.18$, $p = 0.12$ for the Air Traffic Control group to $\rho = 0.64$, $p = 0.002$ for the Communication group.

Table 9. Correlations between Scores in the FP and FY Assessment by Specializations

Specialization	Correlation	Sig.	N = 153
Meteorology	.41*	.008	31
Communication	.64**	.002	21
Air Traffic Control	.18	.12	78
Air-Craft Maintenance	.57**	.005	23

*, significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Foundation Program (FP), First Year (FY)

The difference in the predictive validity for the four different groups of students at TCCAM could be explained by the type of specializations taught in each of the departments and the size of student samples represented by each specialization in this study as shown in Table 9. The participants from the college were specialized in Meteorology, Communication, Air Traffic Control, and Air Craft Maintenance.

It is true that most of the college participants were communication students (66.93% of the sample), and that the predictive validity of FP assessment for the communication group was non-significant, could

very well explain the non-significant result obtained for the predictive validity of the FP assessment in the college.

Table 10. The FP Assessment Predictive Validity by Specialization

Technical college of Aviation & Meteorology (TCCAM)	Specialization	Correlation	Sig.	n
	Meteorology	.27	.27	18
	Communication	.73**	.000	21
	Air-traffic control	.11	.31	78
	Air-craft maintenance	.66**	.001	23

The findings of this study suggested that the predictive validity of FP assessment is weak. Also, the strength of the predictive validity varied according to the student specializations and self-evaluations; the predictive validity of FP assessment was found to be stronger for Communication students and the students who evaluated their language skills as higher.

7. Discussion

Basing on the results obtained through the data analysis, the researchers are presenting the following points for discussions:

7.1 Predictive Validity of FP

The findings of the predictive validity of the FP English language assessment demonstrated a significant but weak correlation between the students' grades in the FP English language assessment and their FY

grade in academic courses. Also, the students' grades in GES assessment showed slightly a stronger correlation coefficient with their grades in the academic courses assessment than did their grades in the AES assessment. This finding suggests that language proficiency is not predictor of the students' academic achievement.

This finding is in the line with the similar research conducted on the predictive validity of various English language tests that are used as gatekeepers to higher education institutions such as IELTS, TEAM, and various local tests (Davies, 1990; Elder, 1993; Cope, 2011; Lynch, 2000).

This finding indicates that the predictive validity of FP assessment accounts only for about 16% of the variance of the students' performance in academic courses assessment. Also, this finding raises some questions about the policies on accepting students with different language proficiency levels in higher education institutions not only in Libya but also in other international institutions. The difference in the strength of the predictive validity of GES and AES also raises some questions about the reliability of performance assessment and consistency in using marking scales.

7.2 Predictive Validity of FP across Specializations

The finding of this study showed that the strength of the correlation between the students' language proficiency and academic achievement varied considerably depending on the students' specializations. These different predictive validity values for the specializations could be partly explained by the communication assessment instruments and test

tasks seemed to focus on students' language skills more than did those of the meteorology or air traffic control assessment instruments. In Communication, students are required to write a 1000-word report, write essays in the final exam, and conduct presentations, all of which require a certain level of English language mastery that is less required by the assessment tasks in other specialization.

This finding is similar to findings from other research studies (e.g., Lynch, 2000; Huong, 2001) which constitute a pattern suggesting that there is a variation in language skills requirements of academic disciplines not only in Libyan higher education, but also in many other international higher education institutions. One of the implications of this finding is different entry levels to higher education institutions based on the language requirements of the academic discipline.

Despite the fact that many international higher education institutions require different levels of language proficiency for different academic disciplines, these requirements are usually not based on predictive validity studies. More specifically, in Libya, TCCAM should increase the entry level of English language for the students who are willing to study Communication Studies. This study suggested that this could be applied in other higher education institutions if local studies are conducted to include larger groups of students with various disciplines.

7.3 Predictive Validity of FP across Self-Evaluation Groups

The correlations between language proficiency and academic achievement showed a variance according to the students' self-

evaluations of their language proficiency levels. The higher the students evaluated themselves, the stronger the correlation between their grades in FP assessment and academic courses assessment was.

However, few research studies investigated the impact of self-evaluation on academic achievement/ difficulties, but in a study by Xu (1991) reported self-evaluation as a good predictor of academic difficulties. This study suggests that more emphasis should be devoted to study the role of self-evaluation in predictive validity in future research. Also, self-evaluations can be used in higher education institutions as an investigating tool to probe more into students' academic achievement and/or difficulties.

8. Conclusion

This correlational study explored the predictive validity of the Foundation Program assessment by correlating students' scores in its assessment with their scores in the First Year academic courses. The findings showed that language proficiency in English is a moderate predictor of academic achievement in general.

However, the power of the predictive validity was found to differ with regards to students' self-evaluations and specializations, but not according to their gender. The higher the students evaluated their language proficiency, the higher the FP assessment predictive validity was. The predictive validity of FP assessment was strong for the Communication and Air-craft maintenance groups, moderate for the meteorology group and non-significant for the air traffic control group.

The findings of this study revealed moderate to low predictive validity of English language assessment according to academic achievement, but students' proficiency in the English language plays a major role in accessing Libyan higher education.

Therefore, this study recommended that in admission to a higher education institution, English language proficiency should be viewed as a criterion along with students' academic achievement, but used fairly variously. However, higher education institutions that employ English as a medium of instruction request a specific level of language proficiency in high school English language courses that is equivalent to that language level required in academic courses.

Moreover, the AES assessment revealed a lower value of its predictive validity than did the GES tests. This finding should be applied in cases where students' scores are very close to the cut-off point (50 out of 100). However, the present procedure taken currently is that if a student's score is between 47 and 49, it is then added up to 50, which is the passing score. English language assessment plays an important role in higher education and its impact is evident in higher education admission policies. Therefore, this study suggests that these policies should be re-evaluated, and interpretations made of student scores in English language assessment should be examined carefully with reference to the findings of the predictive validity of FP assessment.

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The Use of Translation as a Strategy in Learning English as a Foreign Language among Libyan University Students: Case Study on Students at English Department at the University of Tripoli

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Abstract

The use of translation in language learning has been controversially discussed. Studies in this respect are rooted in divergent opinions, where some support the use of translation and others encourage its absence. This study explores the use of translation as a strategy in learning English by undergraduate students at the English Language Department at the University of Tripoli in Libya. The study adopts the Inventory for Translation as a Learning Strategy to gain understanding of the use of translation in learning English by Libyan students majoring English. A number of 60 students were surveyed using a questionnaire to see if translation is a strategy they recourse to in learning English language skills. Although students are sometimes discouraged to use translation in classrooms, the results show that students tend to use translation in acquiring and developing their language skills. The data indicate that there is a correlation between learners' proficiency level and their use of translation as a strategy.

Keywords: *Translation; learning; English; L1; strategy*

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language has always been linked to exposure to that language. Research in language learning focuses on the issues of new trends in language teaching. In learning English as a foreign or second language, the communicative approaches are always at the center because, as Omar (2019) clarifies, “the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to use it in communicative situation” (p. 513). This means that the classical teaching methods such as the grammar-translation method, direct method, and the like have arguably been deemed ineffective or nonfunctional. That is, the mother tongue of learners should be as away and absent as possible in the classroom.

Liao (2006) indicates that many teachers who work with communicative teaching approaches believe that for students to be semi-native in commanding English, they have to avoid translation or thinking of the concept under study in mother tongue surroundings. In other words, this is an indication that a native of Arabic who learns English should study English concepts away from involving their Arabic equivalents. Studies that discourage use of mother tongue in language learning include Levine, 2003; Scott and de la Fuente, 2008; Littlewood and Yu, 2009. They believe that the immersion of learners in the second language environment is essential and the mother tongue interference would negatively affect the outcome and heavily hinder learners’ progress. Such beliefs in language learning, of course, have their counter opinions.

Harmer (2001) explains that students in many cases will recourse to their native language in classes, and they would sometimes go against their teachers' advice. Further, he believes that preventing students from using translation in their learning activities will probably result in creating stressful situations. In fact, the use of translation in classroom activities is disfavored by the language teaching community (Dagiliene, 2012). This is supported by Brown (2002), who argues that translation is unsuitable for foreign language learning due to its close association with the traditional teaching methods such as the grammar translation.

However, such beliefs have been changing and research shows increase in use of translation in language learning. Teachers of English seem to perceive translation for pedagogical purposes. This is what this study attempts to find out from the learners' perspective in the sections to follow. Studies that encourage use of translation and find it effective in foreign language teaching include Moritomo and Loewen (2007), Hummel (2010); Kim (2011).

Translation is a means or a strategy that aims at expediting meaning comprehension and facilitating communication between a teacher and students. This is simply done through interpreting information in classroom activities into the mother tongue. Such use will function in conveying the linguistic, pragmatic, and semantic levels of meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence (Al-Musawi, 2014).

2. Literature Review

This part of the study is designed to present the literature review regarding the topic of the study. It includes articles and books that handles the topic of the study. The researchers search the books, the articles in journals, and the websites to cover the theoretical part of the study.

2.1 Effects of Translation in Learning Languages

Husain (1995) induces that the use of translation in language learning could result in poor communicative skills. This is because language is best learned in an environment that full with L2 activities in order to be able to think and act in that language. This, according to Husain, increases the proficiency level for students. In fact, students are more encouraged and motivated when they perform and participate in the learned language. The more they speak and answer activities in L2, the more they are motivated and confident, which creates supportive learning environment.

Other studies such as Duff (1989) indicates that language is a two-way system and students' resort to their mother tongue is inevitable. Students always associate concepts of the foreign language with their L1 by comparing and contrasting. This is why it is difficult to assume full ban of L1 in foreign language teaching settings. Popovic (2001) suggests that it would be more effective if teachers offer regulated translation tasks in their classroom activities than preventing complete use of translation.

Empirical research on the use of translation have been carried out to explore whether students using it as a strategy or not in their language learning. For example, Horwitz (1987) reports that almost three quarters of German and Spanish students learning English were in favour of using translation as a strategy. Further, Hsieh (2000) concludes that Taiwanese students tend to support the use of translation in building up their vocabulary reservoir and enhancing their comprehension skills. This study adopts a questionnaire designed by Liao (2002), who conducted a research on use of translation and reported in his study (2006) that translation plays a positive role in language learning. The same questionnaire was adopted by Bagheri and Fazel (2011) whose study shows endorsement of Iranian students on the use of translation in developing their writing skills.

In fact, translation can never be absent from learners' minds and classroom activities. According to Duff (1994), students tend to translate and interpret words, signs, sentences, and ideas into their mother tongue. He believes that translation is a good practice in honing students' writing skills. Similarly, Kim (2011) concludes that Korean students of English have found translation beneficial in their writing as it helped them use grammar accurately.

The field of foreign language learning entails opposing voices for the use of translation in learning activities by some teachers and linguists. In other words, the importance of using translation tasks in classroom activities has not been fully recognized, according to the advocate views. The topic is still controversial. Its significance in learning within Libyan context is the emphasis of this study. The

research at hand investigates the use of translation as a learning strategy by Libyan university students. The coming sections illustrate the methodology, including research context, participants, objectives, research questions, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

3. Methodology of the Study

The methodological section illustrates the objectives of this research and questions of the research. It outlines the context of the search, which gives an idea about the teaching and the participants at the University of Tripoli.

3.1 Research context

This study was conducted in the English Department, Faculty of Languages at the University of Tripoli in Libya. The study of English in the English Department begins from learning General English (GE) to more specialized language subjects. For example, while freshmen students study General English with main focus on the four skills, sophomores, juniors, and seniors study English subjects such as Varieties of English, Grammatical Structure, Applied Linguistics, Theoretical Linguistics, and Literature. Teachers normally follow a syllabus imposed by the faculty's scientific committee. However, they are not confined with certain teaching methodologies. That is, every teacher can use their own preferable teaching style according to their teaching philosophy.

Generally, there is an obvious direction against using learners' L1 in classes at the department's policy. This is justified with the fact that English is used as a foreign language in Libya, and students need to

make the most exposure to the targeted language as much as possible. What makes this somehow convenient is the fact that classes are not as large as they used to be five years ago – the maximum class size is 30 students per class. In addition, students have a maximum of three lectures per day at the faculty, which means six hours. Each subject is assigned to a different staff member.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are students from the English Department at the University of Tripoli. They are registered in the academic year 2018-2019. They were 60 students from various levels. A number of 20 students from each level have participated in the study. The levels are lower ones – semesters one to three, middle level – semesters four to six, and upper levels – semesters seven and eight.

Most of the targeted students in this study have been studying English for at least nine years at school before joining the faculty. However, these long years do not imply a high level of proficiency of English. This is due to many reasons, including poor teaching quality and large-size class issues. Therefore, students were selected from the three group levels to see if there is a correlation between language proficiency and the use of translation as a learning strategy.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

Indeed, learners would have different perspectives of the use of translation and a number of studies conducted to see if translation helps students' progress in developing their receptive and productive language skills. However, this study could be the first to apply Liao's

(2002) ITLS among Libyan students. It will discover Libyan students' perception of translation as a learning activity in learning English language.

The term 'translation' generally means the transfer of meaning from one language into another. It can be very complicated when it deals with sentences and texts. However, this study employs it at word and phrase levels. In other words, it deals with the term 'translation' when it is used as a strategy in learning English by the students in English Department at the University of Tripoli. It explores Libyan students' beliefs of translation and whether they employ it in their learning process. Thus, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- It examines different kinds of strategies involving the use of L1.
- It analyses students' opinions on the use of translation in their learning.
- It shows whether translation helps the learning and teaching of English.
- It defines translation as a strategy in learning English language.

3.4 Questions of the Study

With these objectives in mind, the study raises two research questions:

1. What do Libyan students think of translation in learning English?
2. To what extent does students' proficiency level relate to their use of translation as a strategy in learning English as a foreign language?

4. Data Collection Methods

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adopted from The Inventory for Translation as a learning Strategy (ITLS) (Liao, 2006). This questionnaire has been used in many other studies such as (Levine, 2003; Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Scott and de la Fuente, 2008). The questionnaire consists of 28 questions. Twenty-seven of these questions have five point of Likert Scale to choose from. That is, for every point each student has to choose from (never; seldom; sometimes; often; always).

All questions are related to using translation as a learning strategy in the learning process. The last point in the questionnaire gives a space for students to add any unmentioned points in the previous questions where they use translation as a strategy. The questionnaire was distributed to the students who willingly wanted to participate after a brief introduction on the purpose of the study was given. Instructions and clarification were given to the students whenever needed. It approximately took almost 30 minutes to finish the questionnaire.

4.1 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data from the questionnaires were analyzed by using Googlesheets. The quantitative data were computed to help in finding out the answers for the research questions. Therefore, descriptive data procedures such as *means* and *mode* were computed for each group in its own and for the whole groups together. This is done, so that the summarized results showing the extent to which all learners use translation as a strategy is obtained. Further, this would show the

correlation between language proficiency level and the use of translation in the learning process.

In fact, the computed analysis was used to exhibit the common aspect of using translation among the groups regardless of their language proficiency. This is shown in the following section of the discussion and results, which offers greater details on the analysis of the questionnaire and the students' beliefs of using translation as a strategy of learning English.

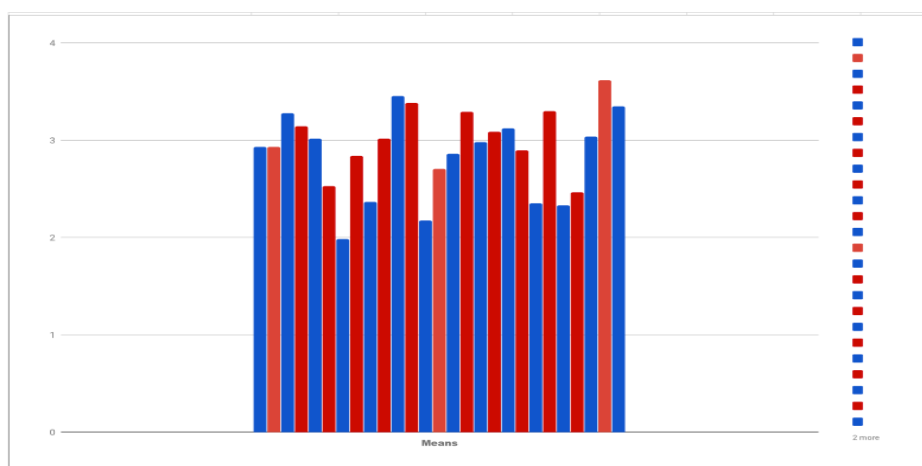
5. Results and Discussion

This part of the study provides the results obtained after analyzing the data of the study, then discussion is provided.

5.1 Mean and Mode of the Students' Responses

As the data were computed for analysis using Google sheets, the results show an overall average level use of translation as a strategy with ($M = 2.904734604$). The most frequent chosen answer for all the questions in the questionnaire was (Mode = 3) in all groups. Chart 1 below indicates the means of every question to all groups. This implies that most of the participants have positive attitudes towards using translation as a learning strategy.

Chart 1: Means of ITLS Items



The questionnaire used in this study involves examining students' receptive and productive skills, learning grammar and vocabulary, and using dictionaries. These will mainly answer the first research question of this study, which is to explore the students' belief of using translation as a learning strategy in learning English language at the University of Tripoli. Table 1 below shows the students' responses to all statements of the questionnaire. It shows the 'mean', which is the average of the data set and 'mode', which the most common number of the data set:

No.	Item Description	Mean	Mode
1	When reading an English text, I first translate it into Arabic in my mind to help me understanding its meaning.	3.27	3
2	I read Arabic translations in the course reference book to help me better understand English articles in the textbook.	2.52	1
3	After I read English articles, I use an available	2.93	3

	Arabic translation to check if my comprehension is correct.		
4	To write in English, I first brainstorm about the topic in Arabic.	2.92	1
5	When I write in English, I first think in Arabic and then translate my ideas into English.	3.14	5
6	When I listen to English, I first translate the English utterances into Arabic to help me understand the meanings.	3.01	3
7	Before I listen to a CD in English, I read its translation into Arabic first.	1.98	1
8	When I watch English TV or movies, I use Arabic subtitles to check my comprehension.	2.84	3
9	I listen to or read Arabic news in order to understand English radio or TV news better.	2.36	1
10	When speaking English, I first think of what I want to say in Arabic and then translate it into English.	3.01	3
11	If I forgot certain English words or expressions in the middle of a conversation, I translate from Arabic into English to help me keep the conversation going.	3.45	5
12	I memorize new English vocabulary by remembering their Arabic translation.	3.38	5
13	I learn English grammar through Arabic explanations of the English grammatical rules.	2.17	1

14	I use Arabic translation of grammatical terms to help me clarify the roles of the grammatical parts of English sentences.	2.70	1
15	I learn English idioms and phrases by reading their Arabic translation.	2.86	3
16	I use English-Arabic dictionary to help me learn English.	3.29	3
17	I use Arabic-English dictionary to help me learn English.	2.98	3
18	I use an electronic translation machine to help me learn English.	3.08	5
19	If I don't understand something in English, I ask other people to translate it into Arabic for me.	3.12	3
20	I ask questions about how Arabic expressions can be translated into English.	2.89	3
21	When the teacher assigns English articles for reading, I work with others to translate them.	2.35	1
22	I practice mentally translating my thoughts from Arabic into English in various situations.	3.30	3
23	I take notes in Arabic in my English class.	2.32	1
24	I write Arabic translations in my English textbooks.	2.46	1
25	I try to clarify the differences between English and Arabic through translation.	3.03	3
26	When reading English, I try to grasp the meaning of what I read without thinking of	3.61	3

Arabic equivalents.

- 27 When speaking English, I think of what I want to say in English without thinking first in Arabic. 3.34 4

Table (1) Mean and Mode of the Students' Responses

5.2 Students' Perceptions about Using Translation in Receptive Skills

As shown in Table1, the statements (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 21 and 26) that are related to the receptive skills (reading and listening) indicate and average level use of translation as a learning strategy. However, in comparing these two skills, translation is more likely used in reading than listening. This is in all three group levels participated in the study. The highest two means scored in the receptive skills was in items 26 and 1 ($M=3.61$ & $M=3.27$) regarding reading. It should be noted that these two statements are somehow examining different techniques of using translation. That is, item 1 is about understanding a text through mental translation while item 26 is about not using mental translation in understanding a text.

5.3 Students' Perceptions about Using Translation in Productive Skills

With regard to the seven items (4, 5, 10, 11, 23, 24, and 27) related to productive skills, the results also show an average level use of translation as a learning strategy. The highest score mean appears in item 11 ($M=3.45$). This, in fact, can be interpreted as that students use

translation as an immediate remedy when communication breaks down. The least scored mean ($M=2.32$) was in item 23 which is about taking notes by using translation in English classes. This is an expected low-scored item as using Arabic in writing or speaking is obviously not allowed by most teachers in the Department of English at the University of Tripoli.

5.4 Students' Perceptions about Using Translation in Learning Vocabulary and Grammar

Grammar and vocabulary items (12, 13, 14, and 15) as shown in Table 1 indicate a more tendency for using translation as a strategy in learning vocabulary than in grammar. The results show a medium level use for translation in the aspects of word retention, understanding grammatical terminology, idioms, and phrases. The highest scored mean ($M=3.38$) in item 13 which infers using translation in understanding grammatical rules. The least scored means ($M= 2.17$) was for item 17 which imply that students do not use translation as a strategy in understanding grammatical rules as much in comprehending other aspects.

5.6 Use of Dictionaries in Translation

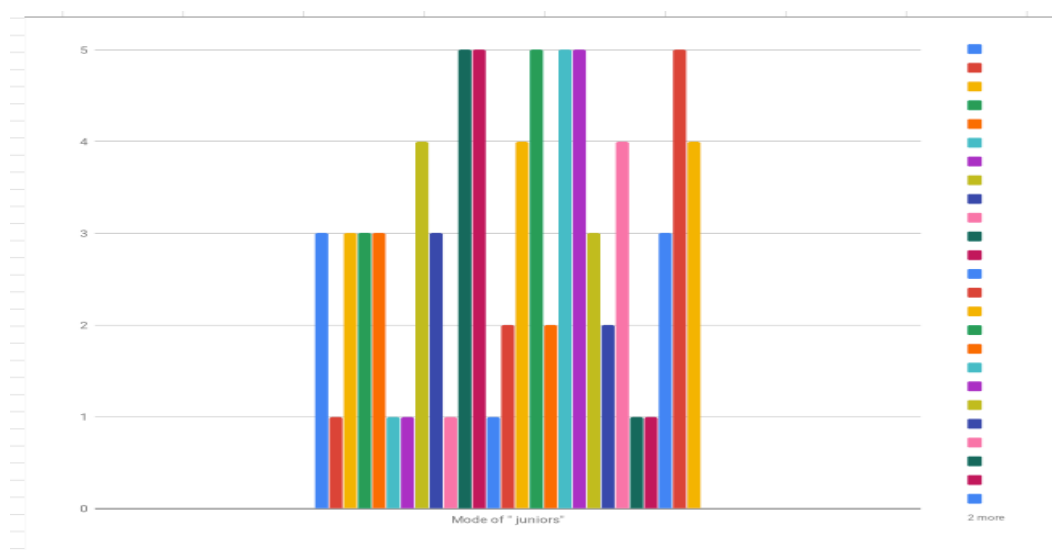
Five items (16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) were introduced to students in the questionnaire pertinent the use of dictionaries to look up words in their L1 in the learning process. As shown in Table 1, the highest means ($M=3.29$) was in item 16 while the lowest means ($M=2.89$) was in item 20. This indicates that students are using dictionaries more from English into Arabic rather than from Arabic into English. In fact, this is

a logical result because students who participated in the study are studying English as a specialization. Thus, they are more often working English into Arabic – meaning that translation more likely to happen. However, these results might be different if the population of the study was different. Further studies in this area are encouraged.

5.7 Language Proficiency and Translation as a Learning Strategy

The second research question in this study was to examine whether language proficiency level correlates with the use of translation as a learning strategy. In this respect, the results show positive indications among the three groups who participated in the questionnaire. The groups were from three different proficiency levels: lower, middle, and upper. Each group scored a different result. As for the freshmen or lower level, the results indicate that they opted for option 5 (always) as the highest selection in comparison with other two groups. Seven aspects of using translations were chosen under option 5 and eleven aspects for option 3 (sometimes), as shown in Chart 2 below.

Chart 2: The Mode of Lower Level (Freshmen)



On the other hand, Chart 3 shows that students of middle level group (juniors) have opted for option 5 as the most frequent answers in six aspects. Four students selected number 4 and seven students for item 3.

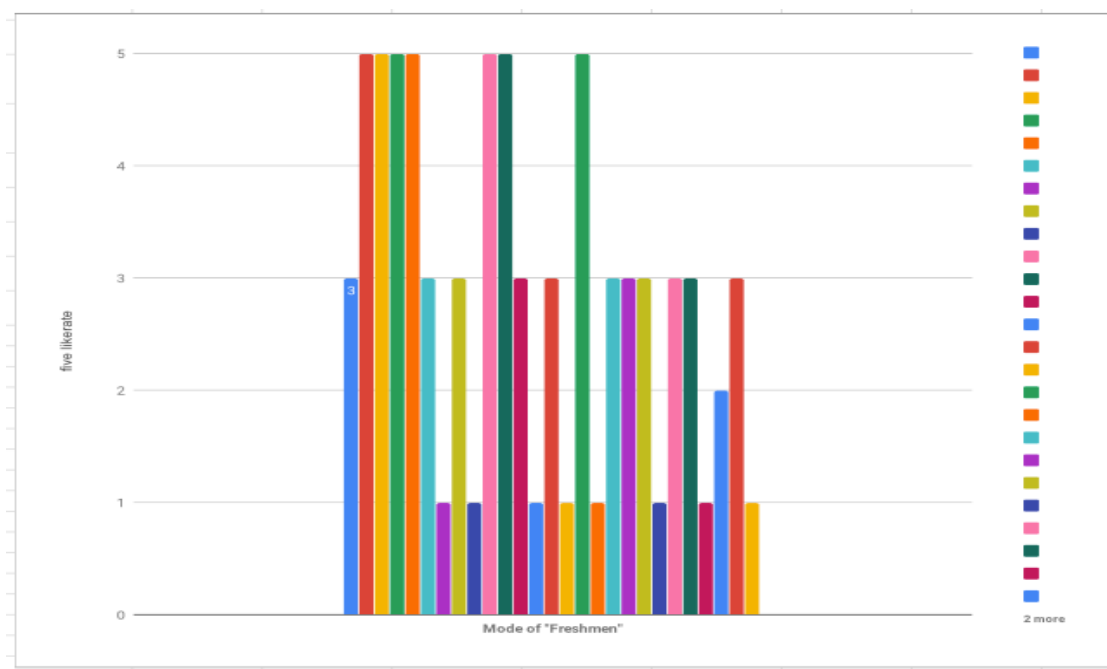
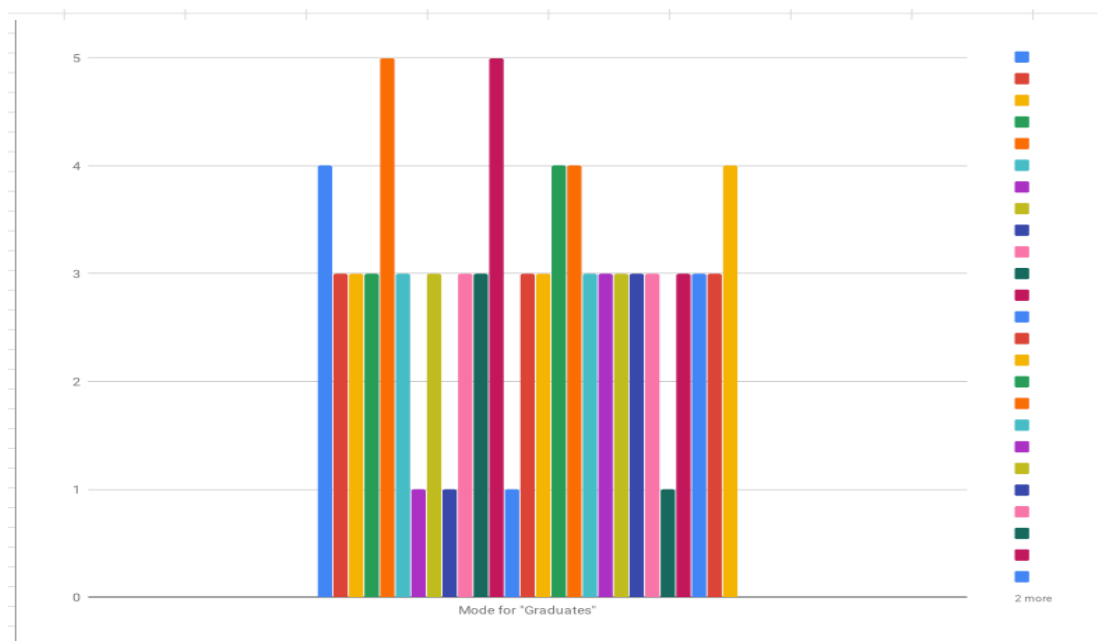


Chart 3: The Mode of Middle Level (Juniors)

Chart 4 below shows that students of upper levels (senior – graduates) whose language proficiency is higher than the previous two score the least for option 5 (always) marking only two aspects. Four students chose item 4 (Often). However, they marked the highest mode for option 3 in 17 aspects.

Chart 4: The Mode of Upper Level (Senior - Graduates)



6. Conclusion

This study has investigated the use of translation as a learning strategy to students in the Department of English at the University of Tripoli. It has raised two research questions and answered them by using a survey. The questionnaire was delivered to three groups, each with different proficiency level and explored various language skills. The overall results show high frequency level of translation use in productive skills (writing and speaking) than in receptive skills (listening and reading). This is indicated by the mode in all groups which show the highest level in items (5, 11, 12, and 18).

This study has also revealed that there is a correlation between language proficiency and the use of translation as indicated in the results of the study. Translation is used by students of lower proficiency level or freshmen to learn new words, to read, to write, and

to speak. In several situations, translation is present in their minds, and the use of dictionaries has indicated so. The questionnaire included an open-ended question which was the last item (item number 28). It gave students a room to express their minds of what they feel about using translation by adding any remarks where they use translation as a strategy in their learning. Most of the participants replied with short answer of “nothing to add”.

However, it is worth noting that some of the comments show extreme views about the use of translation. For example, one of the participants said, “Translation should be completely banned, a death sentence for using it”; whereas, another student said, “I cannot live without translation in my learning”. These attitudes are a reflection of the idea of using translation in language learning.

Although used in different shades, translation as a learning strategy is still consciously and unconsciously used among the students. There is enough evidence that learners of English at the English Department tend to use translation to help them comprehend lessons and actively participate in the classroom activities. The study has illustrated that students are more in favor of using translation as it allows them to compare and contrast and to interact efficiently. It offers them an environment, when it is used in classrooms, that is free from anxiety and stress. Therefore, this study suggests that teachers should prepare tasks involving the use of translation in their classroom activities when teaching language skills or grammar and vocabulary, as well as the techniques of using dictionaries effectively and efficiently.

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Reflective Teaching and Critical Thinking Abilities: Case Study of EFL Instructors at the University of Zawia

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Abstract

Reflection in the educational scope is known as reflective teaching that is considered as one of the requisites of the academic and professional growth. Theoretical studies show close relationship between reflective teaching and critical thinking. Theory views the promotion of critical thinking skills to be dependent on reflective teaching. This study is endeavored to investigate the reflective teaching category implemented most frequently by nine EFL instructors at Department of English Abu-Issa Faculty of Education, University of Zawia. It also aimed to determine the relationship between reflective teaching of the EFL instructors and their critical thinking ability. The research instruments used in this study are Teacher Reflectivity Questionnaire developed by Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand (2010) and Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal-Form (1980). The data were analyzed via SPSS and Pearson correlation coefficient. Findings of the study revealed that the most frequently used category of reflective teaching was meta-cognitive and that there was non-significant correlation between reflective teaching of the sample and their critical thinking.

Keywords: *Reflection; reflective teaching; critical thinking; EFL.*

1. Introduction

Reflection is an explanation of events – not just a description. It often involves revealing anxieties, errors, and weaknesses, as well as, strengths and successes. It is necessary to be mentioned that “reflection” is a type of thinking that aims to achieve better understanding and lead to explicit improvement. In English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, reflection is of immense importance to teacher development and is referred to as reflective teaching. Education theorists and practitioners have utilized the concept of reflective teaching for more than 50 years (Pacheco, 2005).

2. Literature Review

Researchers have abundantly studied the relationship between reflective teaching and critical thinking from a theoretical perspective. Practically, however, this issue is barely investigated. It is highly noticed that EFL instructors at Department of English at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education at the University of Zawia concentrate on assessing and evaluating their students’ learning more than critically thinking and reflectively reacting effectively to their own teaching.

2.1 Reflection

Studies conducted on reflection have indicated that the roots of the term *reflection* can be traced to John Dewey back in 1933 (Ghaslani, 2015). Reflection is considered to be part and parcel of learning and thinking. Reflection involves, but is not limited to, learning and teaching situations, and encompasses all manners of formal and informal occasions that are often quite complex as lectures,

laboratories, practicum placement, tutorial, participation in an assessment task, group work, unplanned events, responses to student or staff comments, personal, and even internal feelings.

For the teacher and student, these responses include what they think, conclude, and do both at the time and after the experience. In this respect, reflection is an active and process that can occur anytime and anywhere. It functions to help teachers and students to re-capture, re-live, make sense of, think about, contextualize, and evaluate an experience in order to make decisions and choices about what is to be experienced, how it is to be experienced, and what will or will not be done next (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985).

Naturally, reflection occurs all the time on the situations and the problems that one goes through. “What went well?”, “What went wrong?”, and “Why it went that way?” are questions posed on a regular basis when reflecting on situations. Reflection is a means of processing thoughts and feelings about an incident or a difficult situation, and gives a chance to come to terms with thoughts and feelings associated with it. Reflection can be particularly useful in dealing with a difficult challenge. This type of reflection may take place after standing back from something as in: ‘on reflection, I think you might be right’, or ‘on second thoughts, I realize I was upset because...’ This type of more focused reflection can lead to a new way of approaching a situation or tackling a similar problem in the future (Jasper, 2003).

2.2 Reflective Teaching

Reflective teaching is a process in which teachers think about their own teaching practices, analyze how knowledge is taught, and how the practice can be improved or altered for better learning outcomes. It is a means to improve a certain practice (cooperative learning and pair work for instance) or to concentrate on a difficulty that students need to overcome. Further, it involves changes in the way of teaching and the role of teacher in the teaching process.

Teachers, who explore their own teaching through reflection, develop changes in attitudes and perspectives which they believe can facilitate their professional growth as teachers, as well as, reinforce the support they provide to their students. Similar to other self-inquiry practices, the reflective teaching is really demanding, since making recordings of lessons can be time-consuming (Negari and Beiranvan, 2015).

However, teachers who are engaged in reflective analysis of their own teaching report that it is an effective tool for self-evaluation and professional development. Reflective teaching as a deliberate, analytical sort of thinking has made researchers study another form of conscious thinking known as critical thinking. Theoretically, there exists a very close link between critical thinking and reflective teaching (Negari and Beiranvan, 2015).

Reflective thinking as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge (Dewey, 1998) sets teaching on a constructivist and inquiry-oriented basis.

Dewey's considerations have been clarified by explaining that being an effective "reflective practitioner" is more than enhancement of practice and development of some other skills and competences.

A reflective practitioner must base his attitude towards teaching on thorough understanding of self, society, and morality. This attitude encompasses stopping, stepping back to notice, examining, analyzing, and making inquiries about different matters and issues in different occurrences (Leitch and Day, 2000). There is no doubt that reflective teaching paves the path for teachers and their peers by providing meaningful and effective discussion about the processes of teaching and learning which inspire the appropriate changes in teachers' mindsets and consequently lead to significant improvements in teaching outcomes.

Based to Wajnryb (1999), the intentional observation that teachers make on their own teaching gives them the opportunity to discover their classrooms from a new perspective other than that they are actually engaged in; it is a way of providing clearer vision and stronger concentration; it is an effective way of collecting classroom data and authentic information regarding teaching. Self-observation is a resource for meta-language to teachers (the language used with peers to reflect on classroom situations, plans, and actions).

Wajnryb claims that deliberate observation improves the awareness of classroom realities and sufficient information which direct EFL teachers towards discussions and reflections on classroom situations

with colleagues, and the decisions taken would be more strategized and, therefore, fruitful.

Ramirez (1992) believes that reflective teaching is unquestionably a valid and reliable tool for effective practice of teaching. “In the second language classroom, reflective teaching may entail asking a number of ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions about teaching practices, reasons for language study, and explanations for students’ success or failure” (Pacheco, 2005). Therefore, a reflective teacher is a person who critically thinks about his teaching and is creative enough to generate proper, new ideas, and synthesizes these ideas to put them into practice so as to develop his performance professionally and improve students’ learning process.

2.3 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking, generally, refers to that mode of thinking – about any subject, content, or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and evaluating it. Critical thinking is distinguished by certain features such as being self-directed, self-disciplined, and self-corrective thinking. Moreover, it is accompanied by the presupposition for the critical thinker to be flexible and open to change rigorous standards and well-aware of the consequences of each decision being made.

It also entails communicating effectively and solving problems brilliantly as well as being willing and committed to overcome native egocentrism, obstinacy, and prejudice. On the basis of what is mentioned above, reflective teaching and critical thinking could be

regarded as two faces of the same coin. Therefore, a practical study that investigates teachers' reflectivity and their critical thinking abilities would undoubtedly be a solid base for further practical studies.

Lewis and Smith (1993) see that critical thinking has its roots in two basic disciplines: philosophy and psychology. It has also been noted that specialists in the field of education have taken part in discussions regarding critical thinking. Benjamin Bloom and his associates are inevitably mentioned in this category. Bloom's classification is hierarchical, with comprehension at the bottom and evaluation at the top. The three highest levels (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) regularly represent critical thinking (Kennedy, Fisher, and Ennis, 1991).

The educational perspective is beneficial because it is based on many years of classroom experience and observations of student behavior, in contrast with both the philosophical and the psychological traditions. Some scholars, however, have noted that the educational approach is limited in its ambiguity. Concepts within the classification lack the clarity necessary to lead instruction and evaluation in a useful way (Sternberg, 1986).

3. Methodology of the Study

The researchers have followed qualitative research method to conduct this study. The researchers based on literature review as a secondary resource to present information and facts about the topic of the study and interviewed nine teachers as a primary resource to reach findings of this study.

3.1 Scope of the Study

The scope of the current study is considered as extension of several attempts that made on the self-development teacher investigations similarly to the study conducted by (Negari and Beiranvand, 2015) that investigates Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching and their critical thinking abilities.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to examine the role of reflective teaching in critical thinking ability of Libyan EFL teachers and to support the theoretical link between reflective teaching and critical thinking with empirical evidence. In this regard, Omar (2019) recommends that teachers should encourage their students to think critically and be themselves. This study, also, aimed to determine the effect of some demographic variables on teachers' reflection.

As a systematic endeavor to find a solution for the mention problems or at least draw the attention on such an issue, the researchers decided to conduct this descriptive study aiming to:

- (1) investigate the category of reflective teaching that is employed most frequently by EFL instructors at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education and
- (2) determine the relationship between reflective teaching and critical thinking among EFL instructors at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education.

3.3 Participants of the Study

Nine EFL instructors, majoring in English language teaching, is the sample population of this study. The researchers chose the sample randomly from Department of English at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education.

3.4 Questions of the Study

To reach findings of this study, the researchers posed the following questions to answer:

- What category of reflective teaching is employed most frequently by EFL instructors at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education?
- Is there any significant relationship between reflective teaching of EFL instructors at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education and their critical thinking ability?

3.5 Instrumentation of the Study

Two quantitative instruments have been deployed in this study. A questionnaire to gauge teacher reflectivity and an appraisal form to measure teacher's critical thinking ability.

Teacher Reflectivity Questionnaire

The questionnaire is adopted from Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand (2010). It includes 29 items on a frequency 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 5= always. This questionnaire measures affective, cognitive, metacognitive, practical, and critical dimensions. It is valid and highly reliable as an instrument for measuring teachers' reflectivity. Table (1) below shows the five categories of the questionnaire items

Components	Questions	Definition
Practical	1-6	Actual act of reflection by using different tools, such as keeping journals, talking to colleagues
Cognitive	7-12	Conscious efforts for professional development by attending conferences and reading professional books and journals
Learner	13-15	Deals with knowledge of learners and their affective/ cognitive states.
Meta-cognitive	16-22	Deals with teachers' knowledge of their personality, their definition of learning and teaching, their view of their profession
Critical	23-29	Deals with socio-political dimension of teaching

Table (2) below shows detailed classification for the mean scores of reflective teaching questionnaire based on Oxford's 1990 criteria of mean scores to understand the Likert scale classifications.

Mean score	Likert Scale	Classification
1.0 to 1.4	never	Low
1.5 to 2.4	rarely	
2.5 to 3.4	sometimes	Medium
3.5 to 4.4	often	High
4.5 to 5.0	always	

Watson and Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal

Watson-Glaser Critical thinking appraisal form (Watson and Glaser, 1980) is used to measure teachers' critical teaching. It includes 80 items each followed by two to five alternatives which should be completed within one hour. This Appraisal includes five subsections that measure the aspects of critical thinking defined by Watson and

Glaser as drawing inferences based on factual statements, recognition of assumptions in a number of assertive statements, making deductions to decide if conclusions are legitimate or not, and evaluating arguments as being strong or weak (Negari and Beiranvan, 2015). The final score of the test can be classified as Watson-Glaser assessment criteria into: Strong (from 60 to 100); Average (from 40 to 60); and Weak (from 0 to 40).

Strong (from 60 to 100)

Average (from 40 to 60)

Weak (from 0 to 40)

Upon collecting the questionnaire and the appraisal from, the data were analyzed and the findings were extracted.

4. Data Analysis

To determine the category of reflective teaching that is employed most frequently by EFL instructors at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education, the mean was calculated via SPSS software for each category, and the categories were ranked. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine whether there was any significant relationship between EFL teachers' reflective teaching and their critical thinking ability or not.

The Overall Mean Score of Reflective Teaching Categories

The following table (3) shows the mean scores of the different reflective teaching categories along with their ranks. Meta-cognitive category occupied the highest rank on top of the other for categories with mean of (4.26), followed by cognitive category which took the

second rank with mean of (3.78). Additionally, learner category had the third rank with mean of (3.6). The fourth rank went to practical category with mean of (3.48). Eventually, critical category occupied the last rank with mean of (3.45).

Categories	Mean	Rank
Practical	3.48	4
Cognitive	3.78	2
Learner	3.6	3
Meta-cognitive	4.26	1
Critical	3.45	5

Practical Category

The following table (4) shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each item of group A (practical category). The mean score for A1 and A2 was high (4.444 and 4.333). For A3, A4 and A5 each was medium (3.222, 3.333 and 3.333), and finally A6 was the only low score on this category (2.250).

Code	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
A1	1. I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.	4.4444	0.52705
A2	2. I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice/feedback	4.3333	0.70711
A3	3. After each lesson, I write about the accomplishments/failures of that lesson or I talk about the lesson to a colleague.	3.2222	0.83333
A4	4. I discuss practical/theoretical issues with	3.3333	1.11803

	my colleagues.		
A5	5. I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices.	3.3333	1.22474
A6	6. I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance.	2.2500	1.48805

Cognitive Category

The following table (5) shows the mean score and standard deviation for the six items of group B (cognitive category). The mean scores for items B1, B2, B4, B5, and B6 were high as mentioned respectively (4.111), (3.500), (4.000), (3.888), and (3.833). The only low score was B3 with (3.375).

Code	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
B1	7. I read books/articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance	4.1111	0.92796
B2	8. I participate in workshops / conferences related to teaching / learning issues.	3.5000	1.41421
B3	9. I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences.	3.3750	1.59799
B4	10. I look at journal articles or search the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.	4.0000	1.00000
B5	11. I carry out small-scale research activities in my classes to become better informed of learning/teaching processes.	3.8889	1.26930

B6	12. I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method for investigating them.	3.8333	0.98319
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Learner Category

The following table (6) shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each item of group C (learner category). The mean scores of the two items C1 and C3 were high (4.000 and 3.777). As for C2, it had a low score of (3.222).

Code	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
C1	13. I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences.	4.0000	0.75593
C2	14. I talk to my students to learn about their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests and abilities.	3.2222	1.09291
C3	15. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.	3.7778	0.83333

Meta-cognitive Category

The following table (7) shows the mean scores and standard deviation for each item of group D (meta-cognitive). All items of this category had high scores: D1 had a mean score of (4.111), D2 had a mean score of (4.000), D3 had a mean score of (4.000), D4 had a mean

score of (4.666), D5 had a mean score of (4.333), D6 had a mean score of (4.333), and finally D7 had (4.111) as a mean score.

Code	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
D1	16. As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.	4.1111	0.92796
D2	17. I think of the ways my biography or my background affects the way I define myself as a teacher.	4.0000	1.22474
D3	18. I think of the meaning or significance of my job as a teacher.	4.0000	0.70711
D4	19. I try to find out which aspects of my teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction.	4.6667	0.50000
D5	20. I think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.	4.3333	1.00000
D6	21. I think of the positive/negative role models I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice.	4.3333	0.86603
D7	22. I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.	4.1111	0.78174

Critical Category

The following table (8) shows the mean score of each item of group E (critical category). The following items had high mean scores: E1

(4.000), E2 (4.000), E3 (3.555) and E6 (3.555). Two items had medium mean scores E5 (3.333) and E7 (3.375). Finally, only one item had a low mean score, E4 (2.375).

Code	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
E1	23. I think about instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes.	4.0000	1.22474
E2	24. I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination, and gender bias.	4.0000	1.50000
E3	25. In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women and minorities, and poverty.	3.5556	1.23603
E4	26. I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views.	2.3750	1.30247
E5	27. I think of ways through which I can promote tolerance and democracy in my classes and in the society in general.	3.3333	1.41421
E6	28. I think about the ways gender, social class, and race influence my students' achievements.	3.5556	1.58990
E7	29. I think of outside social events that can influence my teaching inside the class.	3.3750	0.91613

Watson-Glaser Appraisal

Table 9 below shows the total score and percentage of each participant on Watson-Glaser critical thinking appraisal. The participants achieved 5 high total scores 15 (88%), 14 (82%), 13 (76%), 13 (76%), and 11 (64%); and the following three average scores 9 (52%), 9 (52%), and 8 (47%); and only one low score 6 (35%).

Participant No.	Total Score	Percentage
1	14	82
2	9	52
3	15	88
4	13	76
5	8	47
6	6	35
7	11	64
8	13	76
9	9	52

Correlation between Reflective Teaching and Critical Thinking

Table 10 below shows the value of Pearson correlation (0.283) along with Sig. (2-tailed) which is (0.461). According to these results calculated by SPSS, the relationship between the two variables of the study (reflective teaching and critical thinking) is weak because (Pearson' $r = 0.283$, closer to 0) and is non-significant since Sig. (2-tailed) = $0.283 > 0.05$).

Correlations			
		Reflective teaching	Critical thinking
Reflective teaching	Pearson correlation	1	0.283
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.461
	N	9	9
Critical thinking	Pearson correlation	0.283	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.461	
	N	9	9

5. Findings of the Study

Based on the data analysis and answering the questions of the study, the researchers have obtained the following findings:

- This study presented a high overall frequency of practicing reflective teaching. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Faghihi (2016) in which a low general level of reflective teaching in the Iranian context. In addition, this finding is not supported by the findings of Ghaslani (2015) who also proved a low level of teaching reflectivity in the Iranian context. The data analysis has shown that EFL instructors in the Libyan context have a higher level of reflection.
- The analysis has shown that the most frequently employed category of reflective teaching is “meta-cognitive”. This finding is in line

with the findings of Faghihi (2016) who also found the category “meta-cognitive” of the highest frequency. Akbari, Bhezadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) define meta-cognitive category of reflective teaching as the category that deals with the character of the teacher, his own way of defining teaching and learning, and his viewpoint on his own profession.

- The data analysis of this current study has shown a non-significant correlation between reflective teaching and critical thinking. The analysis disproves the theoretically-proven relationship between reflective teaching and critical thinking. This is against the findings of Negari (2015) whose results agreed with theory by finding a significant correlation between reflective teaching and critical thinking abilities through practical research. This can be justified by taking into consideration that the practice of reflective teaching is classified into multiple categories which may or may not be related to critical thinking.
- The data analysis has shown that reflection is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. It enables all those who have an educational interest to get a very reliable record that can be used in the short and long-term improvement plans.
- The analysis, also, has shown that this study was conducted and obtained very fruitful results that can be concluded as EFL instructors at English Abu-Isa Faculty of Education clearly enjoy high general level of reflection, but there was no significant correlation between reflective teaching and critical thinking.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the researchers have presented the following recommendations:

- This study has valuable findings that can assist other interested researchers to conduct future studies.
- It is highly recommended to conduct the same study on larger sample population with regard to some demographic information such as gender, age, years of experience, and the like.
- It is strongly recommended to use multiple instruments to investigate the research aims.
- The researchers recommend conducting other correctional studies concerned with determining the relation between reflective teaching and other psychological issues such as motivation, self-esteem, attitude, and the like.
- Based on the analysed results, it is recommended that EFL instructors in Libyan context concentrate more on other categories of reflective teaching in order to better develop their critical thinking abilities and, therefore, to have better outcomes of their teaching.

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The Effect of Gender Class in Speaking English Publically: Case Study on Omar Al-Mukhtar University's Students

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Abstract

Learning a new language is a concern of a lot of language researchers and educators in the field of language teaching and language learning, concerning mainly on the methods and strategies used to achieve it. This paper is spotlighting about the effect of gender on using English in public situations. The researchers passed through different supporters and refusals to the idea of gender effective phenomena, yet they continued in their study. To search about this phenomenon, the researchers have conducted an experiment on male and female groups of students of English Language Department at Arts and Sciences College, Derana at Omar Al-Mukhtar University to investigate the assumption of having different scales between the male and female genders. After analyzing the data obtained, the researchers have reached several findings that support the assumption provided, where the male group of this study shows high participation in learning speaking skill rather than the female group.

Keywords: *Gender; teaching speaking; language acquisition.*

1. Introduction

A large number of researchers worked on the issue of gender, including spoken language learning power, motivating, teacher perceptions, learning expressive style and scheme, classroom fundamental interaction, precept materials, testing and pedagogies. Many studies that examined gender as a variable in the use of language learning scheme reported that significant gender differences always are the same, and they show greater use of language learning scheme. Some researchers have two senses of finding that there are no significant differences between male and female in term of self-efficacy. Other studies have found no noticeable differences in condition of autonomous linguistic communication learning between males and females.

2. Literature Review

To conduct this study, the researchers search in the books, journals and online websites to find out the literature review about this phenomenon.

2.1. Male and Female Variation

The nature of the connection between the two phenomena, sexuality and spoken communication learning, clay elusive and is seen differently by different assimilator and educators. Some field of study continue to charm to variation and interaction also linguistics methodology, treating gender as a variable, while others, grounded in

critical, poststructuralist, and women's liberationist theory, approach gender as a system of social sexual congress and discursive practice.

Gender itself, then, is considered as one of the main factors that influence second speech eruditeness (Andreou, Vlachos, and Andreou, 2005) and ignoring its effect may lead to inappropriate selection of scholarship environments and materials for both male and female language prentice and especially in co-educational asylum.

Different aspects about why gender differences influence learning have been canvassed, some point to biological feature (Ning, 2010). On the other hand, many researchers rejected this relationship, suggesting instead the social and cultural reason for causing the huge opening between men and fair sex in many fields including language learning (Ning, 2010; Kaiser, 2006). On the whole work which have examined the relationship between sex and strategy use have come to mixed termination.

Ehrman and Oxford (1989) discovered distinct gender deviation in strategy use. The study by Green and Oxford (1995) came to the same conclusion. Ehrman and Oxford's (1989) study, however, failed to discover any grounds of differing encyclopedic strategy use between the sexes. It might be concluded that, although hands and womanhood do not always demonstrate differences in language-learning strategy use, where differences are found, women tend to use more language-learning scheme than men.

According to Rosenfeld and Berko (1990), different gender does not affect the communicating apprehension, claiming that "gender is

not significant in communication anxiety” (p. 125). Although the male person tends to be shy while female tend to have more public speaking anxiety, there seem to be a few consistent differences between the genders.

Bacon’s (1992) findings are rather in reverse with that of others. In his study on the human relationship between gender and the use of processing strategies, he came to the conclusion that hands and fair sex adjust their strategies differently to the difficulty of the passages. In other words, workforce and women judge their horizontal surface of comprehension differently, and generally men are more confident than women in the use of language learnedness strategies when they are exposed to authentic textiles.

However, a study by Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2006) found that naturally, female look more anxious than male. On a similar vein, from a study conducted by Machida (2001), she examined Sunshine State Japanese language class anxiety based on gender differences and the three senses of finding reflected that female learners are more anxious than the male counterpart.

On the contrary, Kitano (2001), in his research in the context of English language as a foreign language, found that in comparison to female student, male scholars tend to be more anxious while comprehending a second language. The data show that male students are found to be more apprehensive in speaking as they perceive their actor’s line to be less competent than that of the female students.

2.2. Male and Female Anxiety

For the differences in anxiety degree between male and female student, several possible explanations which relate to the factors of sureness, certificate and favorable position should be taken into thoughtfulness. Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2006) also honorably mentioned that female scholarly students might flavor more anxious when it comes to oral examination activity in division. This is due to the fact that sometimes the female scholarly students need to smell secured in class; thus, they try to avoid any form of activities that might unmasking their mistake in nominal head of others. This is due to the fact that some of them are more concerning about ‘maintaining their faces’ in forepart of others, especially male students.

Female students naturally do not like to appear as less proficient and less confident (Bruce and others, 2005). Therefore, they escalate their anxiety whenever they are asked to get involved with activities like speaking and listening. This somehow is portrayed as a demonstration of helplessness in front of others especially while presenting in front of the opposite gender (Tom, Johari, Rozaimi, and Huzaimah, 2013). Some male students on the other hand, do have more self-control condition and the ability to detach themselves from unpleasant tactile sensation. In short, some of them might adopt the ‘shutting down’ technique where they appear to be more lie back and careless exteriorly.

In addition, a study conducted by Zhao Na (2007) has also found that male pupils are more anxious in English class where the experience

is considered as nightmare for them. This agrees with Uduosoro (2011) who found no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Another deviation is that woman is more passive than men. If they are talking, they tend to show that they are not sure about what they are saying. The passivity and tentativeness of cleaning woman in communicating are also affirmed (Vanfossen, 2001).

2.3. Male and Female Strategies of Learning

Female and male also had different preferences in terminal figure of working with a mathematical radical, either single-gender activity mathematical group or mixed-sexual urge group. More males than females preferred working with mixed-sex group. Most of the female respondents preferred working with single sex group. Males' penchant in workings with different sex show their tendency to challenge the differences in more dynamic situations; whereas, females tend to be more monotonous showing their less confidence and less sure thing. Some schools changed their types from single-sex to co-educational over time (Ku and Kwak, 2013).

From the biological viewpoint, female and male students also differ fundamentally in degree of cognitive power and learning style. These differences are derived both from basic physiological differences, such as differences in the developing of brain, and from differences in higher-level cortical functions (Keefe, 1982). The theorists of second language accomplishment believe that female learners show possible superiority in their second language learning process.

Other studies show that gender is not an important divisor in determining students' grounds of success and bankruptcy. In other words, English as a foreign language learners did not differ at all in terms of gender in their attributions to either success or nonstarter with obedience to the reasons involving ability, effort, pursuit, task difficulty, circumstances and factors about teachers and school.

A study by Humphrey Davy (1998) on classroom discourse in a side comp school appearance the same trend. Her information consists of conversation recorded during an authentic classroom body process where students worked in both mixed- and single-sex activity chemical groups during an English lesson. The results show that in single-sex conversations, the girls' linguistic strategies were characterized by "hedging their individuation, avoidance of being over dominant and a tendency to reflect equality within the group" (Davies, 1998, p. 16). The boys' way of conversing was more competitive, where every boy was striving to represent himself as a powerful speaker and directing the discussion. In the mixed-sex groups, the male verbalized utterances tended to blockage other's turn of events while females used more co-op strategies. This led to the girls' speaking turns becoming shorter and giving the boys a chance to green goods thirstier turns.

Number of researchers (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Ellis, 1994) continue to assume female superiority in language development. Many other scholars concluded their research studies with the claim that females have an advantage over males in language acquisition both in first and second languages. Beyond language learning strategies and comprehension, males and females also appear to differ in language

learning motive. Written report suggest that males and females differ in general academician motivation and in particular that females are more motivated to learn side than males (Mori and Gobel, 2006).

3. Methodology of the Study

To fulfil this study, the researchers conducted a methodology that fits the purpose of this study.

3.1. Problem of the Study

Several studies and research in the Libyan context reveal that female university students at English departments at Libyan universities have less participations, namely in speaking, than male students. This might be attributed to some social aspects as shyness and other social norms, so the researchers see that there is a problem that needs to be investigated and to find remedies.

The researcher based on Bacon's (1992), which came to the conclusion that men are more confident than women in the use of language learnedness strategies when they are exposed to authentic textiles. Also, Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2006) mentioned that female students might be more anxious when it comes to oral examination activity in division. This is due to the fact that sometimes the female students need to be secured in class.

3.2. Hypothesis of the Study

The researchers of this study put a hypothesis that female students are less active in learning and speaking English in the classroom. So, the researchers work out to identify a clear evidence of gender effect on

learning and speaking English. The researcher based their hypothesis on Ning (2010) suggestion that the social and cultural reasons are the main elements on language learning.

3.3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate about the reasons that stand behind female students in the English Department at OMU not participations in English conversations or activities inside the classroom. this study, also, might open the doors for further studies in this field.

3.4. Participants of the Study

At the early phase of our experiment, the population was 100 students from all levels of English Department at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. The researchers made a level testing and selected a sample consisting of 30 students. The level testing is designed to divide the participants according to the international language level testing. The researchers' concern to select the students in intermediate level for the sample was consisting of 15 males and 15 females. The researchers have divided the participants into 3 groups, Group (A) consists of 15 females, Group (B) consists of 15 males, and Group (C) is mixed of group A and B.

3.5. Design of the Course in the Study

The course was designed to teach the mixed group (C) for 1 month and would be separated into 2 groups (A) and (B) for the next month. Monitoring the develop of the student and measuring their progress was

connected to different scales chosen by the researchers, taking into consideration the following scales to measure their progress:

No	Aspect	Indicators	Scoring
1	Content	The learner generates ideas properly and provide supporting details.	Correct 10 Half correct 7 Almost correct 3 Incorrect 0
2	Organization	The learner organizes ideas coherently and effectively.	Correct 10 Half correct 7 Almost correct 3 Incorrect 0
3	Word Choice	The learner uses specific and effective words to convey the intended message.	Correct 10 Half correct 7 Almost correct 3 Incorrect 0
4	Grammar	The learner uses correct use of grammar.	Correct 10 Half correct 7 Almost correct 3 Incorrect 0
5	pronunciation	The learner uses correct articulation and pronunciation.	Correct 10 Half correct 7 Almost correct 3 Incorrect 0

4. Findings of the Study

The course was presented to the students during 8 weeks by 16 hours a month. Every week, the researchers registered their progress by a special score table designed to show their achievement during the

class. Students are required to give a single talk and doing presentation. In addition, every student is compulsory required to participate on a mixed presentation during the first two months. The following chart shows the first two weeks' participation according to the scaled mentioned:

Figure 1. Histogram of single talk of group (C) during the first two weeks.

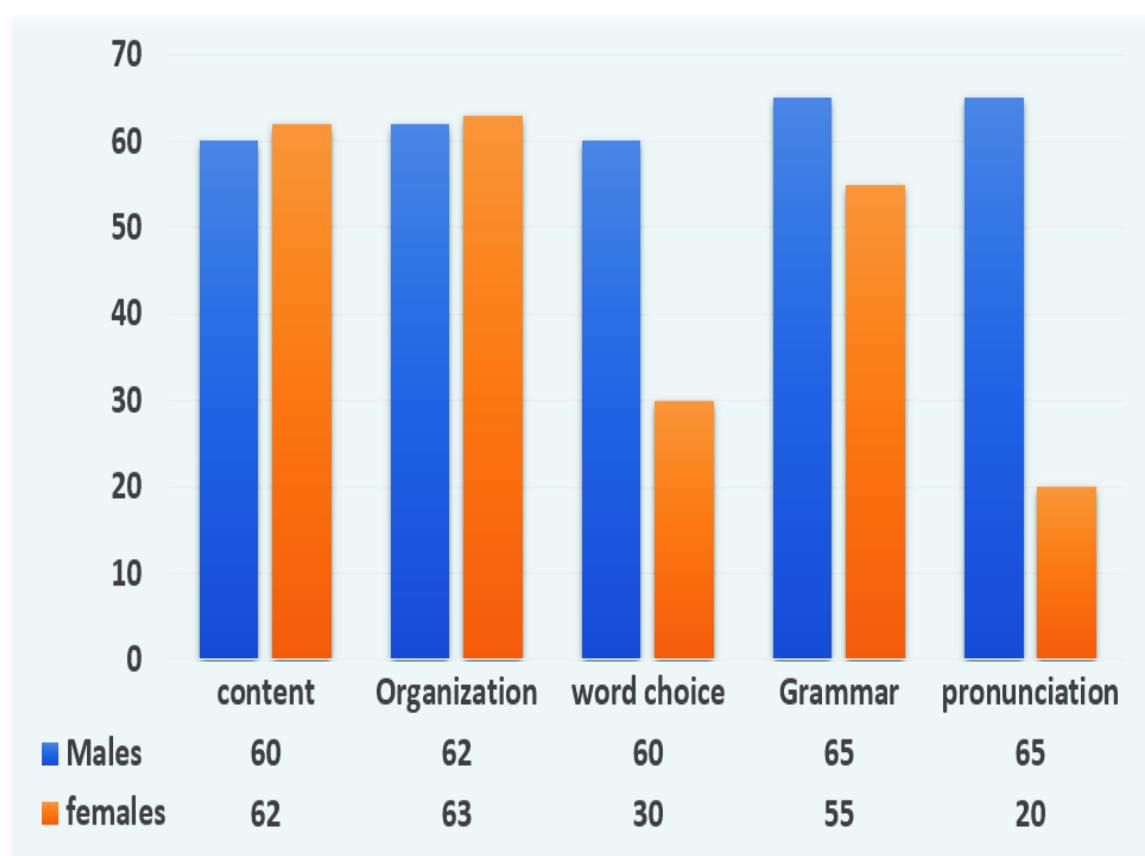
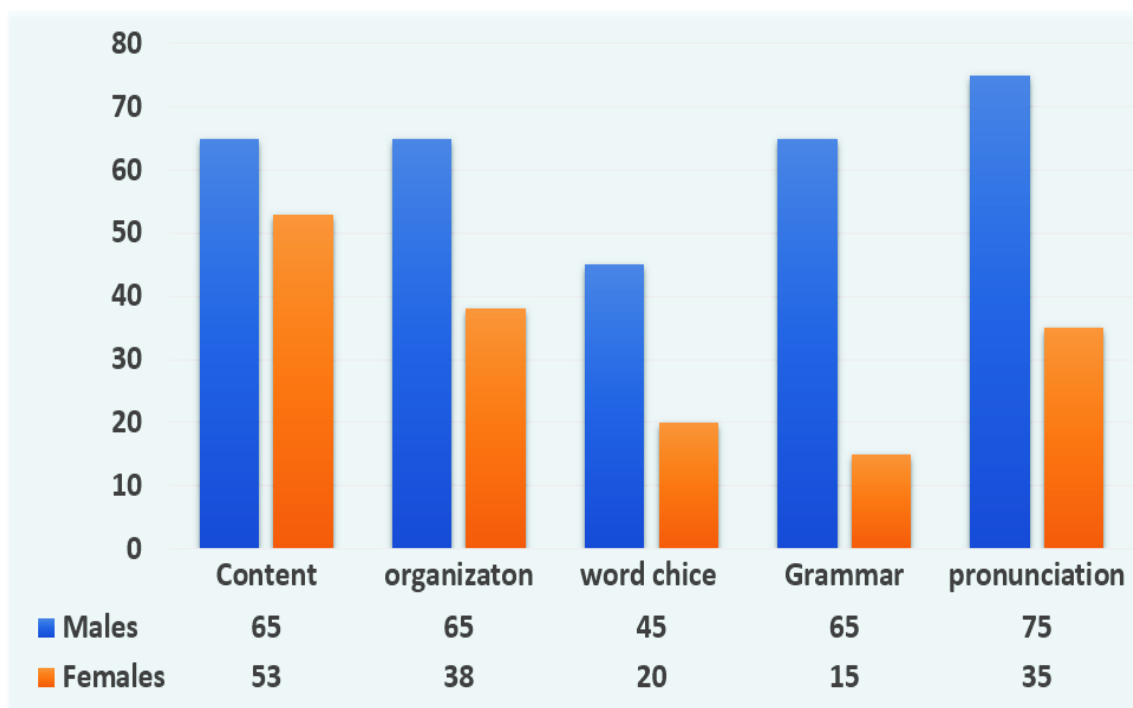


Figure 2. Histogram of mixed presentation of group (C) during the first two weeks.



As shown on Figure 1, the males' performance was very noticeable during the first two weeks. Whereas, Figure 2, females show less performance than expected. The data analysis shows that the less performance of females was due to their shyness and culture background which prevent them to participate in the mixed group.

To increase their progress, the researchers decided to allow the students to choose their topics to present during the classes. The single topic and presentation were easy to decide, but the participants were struggling to choose the mixed presentation. The following chart for the last two weeks shows a significant decreasing on their progress level.

Figure 3. Histogram of single talk of group (C).

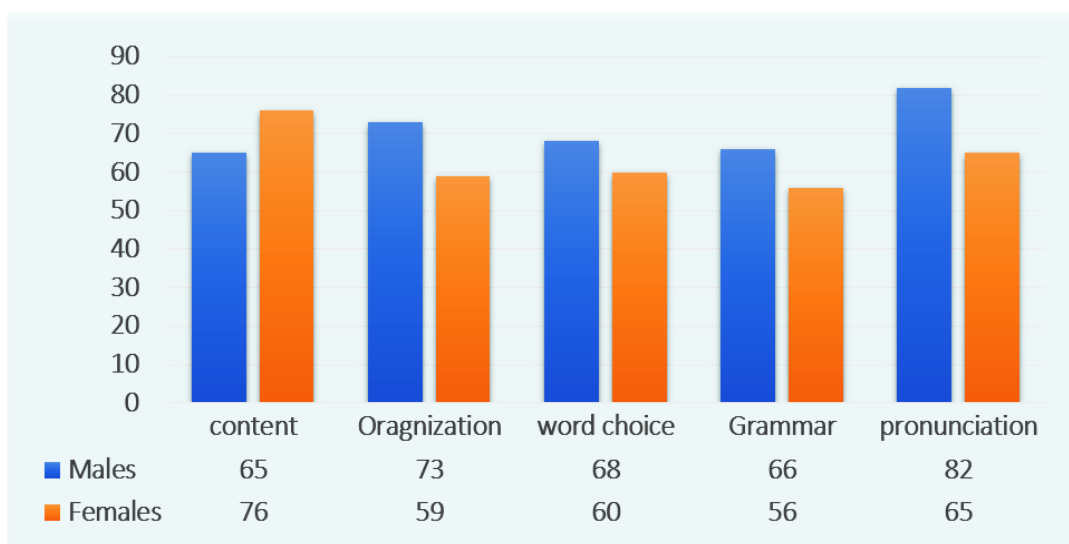
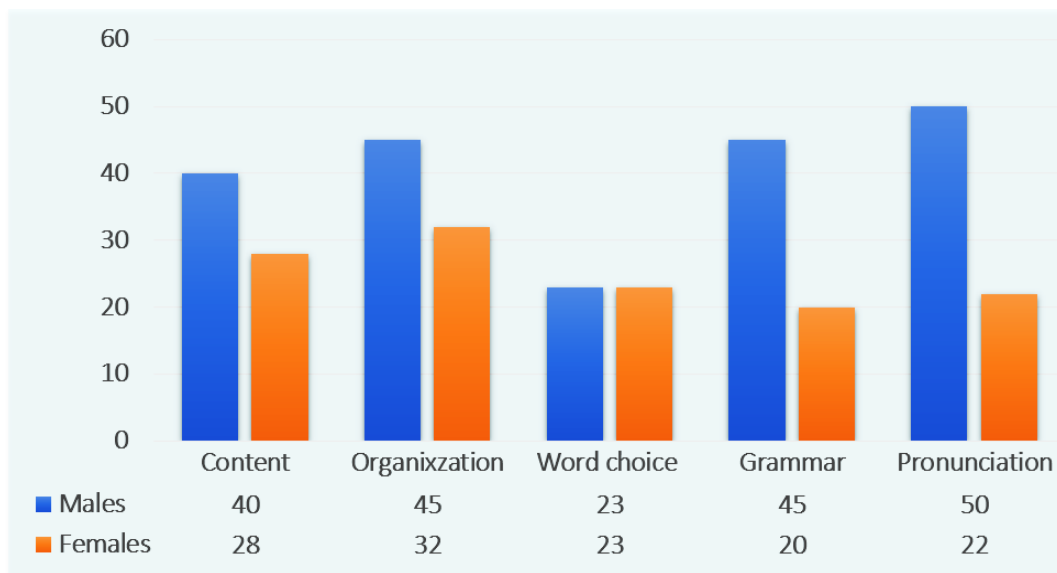


Figure 4. Histogram of mixed presentation of mixed group (C).



The result shows a noticeable decreasing in both genders attitude, which raised a question for the researchers to pointing out the reasons behind it.

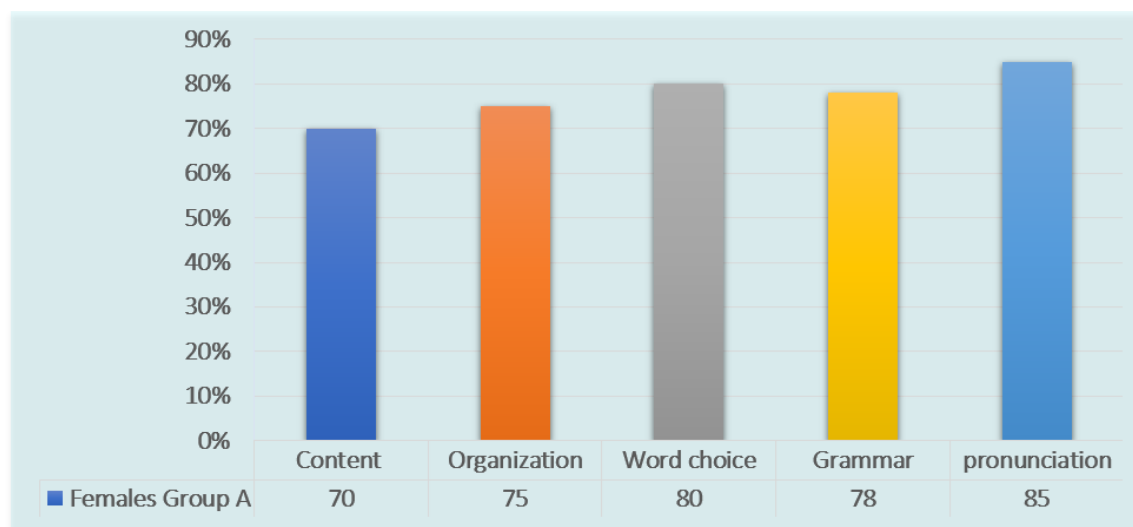
At the end of the first month, the researchers have interviewed separately the students and asked them about their experience during

the classes. Most answers by females show their dissatisfaction of participating with males especially during the mixed presentation. On other side, male students expressed their resentments about the females' hesitations and their less share on choosing topics and their performance on stage. They also pointing on how they suffered to exercise with the females for some cultural background.

The next phase of the experiment was to divide the mixed group (C) into two groups: females Group (A) and males Group (B). The researchers gave every group a chance to choose their talk and presentation with other party. During the classes, the researchers noticed that females participating increased gradually counter to their presence in the mixed group, and the nature of topic changed completely.

Female group started to talk about women rights, their role on society, and other interesting topics. The following chart shows female group progress during the first two weeks of the second month.

Figure 5. Histogram of single talk group (A).



In contraire, the progress in Group (B) changed slightly 30% of the participants' progress decreased slightly; whereas, 70% of the students' contributions increased and their attitude on the class as well. Focusing on the 30% and the reasons of such less performance, the researchers found that the students had lost the spirit of challenge and competence with females. The following chart shows the performance of Group (B) as a single class.

Figure 6. Histogram of single talk of group (B).

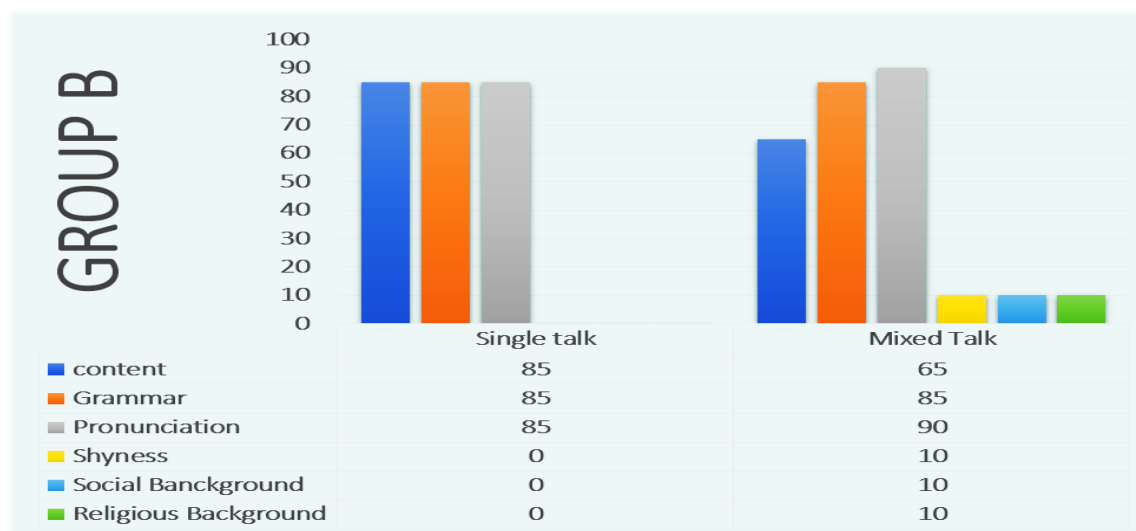


By reaching to the end of our experiment, the researchers decided to examine the students' performance and their achievement. The participants were subjected to exams to measure their progress and estimate their achievement. Every student was tested separately and then asked to participate in a mixed exam. The results show huge differences between their individual test and within mixed group.

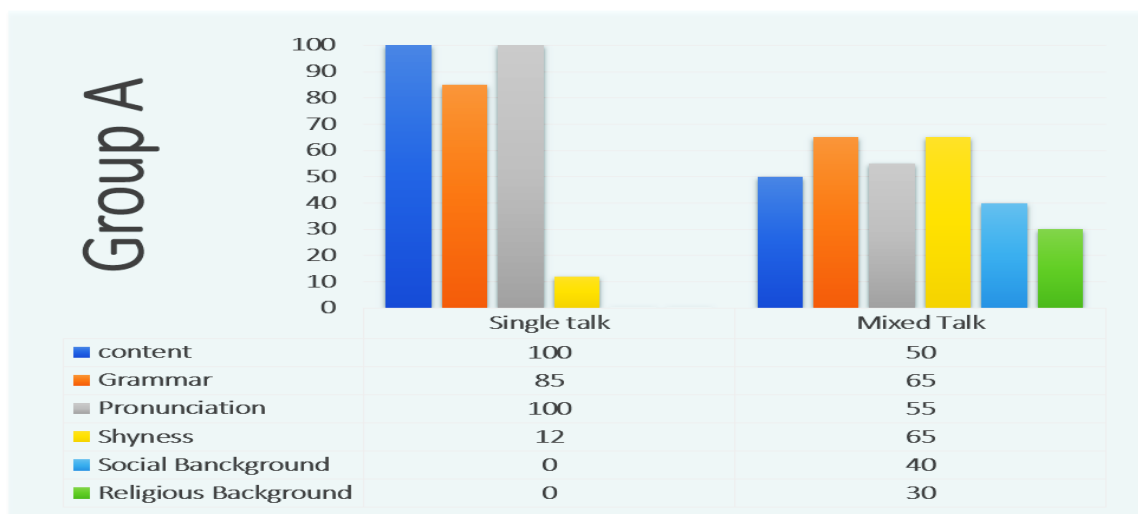
Group (A) marks were excellent during the single exam: 70% of Group (A) obtained 75% of the total marks, 8% obtained above 85%, and 17% reached to the top 100% of the total marks. Despite that, on

the mixed exam, Group (A) marks decreased massively: 85% of the participants obtained 50% of the total marks, 10% obtained 60 – 65, and 5% reach to 75% of the total marks.

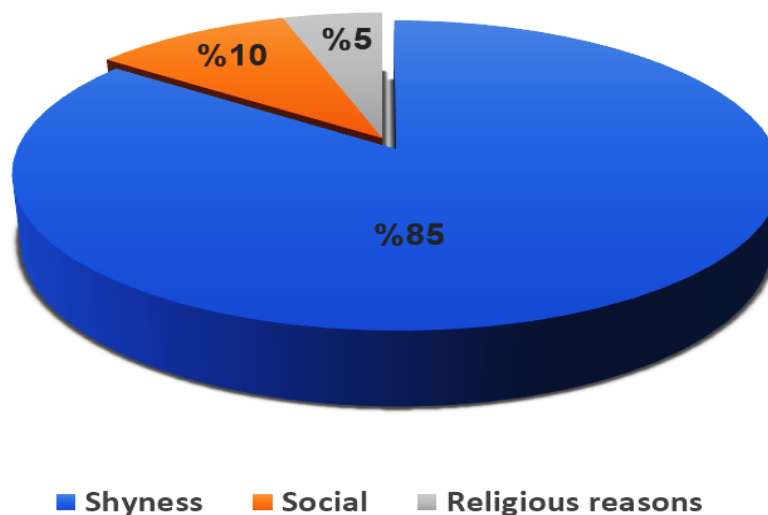
Group (B), on the other hand, seems to be more stable, and their marks were very close. During the single exam, 80% obtained 80 of total marks and 20% obtained 95-100 of total marks. Whereas, on the mixed exam, 78% of Group (B) obtained 75%, 12% obtained 85%, and 10% obtained 100%.



The students were asked to write their feedback about the course and the main problems they faced. 85% of Group (A) stated that, participating in a mixed group was their crucial problem, and their performance were reduced as a result of that. Moreover, 10% of Group (A) pointed out that the mentality between the two genders made the participation in the mixed group considered to be their main obstacle. 5% agreed that their religious background was their main component to their less performance.



Group (A) Feedback



5. Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the researchers are presenting the following recommendations:

- Teachers should give equal opportunities to male and female students to practice English in authentic situations inside the classroom.

- Teachers should encourage female students to participate more and get involved in mixed activities with male students.
- Teachers should find appropriate ways and strategies to involve female students in mixed activities inside the classroom.
- Teachers should involve families in the process of learning through encouraging their female students to practice English everywhere with both sexes.
- Teachers should change the classroom to a place where all students find opportunities to practice English.

6. Conclusion

The researchers' investigation on a small group reaches to a fact that gender is playing an important role on learning process. Social and cultural reasons considered to be the main reasons on gender learning effect, and religious background is the third part of the triangle. The nature of the society is locating the path of gender effects on learning process, and that lead the researchers to another question to search about. On this study, the researchers did not take into consideration the role of the teachers' gender and their impacts, so they recommend that further studies about it and the nature of society be conducted.

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Exploring Libyan Undergrad Students' Perceptions of Undertaking Graduation Project in the Department of English at Sirte University

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Abstract

Conducting undergraduate project is a hard task for most of them, since it requires well-academic writing skills. Also, it gets more difficult especially for L2 learners that might not be aware of the academic writing conventions while others may lack the ability to research or even apply knowledge across different contexts. Hence, the current study is set to explore the experiences of the undergraduates while conducting their graduation projects. This study explored the Libyan undergraduate students' perceptions of undertaking their graduation projects in the Department of English at Sirte University. A total of nine undergraduate students who were in the process of conducting projects formed the sample of the study. The multiple semi-structured interviews used in order to gather the data. The results of the present study revealed that students had difficulties while conducting their graduation projects.

Keywords: *Graduation project; undergraduate students' experiences; academic writing; multiple interviews*

1. Introduction

The graduation project has been one of the requirements of undergraduate degree program for many years in the Department of English at Sirte University. While it has been named in a variety of ways around the world, in which the terms ‘dissertation’, and ‘project’ are used interchangeably within many institutions. However, for all students in different countries, it is typically undertaking a substantial learning activity. In addition, the undergraduate project is a significant form of assessment in the curriculum of a Bachelor degree in the Department of English at Sirte University. Moreover, it is often the first major piece of independent research that is a pre-requisite part that the undergraduate students will undertake for their educational completion.

Significantly, the undergraduate project process impacts valuable learning objectives that have lasting influence as undergraduates prepare for professional service. Consequently, a number of studies in different disciplines covered a wide range of topics that discuss the challenges and other experiences while conducting the graduation project, such as: the topic selection, access, and data collection problems (I’Anson and Smith, 2004), factors affecting the completion of research projects (Thondhlana, Mawere, and Weda, 2011), problems associated with the undergraduate research supervision process (Simuforosa Veronica, and Rosemary, 2015), and the challenges in research teaching and writing (Alsied and Ibrahim, 2017).

Although, there has been an interest in the problems of undertaking the graduation project, the undergraduate students’ experiences of

undertaking research project seem to receive less attention. Hence, according to the researchers' best knowledge, no previous research has examined the experience of the undergraduate students in the Department of English at Sirte University. This fact gives the current study the significance in being a unique one in the department. Hence, the present research focuses on the undergraduate students' experiences while conducting their graduation projects.

2. Literature Review

This part is concerned with the literature review that deals with the topic of the study.

2.1 The Role of the Undergraduate Research Project

The current research adopts the classification offered by Clewes (1996) with 'project' refers to first-degree research, 'dissertation' to masters' degrees, and 'thesis' being reserved for higher research-only degrees. The assessment of dissertation/project constitutes a piece of academic research (primary and/or secondary), varying in length from 5,000 to 12,000 words (I'Anson and Smith, 2004). This study also adopts the identification of four objectives given by Hussey and Hussey (1997) of the undergraduate research project: (1) analytical problem solving skills; (2) active learning through identification of a problem to be explored and completed; (3) skills development for independent research; (4) application of academic knowledge.

The roles of conducting undergraduate projects enable undergraduate students to experience what is beyond their abilities and expectations; thus, render students to expand their knowledge and to

show that they understand the rules of the academic community, also encompass both intellectual and skills development. However, the undergraduate project holds special value for both the teacher and the student (Webster, Pepper, and Jenkins, 2000).

For many students, it provides the first opportunity to plan and carry out academic research, and it is often the most substantial and independent assessment they undertake during their degree (I'Anson and Smith, 2004). In addition, Simuforosa, Veronica, and Rosemary (2015) viewed that the aim of writing up research project is to “prompt students to investigate, analyze and articulate findings in ways that help them understand the methods used in the field to generate new knowledge and creative thinking” (p. 58).

2.2 Requirements of Undertaking Graduation Project in the Department of English at Sirte University

It has to be mentioned here that in the past, graduation projects were not given as much attention as should be. However, in recent years, the academic staff tended to give more importance to the projects for various reasons: one of which was the restructure of the faculty from the Faculty of Arts and Education to Faculty of Arts. Most prominently, many strategies have been made specifically in regard to improve the graduation project process by giving opportunities for project 1 students to present their research work and receive primer feedbacks on what they have done.

In addition, students are not allowed to undertake the graduation project unless they have studied research methodology and academic

writing courses to be more familiar with the process. As it has been indicated in the yellow guidebook of the Department of English, the undergraduate project must be carried out during the 7th and 8th semesters.

Also, students who are ready to get along with their research work, they are anticipated to have a complete background of two components: (i) research methods, and (ii) research writing process. The first component designed to introduce students with some theoretical background as well as the key issues and concepts in research; whereas, research documentation is given to ensure that students can (practically) utilize all the theoretical knowledge and the skills they have learned about research.

In addition, students must take the academic writing course that is one of the essential requirements to attain a good academic research. Baily (2011) argued that writing good academic English is one of the most demanding tasks students face. Thus, developing academic writing is a crucial skill for completing research degrees. Therefore, the course aimed at raising awareness of practicing and reflecting upon the conventions of written texts.

In addition, it helps students “to use effectively the discourse patterns of academic English, improve critical reading and thinking skills, generating ideas” (Handbook, 2014, p. 22). In fact, undergraduate students are more significantly carrying out their research project for assessment and evaluation. Therefore, it is expected to be comprehensible, logical, and up to standard.

Besides, it is also required for students who are ready to undertake their BRP to select their supervisors to be guided. Supervision is a critical element, which contributes immensely to the successful and timely completion of research projects. A research project supervisor advises the student in management of the project, guides the student through the research process, and provides the required emotional and psychological support when needed (Mouton, 2001).

Furthermore, undergraduate students are required to conduct their research projects in groups to be allowed by the Department of English to undertake the research project. This is not only because it is a compulsory strategy, but also it helps students in conducting their projects as with cooperation with other students would facilitate the research progress. In addition, mostly due to the lack of the teachers who are supervising students' graduation projects in the Department of English.

2.3 Students' Perceptions on Carrying out Undergraduate Project in Literature

The available literature indicates that a good number of studies have been conducted worldwide on either postgraduate or undergraduate research projects experience. Some of the undergraduate research studies focused on specific aspects of the graduation projects (as academic writing and supervision challenges) while others explored non-linguistic issues related to undertaking projects (as topic selection, data collection, and others). For example, a study conducted by Alheshe, Mustafa, and Makhlof (2018) to find out the problems that

students in the Department of English at Sirte University face when they write academically in English, and the factors that may cause these difficulties. A total of 23 students participated in this study, in which both of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews approaches were used.

The findings revealed that cohesion and coherence were the most difficulties the students faced in writing, followed by paraphrasing, reference, citation, and finding relevant reference and choosing significant topic. And the least one was expressing own voice. Moreover, the most prominent factors, which students attributed those difficulties to, were related to low language proficiency, lack of confidence about their writing output, and they pay less attention on the cohesion and coherence of their writing.

Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) conducted a study to investigate the major challenges in research writing faced by Libyan EFL learners at Sebha University and also to explore the Libyan teachers' attitudes towards their students' work. A total of 42 students and 4 teachers participated in the study, which used mixed of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview approaches. The findings of the study revealed that Libyan EFL learners had some challenges with identifying the area of interest, selecting a topic, formulating research problem, and writing the literature review.

In addition, they had difficulties in collecting and analyzing the data and found that academic writing was the most challenging. It was also found that Libyan teachers had negative attitudes towards their

students' research due to the following reasons: lack of motivation, inadequate background knowledge about research, insufficient number of courses correlated to research, and the lack of library and Internet sources in the faculty.

Simuforsa, Veronica, and Rosemary's (2015) qualitative study was set to explore problems associated with the undergraduate research supervision process from both views of supervisors and students undertaking undergraduate research projects over three universities in Zimbabwe, who were selected purposefully with the use of focus group discussions and questionnaires tools. The findings of their study revealed that many challenges affected undergraduates' research projects facilitation were related to supervision: the supervisors' inadequate research skills and expertise, students' research incompetencies, non-supportive relationships of supervisors with students, and negative feedback from supervisors' hamper students' research progress.

A study conducted by Alshehry (2014) to find out the factors affecting female students' research skills at College of Education at Najran University in developing their understanding and confidence in academic writing of research and strengthening the relationship between the students and teachers. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 female undergraduate students and four female teachers in the Department of Science. The results revealed that a lack of writing research knowledge and experience hindered the students to not specify time for research.

Also, the departmental and college environments in the study did not facilitate conducting research, and the teachers did not use different methods in their teaching that linked research with teaching. Additionally, as a result most of the students considered their background research skills and development to be weak even prior to completing the course, and these factors contributed to make obstacles in producing original and successful research projects.

Thondhlana, Mawere, and Weda (2011) conducted a study sought to find out undergraduate students and research supervisors' views on factors affecting the completion of research projects by Zimbabwe Open University students. Student, supervisor, and institutional related factors were the focus of their study. Descriptive survey method was used for the students who had failed to complete their research projects on schedule as well as research project supervisors.

The researchers used questionnaires and interviews to collect data, and their research discussion focused on the given period of the completion of research projects schedule. Their research findings found that the time given to students to do their research project was inadequate. The lack of libraries, Internet, and typing facilities as well as finance for travelling to and from the supervisor hindered students' research progress, which those factors contributed to failure by students to complete their research projects on schedule.

Tan (2007) conducted a study in which to permit the undergraduate students involved in an undergraduate research course to relate their experiences in their research undertakings at University of Santo

Tomas in Manila, Philippines. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with total of four focus groups that experienced a variety of activities and mixed feelings, which were clustered in this study in three phases: Grouping, Developing, and Accomplishing.

Furthermore, this study described the research experiences of a selected group of the undergraduates who had defended their research results. The study revealed that the students who were under competent and supportive mentors had a successful research experience. At first, the undergraduate students were lacking confidence and uncertain of undertaking a project; however, by the end of their research, they felt satisfied and excited of what they had accomplished. The students gained many benefits such as gaining confidence, improved communication, and writing and research skills.

I'Anson and Smith (2004) conducted a study to explore undergraduate students' experiences of undertaking a research project, focusing on challenges encountered at the topic selection, access, and students' responses to data collection problems. Data collected through interviews and surveys with 50 final year BA Tourism Management students at University of Greenwich, UK. In the findings of the researchers' study, the main difficulties encountered by students were concerned with access, collecting sensitive data, or being faced with unwilling respondents.

To sum up, the related previous research reviewed above were carried out to investigate specific aspects of the graduation project process of foreign undergraduates in general and to the Libyan context

in particular. However, most of the research done in this regard is restricted to investigating the problems encountered by the undergraduate students when conducting the graduation project, and the factors that affect the problems. They almost all have their own shortcomings in terms of the context or the methodology used.

Very few studies, if any, focused on the experiences of undergraduate students and the differences and the similarities that they may have in common while conducting their projects. Thus, such a research gap is worthy of giving an explicit attention and a deeper understanding of the undergraduate students in the Libyan context in general and in the Department of English at Sirte University in particular regarding their experiences of conducting the graduation project.

3. Methodology of the Study

This study adopts a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to accomplish its aim as “through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants” (Mason, 2002, p. 1). Dawson’s (2002) qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviors, and experiences through such methods as interviews. It attempts to obtain an in-depth opinion. Since this study is conducted to explore the experience of the undergraduate students who are in their process of conducting the graduation project, qualitative design is appropriate for this research, in order to seek for a more in-depth exploration of views.

In the present study, semi-structured multiple interviews were employed, as in the semi-structured interview “the researcher uses a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information” (Mackey and Gass, 2005, p. 173). Furthermore, multiple interviews are used because it is possible that from the initials till the follow-ups the interviewees encounter many challenges and experience new things during the process of conducting their research projects. For these reasons, the semi-structured multiple interview formats were chosen in the current study.

3.1 Participants of the Study

Our interest is in the undergraduate students’ experiences that are in the process of conducting their graduation projects, so the sample was chosen from the Department of English language at the Faculty of Arts at Sirte University. Hence, the sample size for the interviews was nine students mixed in gender (eight females and one male). Thus, it was due to the small number of males who were undertaking their graduation projects, so just one out of them was willing to participate, and the others were not interested in doing the interviews. Those who were selected were selected using random sampling. Therefore, to give the chance for any student in spite of his or her educational level of being selected to have an equal chance of being selected.

3.2 Question of the Study

To conduct this study, the following questions was asked to be answer: What are the perceptions of undergraduate students about their experiences of conducting the graduation projects in the Department of

English at Sirte University? As mentioned above, the semi-structured multiple interviews were utilized for nine undergraduate students who are in the process of conducting their graduation projects and were analyzed thematically. Then during the analysis group of themes had emerged which will be discussed and linked to the literature in the following section:

4. Results and Discussion

This part of the study is dedicated to the results obtained from the data analysis, followed by discussion.

4.1 Challenges Encountered while Conducting Undergraduate Project

The results of the current study revealed that the participants had challenges or hindrances while conducting their graduation projects, which affected negatively on the process. Moreover, the most prominent challenges from their experiences were divided into five sub-themes which are the academic writing, working in groups, data collection, applying research methods, in addition to insufficient period of time challenges.

4.1.1 Academic Writing Challenges

The results of the study demonstrated that the academic writing skill was the most challenging according to the majority of the participants. The participants stated that they had weaknesses and poor background knowledge at the practical part of academic writing course, and it was a hard task and could not be easily achieved though those

students had undertaken this course previously. This is enhanced by a study conducted by Omar (2019), who stated that “Studies and research reveal that most English language learners (ELLs) encounter challenges when they write an academic paper in English due to lack of grammar” (p. 213).

Actually, for the undergraduates, the ability to write academically while conducting their research projects is indeed complex and confusing. Furthermore, the most common challenges in writing academically were related to the use of language that suits the academic standards, finding relevant topics and sources, and referencing. Some of the interviewees’ statements were as:

“The most prominent problems were how to form a good paragraph that fit the academic standards, how to write references and some grammatical mistakes and about overcoming these problems I call my project partner and if she couldn’t help, I tell my supervisor and we discuss the problem together.”

“As a start, writing a graduation project, is not an easy thing, it needs time, as well as, efforts... once it gets a bit serious and this before even you start writing of course, the time you start searching for previous and connected studies to yours, this is one of the hardest difficulties that could face us all, you literary get lost.”

“Unfortunately, I faced a lot of problems such as lack of resources, unprepared libraries but definitely this did not ruin my work I tried harder to get books and resources from Tripoli so I think all students will go through such issues.”

The above findings showed somehow similarities to other studies in literature, as in a study conducted by Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) who confirmed that one of the biggest challenges of research writing is the lack of resources in the library and the accessibility to the authentic database and the individuals cannot easily have access on them.

Furthermore, for Al Badi (2015), in which the focus of the study was about the academic writing difficulties; thus, it revealed that the postgraduate students had similar difficulties in academic writing in spite of their previous educational background. In addition, the most difficulties were related to language use in addition to coherence and cohesion; whereas, other challenges were related to finding relevant topics and sources; and the less challenging one for the students was referencing and citations.

4.1.2 *Working within Groups Challenges*

To achieve such a long piece of research, support is needed the most; however, some of the participants (5 out of 9) stated that they lacked the peer support. Either for the reason that their group members were not motivated to work and just relied on one member, or as for others who were from different educational background levels, which caused the difficulty in having the team spirit or in working as a supportive group. As a consequence, they had negative experiences with working within groups. Those participants stated about that as the following:

“There is no cooperation between me and my mates at all , the work lays on one of us only, and one of them was most of the time absent, it

would be better to let us work individually as because there is no interaction between students. But if it kept within groups so the work must be divided equally.”

“I hate that part, I don’t feel comfortable to work in a group, especially because I don’t know them and we are all in different academic levels. And the outcome is that there is no team spirit.”

It seems that the result of working within groups as a challenge for the students is in agreement with the results that have been revealed by many researchers (Isaac and Tormey, 2014; Ford and Morice, 2003), who found that working with groups could become very problematic for students. Nevertheless, the reasons behind that somehow differ from those in the current study.

According to Issac and Tormey (2014), the differences in personality and communication style were the most common and severe types of tension experienced by students while working with group members. However, the reasons behind the negative experience of working with groups in the current study were due to relying just on one person in the group and the different educational levels.

4.1.3 Data Collection Challenges

The results indicated that the questionnaire was the most common research method used by the participants of the current study in order to gather the information that enable them to answer their research questions. However, some of them had encountered difficulties in collecting the data for their projects even though that such method is commonly used in their research context. Thus, it was mostly due to the

uncooperative respondents and to the difficulty of being selective as the participants found it a little bit risky to collect the data that will not affect their research results. More elaboration with the participants' statements are presented below:

“One of the problems was the participants weren't cooperative, there was no response from them even when we asked them to participate some were saying no, others were just answering randomly we had no objectivity from their responses.”

“Ok to be honest, nothing was easy especially in collecting data a very inconsiderable fault will damage the results that's way I found some how difficult to collect data.”

The above findings of the difficulty in data collection phase are similar to another study conducted by Huang (2007) who found that students had difficulties of collecting the data due to un-cooperation of the respondents. Nevertheless, the context of Huang's study differs from the context of the current research, where Huang investigated the perceptions of postgraduate students towards undertaking their dissertations.

Also, the students in his research seemed to have no obstacles in being selective regards their data; whereas, the participants of the current study were indeed facing such problem.

On the contrary, other participants attributed the ease of collecting data to the use of questionnaires, where they dealt more with percentages. In addition, the participants stated that the selected respondents for their projects were cooperative because of the research

topic which involved the respondents to answer questions interestedly. More elaboration with the interviewees' statements are presented below:

“As I used a questionnaire which is the most common method between the others so I didn't find difficulties in this. [And], it was ok as our quantitative study helped us to deal more with numbers rather than words and explanations and the participants were so cooperative as they fill the questionnaires and return them on time.”

“Actually, the participants were cooperative because of the topic. I guess something new and interesting.”

4.1.4 Applying the Research Methods Challenges

Although a few participants stated that they faced challenges in applying the knowledge they have learned about research, specifically the research methods, it was important to shed the light on such an issue to know the reasons that made this a problem for them. Despite the fact that the preparatory research courses such as: research methodology and research proposal are one of the important strategies that the Department of English at Sirte university is following for the undergraduate students to be ready to start with their graduation projects. However, students still found it difficult to apply the research methods even if they were adopted; one of the interviewees' statements was as the follow:

Although, the questionnaire in our research was adopted, we had difficulty in picking up the questions that suit our research' aims. And, when we finally decided upon the questions, we just

listed them and asked the participants to answer without dividing them according to specific criteria, which caused a problem when we started analyzing the data. So, we had to rewrite the questionnaire and divide each group of questions to the suitable criteria.

The result of difficulty in applying the knowledge of research methods was supported by Edwards (2002), who argued that although preparatory research methods courses are common for project and dissertation students, many, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, find the transfer from learning about research to actually doing their own research difficult.

However, applying the research methods were easy task for the others and according to those participants that refer to the adoption of such methods and nearly with the same questions and criteria. One of the interviewees' statements about that was:

“We adopted a questionnaire from a study and we used it with same questions and so it was easy to apply.”

4.1.5 Limited Period of Time

Time pressure is one of the challenges the students had encountered while conducting their graduation projects. As it has found in the study findings, some participants complained that the time located for project completion is inadequate. Moreover, perhaps they lack some technical skills such as time management skill. Thus, the lack of such skill could affect negatively either on the progress of their work or in including enough participants who were under pressure and hesitated to take a

part in research since they had exams. Two of the interviewees stated that:

“The most prominent problems were that the time to finish and submit the project was so limited and the participant had final exams in the time that we wanted them to share us their answers specially that we selected them from specific semesters and about the process of writing itself there were a lot of errors or grammatical mistakes.”

“We are supposed to finish within this month, the time is so short. We have exams, assignments and project we cannot manage between these things. I think it is a little bit hard for us to finish on time.”

The findings are in agreement with those of Thondhlana, Mawere, and Weda (2011) that the time of two semesters given to students by the university to do research work is inadequate as students have poor time-management skills. They leave a lot of work undone until the end of the research period and only rush to try and complete it at the last minute. In addition, it is obvious from the findings in the current study that “Unfortunately, not many students know adequate time management” (Bocar, 2013).

According to Todd, Smith, and Bannister (2006), the most challenging problem that students might face is time management. Students tend to allocate everything to the last stage where they find it difficult to accomplish their research on time.

4.2 Factors that Caused the Challenges

As it has been mentioned earlier that the participants faced variety of challenges during the process of conducting their graduation

projects; thus, students attributed these difficulties to some factors which reflected negatively on their projects' progress such as: lack of previous experience and high knowledge of the project process and the insufficient skills regard the research proposal practical part that it was helpful only in terms of theoretical aspect. More clarification with the interviewees' statements were:

“Most of the students find difficulties in knowing the research project process in other words how to start and this [how it] should be done.”

“As it is a new experience the most difficult and stressful and fatal one to us as students in the English department in Sirte university and [we are] not familiar with that length of such piece of writing.”

“Actually as the proposal was theoretical, it can help you a little about what are the steps that you're going to follow, but practically it cannot help you a lot. We did not take the practical part; you distribute your questions to participants and do analysis.”

According to the above findings, it could be discussed that the unfamiliarity in the area of unclear goals and expectations of how the undergraduate project should be written, done, and organized had caused preliminary issues for the undergraduates. This finding is in agreement with results of previous research by Alshehry (2014) which revealed that the students had little knowledge and understanding of how to design and write research. Though all students of the present study are open to the idea of doing research but do not know the first thing about attaining a student research position as they are

experiencing, for the first time, the longest piece of research they had ever undertaken during their study program.

4.3 The Experience with the Supervisor

This is one of the main themes which some of the interviews questions based on. As it revealed that the experience with the supervisor had an important part for the students at different stages of conducting their graduation projects. In addition, the results about the experience showed that it was positive for most of the students, who participated in this study.

For the reasons that their supervisors were very cooperative specifically in arranging meetings with their students and giving an adequate feedback as well as suggesting topics for their graduation projects when could not decide about any. As consequence to this good relationship, most of the students welcomed their supervisors' comments and taking them into consideration. One of the participants stated about that as:

My supervisor was helpful from the beginning of the journey. In fact, he drew the whole picture clear for me and my project mates as well. Means to say, he elaborated the process as it should be. Though, my supervisor did his job and more than his efforts even when he passed a very difficult health problem. However, he kept cheerfully helping us and was beside us till we submit the project successfully. In addition, we set a plan of meeting from the moment we decide to be group. That is, we used to meet every Monday at 12 to 1 p.m. Besides this, we

created a messenger group for urgent discussion and interpretations also sending files as well. Furthermore, [the reason for choosing the topic] was my supervisor's decision. And I welcomed it; also he gave us instructions of how to write the project.

On the other hand, there was just a single case among the participants who stated that she had a negative experience with the supervisor. In addition, the relationship with her supervisor was somehow good and even the topic was suggested by her. However, the negative part was as a consequence of having insufficient time during their meetings, as the participant complained that *"We met just for 10 minutes every Monday"* so that was not enough for her to receive an adequate feedback. Furthermore, she clarified about the way in which she received her supervisor's comments, stating:

"I was negative towards my supervisor's comments, because any work we do, she doesn't like and then she edited the work by herself, because she was not flexible. [In addition]... we only read without understanding. She does not accept our ideas and work."

These findings seem to agree with Simuforsa Veronica, and Rosemary (2015) as they had revealed in their study results that many challenges affected on the undergraduates' research projects facilitation were related to supervision: non-supportive relationships of supervisors with students, and a negative feedback from supervisors hinder students' research progress.

4.4 Benefits Gained from Conducting the Graduation Project

Even though all the participants faced many challenges while conducting their graduation projects, all of them agreed that they gained benefits as a consequence of accomplishing their work. The benefits were related to the improvement of academic writing, research, and language skills, in addition to the communication skill specifically in terms of working with a collaborative group. Furthermore, it revealed that gaining such benefits were due to some of the assisting factors which helped them make such experience positive. For example, selecting their own projects' topics and the feedback of the previous courses of writing. The participants declared about their positive experiences in the following statements:

I found the answer to my personal question which was the reason to search about such a topic or to do this research and it was about why don't students interact in the class using English. And I learned more how to research and to write academically. I also become familiar with the meaning of the research project itself I mean if anyone asks me I can give him/her the helpful information about writing the project.

Yes a lot, firstly I learned how to cooperate with a group [...] this technique improves ones ability to communicate and come out with thoughts that been never spoken about and also it is more interesting to be acquainted with new information from your mates. And [I learned] how to push up myself to perform my thoughts and also I became more aware of the suitable

language used in academic writings [also] I can observe my language improvement after doing the research, my spoken language became better than before.

The above findings show some similarities which were supported by Tan (2007) that the students gained many benefits such as improving communication, writing, and research skills by the end of their research as they were satisfied and excited of what they had accomplished. In addition, it found that the participants of the current study had also improved another language skills and sub-skills such as: reading, spoken, and grammar, where such benefits were not found in Tan's results. It revealed that the participants' own choice for topics motivated them to work harder and seek for answering their research questions.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, some recommendations were presented as:

- To help students overcome the research and writing difficulties, more practical and advance seminars and workshops on academic writing and research methodology should be provided and taken more seriously. Thus, that could help them improve and produce a satisfying piece of research.
- Students should also learn how to manage the available time and set a plan previously to avoid the difficulties attributed to the lack of the time management skill. Therefore, they would accomplish the task in due time with satisfaction.

- It would be better to avoid pairing students on one topic because students have different learning styles and abilities level. Hence, joining these students through groups in the research process can make it a difficult task and the department shall rethink to make this practice optional.
- No research is complete. Hence, some recommendations were made based on the limitations of the current study. First, larger sample would probably enhance the reliability of the research. Second, multiple research designs and methods could strength/support the study findings with more accuracy and credibility. Finally, selecting participants from various contexts, for example, the Faculty of Arts' fields could probably enrich studies with different experiences.

6. Conclusion

As mentioned above, this study aimed to answer the research question about the Libyan undergraduate students' perspectives regarding their experiences towards conducting graduation projects in the Department of English at Sirte University. The findings of the study showed that the Libyan undergrad students encountered challenges while conducting their graduation projects, regardless to the preparatory research courses as research methodology and research proposal they had in order to be ready to this phase. The most challenges from their own experiences were related to the academic writing, working within groups, data collection, and applying the research methods challenges, in addition to the insufficient time.

Moreover, it was found that the students attributed their challenges to some factors which were the lack of previous experience and high

knowledge of the graduation project process, and the insufficient skills regard the research proposal practical part. Furthermore, it was found that the majority of students had positive experiences as a result of the good relationships with their supervisors, who were very supportive at different stages of the graduation project.

On the other hand, it was the opposite for just one of the participants who had a negative experience due to some reasons. Therefore, it can be said that though students faced many challenges and had some of negative experiences while conducting their graduation projects. Nevertheless, at the end of doing their own research, they gained benefits and improved all of writing, research and communication skills.

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Impact of Cooperative Learning in Fostering Libyan University Students' Outcomes

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Abstract

It is known that Communicative Language Teaching CLT has emerged as a result to the objection of traditional methods of teaching foreign languages, in terms of activating Cooperative Language Learning CLL, as opposed to memorizing grammatical and lexical items. The aim of this paper is to follow the nature of both communicative and cooperative approaches to confirm that they share some pedagogical roots, instructional practices and positive impacts on teaching English as a foreign language EFL. This study presents the importance of focusing on communicative processes and cooperative tasks to enhance learning of a foreign language in a higher education setting in Libya. The researcher observed and experimented two classes contained 41 students of English language at two different universities in eastern Libya, Benghazi and Omar Al-Mukhtar. Based on the findings obtained, the current lecturing teaching method did not seem to be suitable for upgrading students' achievement levels. It was pointed out that cooperative learning provided students with the necessary skills to interact communicatively, promote academically, and feel positively.

Keywords: *CLT; CLL; cooperative learning CL; communicative.*

1. Introduction

The communicative approach to language teaching appeared as a reaction to British applied linguists' dissatisfaction with the situational language teaching approach in the late 1960s, and the rejection of the linguistic theory underlying audio-lingualism in the United States in the mid 1960s. The last 50 years have witnessed a number of transitions in English language methodology, from grammar translation method which focused on explicit grammar and reading literature of the target language, to audio-lingual method in which the emphasis was on listening and speaking, to communicative approaches which are all based on a view that the functions of language should be emphasized rather than the forms of the language.

In respect of this point, Richards (2006) pointed out that language learning was viewed as the mastery of grammatical knowledge and a mechanical habit formation. Mistakes were minimized by memorizing dialogs and performing drills, so that errors were to be avoided through the spoken and written production.

Other educators (e.g., Yule ,1996; Gallway, 1993, and Widdowson, 1978) saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative competence (CC) rather than on structural competence. They emphasized the interpersonal relationships, the nature of communication and the interactive process of language. As a result, language teaching profession has responded with methods and techniques that emphasize communicative competence, group work, interaction, and cooperative learning.

2. Literature Review

The aim of this part is to provide the literature review regarding the theme of this study.

2.1. Communicative Competence

According to Savignon (2002), competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) research to account for its development. Chomsky (1965) introduced the term competence in both a weak sense and a strong sense. The weak sense is that competence to be considered as the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language. The strong sense assumes that competence is to be associated with knowledge of rules of grammar.

Campbell and Wales (Cited in Savignon, 2002) propose a broader notion of competence, that of communicative competence. This notion is intended by them to include not only grammatical competence, but also contextual or sociolinguistic competence. Widdowson (1983) emphasizes that "competence, whether linguistic or communicative, refers to those aspects of human language behavior that can be formalized in a model description" (p. 23). Canale and Swain (1980) claim that CC can be defined in terms of three components as:

1. Grammatical competence: It refers to the ability to use the language correctly, how well a person has learned the language features and rules, including, pronunciation, sentence formation, and vocabulary.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: It indicates the learner's ability to use language in specific social situations, as using suitable language forms at a job interviews.
3. Strategic competence: It refers to how well a person uses both verbal and non-verbal communication forms to recover from lack of knowledge in other competencies.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), communicative competence is the aim of language teaching, besides the development of procedures for teaching the four language skills as these skills form the base of the interdependence of language and communication. Prabhu (1987) in his Communicational Teaching Project states that “the development of competence in a second language requires not systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication” (p. 2).

Savignon (2002) points out that CLT derives from a multidisciplinary perspective including linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research. It emphasizes how to use language as a means of communication. Teachers should train students how to use listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into the real life communication. In relation to that, CLT makes use of

authentic materials and real life situations that necessitate communication through the tasks employed (Gallway, 1993; Rodgers, 2001).

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), there are some features that characterized the communicative view of language; they are: language usage to express meaning, interactive function of language, language as a reflective structure, and communicative categories in discourse. In the same vein, they listed three elements in terms of CLT learning theory and which promote learning process as:

- (1) Communication principle represented in real communication activities;
- (2) Task principle represented in using language for carrying out meaningful tasks; and
- (3) Meaningfulness principle represented in seeing language meaningful to the learner. It is worth mentioning that learning activities are selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use.

Nunan (1998, p. 279) lists the following five features as characteristics of CLT:

1. A focus on communication through interaction.
2. The use of authentic materials.
3. A focus on the learning process as well as the language itself.

4. A belief that learners' own experiences can contribute to learning in the classroom and real-life activities.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Therefore, CLT is viewed as a learner-centered approach in that it takes into account learners' backgrounds, needs, and goals and generally allows learners some creativity and role in learning and teaching processes. Moreover, in communicative language classrooms, students are able to perform speech acts or language tasks on their own without teacher's assistance. The focus shifts from teacher-led to student-centered language application (Wang, 2009). Furthermore, the student's role in CLT is to bring different beliefs and attitudes to the learning context. The teacher's role is to analyze, counsel, and manage the whole situation.

2.3. Cooperative Learning (CL)

Li and Lam (2005) describe cooperative learning as "a student-centered, instructor-facilitated instructional strategy, in which a small group of students is responsible for its own learning and the learning of all group members" (p. 1). According to Oslen and Kagan (Cited in Rahman, 2014), learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups, and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.

Students interact with each other in the same group to acquire and practice the elements of a subject matter in order to solve a problem, complete a task, or achieve a goal (Li and Lam, 2005). They take more initiative, feel more responsible for the outcomes they receive, and feel more effective. Cooperative learning aims to develop students' knowledge, generic skills (e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills), and attitudes. The ability to participate effectively in group work or teamwork is seen as a desirable employability skill and should be considered to be part of every learner's educational experience (Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne, 2000).

Effective cooperative learning is dependent on six basic components. Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984) label these six elements as:

1. The first element is positive interdependence which exists when group members perceive that they are responsible for other members' success and failure.
2. Accountability is the second element of cooperative learning. Each member must be accountable to contribute his or her work in order to determine the level of the academic content mastery, so students can provide appropriate assistance and accurate support to one another.
3. The third element is positive face-to-face interaction. It occurs when students share verbal interchange, resources, support, and encouragement.

4. The fourth element of cooperative learning is to teach students the required interpersonal and small group skills. As in cooperative learning classrooms students are required to learn both the academic subject matter and the interpersonal group skills to act as part of a group. These social skills include leadership, decision-making, conflict management, trust-building, and communication. In the same vein, Kagan (1999) states that other social skills which cooperative learning improves are teamwork skills, resolution skills, listening, and taking turns. In terms of class climate, he adds that cooperative learning classroom produces more polite and considerate students. Besides, it increases students' desire to attend classes, makes them more comfortable with the academic content, and refreshes the teacher-student interpersonal relations.
5. According to Johnson and Johnson (2013), "the fifth component of cooperative learning is group processing, which exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships" (p.5).
6. According to Kagan (1999), another basic principle of cooperative learning is equal participation, which exists when each student has a turn or a mission to do within a timed space, so more active and fluent students would not take over. In short, focusing on group participation and information exchange automatically leads to the fact that CLT and CLL are a natural marriage in foreign language teaching (Kagan, 1995).

2.4. Classroom Activities in CLT and CLL Environments

According to Richards (2006), there are some types of classroom activities that reflect the core principle of CLT as well as CLL, and which focus on fluency, meaningful interaction, engagement in real life communication, and negotiation of meaning. These notions are characterized in communicative tasks such as information gap activities, opinion-sharing activities, and the focus on pair and group work. According to Canale and Swain (1980), it is seen that communicative activities work better on the classroom and are capable of making learners more conscious, understanding, interactive, and socialized.

Scrivener (2005) defined communicative tasks as “classroom activities designed to get learners to speak and listen to one another” (p. 152). He also listed some ideas, tasks, and resources that teachers can use and modify in order to get learners to use the language they are learning in meaningful ways. These activities can be conducted in the shape of pair work, information gaps, and small group discussions. Thus, students will cooperate to complete them. Some of these ideas and recourses are: Flash cards, Storytelling, Follow-up activities, Preview activities, Using video and DVD in class, Computers and the Internet, Projects, Poetry, Drama, and others (Scrivener, 2005).

Activities which require learners to engage and cooperate to share their knowledge with group members are based on cooperative strategies (Examples, Jigsaw, Think-Pair-Share, STAD (Student Teams-Achievement Divisions), Group Investigations, Round Table or

Rally Table, Round Robin Brainstorming or Rally Robin). According to Kagan and High (2002) “these easy-to-learn, easy-to-use instructional strategies are ideal for promoting second language learning” (p.10).

2.5. Cooperative Learning in Higher Education

Cooperative learning had been highly recommended and frequently researched in primary and secondary curriculums and settings. In terms of consistency of positive outcomes, cooperative learning remains the strongest researched educational innovation ever with regard to producing achievement gains (Kagan, 1999). Meng (2017) in his study on the application of cooperative learning to comprehensive English classes in a Chinese independent college finds that “CL as a pedagogy can improve students' performance on course exams, and not necessarily their language performance. Students in this study agree that they have more chances to practice the language in a cooperative environment” (p. 94).

In a case study of cooperative learning and communication pedagogy, Tasy and Brady (2010) found that engagement in CL activities indicates a student's academic performance. They pointed out that there is a significant relationship between the importance of a student's grades and his or her active participation in CL setting. The experimental study of Alrayah (2018) indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between CL activities and EFL learners' oral fluency of speaking. He recommended to train EFL

teachers how to implement CL activities in institutions where English language is taught.

Jalilifar (2010) investigated the impact of two techniques of cooperative learning on college students' reading comprehension achievement of English as a foreign language EFL, (Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Group Investigation (GI). The results showed that STAD technique is more effective than GI in terms of improving students' reading comprehension.

3. Methodology of the Study

An action research model was utilized by the researcher. According to Scrivener (2005) action research is “a teacher’s personal study of his/her own teaching or of the students’ learning” (p. 379). There are six stages that should be experienced in conducting action research, starting with the stage of choosing the general area of the experiment, doing background reading and research, deciding the specific focus of the experiment, deciding how to assess the results, conducting the experiment, and finally analyzing and reflecting on the outcomes (Scrivener, 2005).

Barton and Lazarsfeld (Cited in Flick, 2009) suggest using qualitative research for developing hypotheses, which “afterwards will be tested by quantitative approaches” (p. 26). Qualitative and quantitative research instruments were used to collect the data of this study. Nunan (1992) states that “qualitative research is concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame of

reference” (p. 5). The use of a variety of methods such as observation, interviews, and documents which considered as traces of interaction and practices, is the characteristic of such research.

3.1 Objectives of the Study

Considering the above literature, this paper seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To improve that CL is a feasible phase of CLT;
- To examine the role of lecturing method applied in Libyan university classrooms in preventing / facilitating learning;
- To examine the elements of cooperative learning by implementing the jigsaw activity in a higher education setting;
- To assess students’ outcomes before and after working together in groups;
- To investigate university students’ attitudes towards cooperative activities and group work tasks.

3.2 Participants of the Study

This study was carried out at two Libyan universities: University of Benghazi and Omar Al-Mukhtar University. Throughout 6 weeks, a total of 41 undergraduate English language students were observed and tested individually and in groups; 13 of the participants expressed approval to be interviewed.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher used classroom observation checklists, quizzes, and semi-structured interviews in order to collect the relevant data. Wang (2009) states that “observation is used as a tool to reveal the lecturer’s teaching style, classroom tasks, and the level of interaction with students” (p. 99). Bell (Cited in Wang, 2009) states that the interview is an adaptable tool that can be used to obtain deep responses from participants. In addition, to conduct the experiment, the jigsaw strategy was relied on, as a cooperative learning technique instead of lecturing, to explain a text from the students’ course of Linguistics.

4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data (observation and interview) and quantitative data (quizzes’ scores) were analyzed manually. A general inductive approach was used to analyze the qualitative data to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.

4.1 Classroom Observation before the Experiment

The first stage of conducting this study was observing university classes during normal lectures (lasted in two weeks). Two observation checklists adopted from Scrivener (2005) were used: (1) Classroom Snapshot Observation Checklist, which aims to gather general information about university classroom practices; and (2) What Helps People Learn Observation Checklist, which seeks more details about the components of teaching and learning processes (classroom, activity,

teacher, and learner, and to what extent these details affect students' learning and performance).

The general atmosphere was featureless. It was not available for the teacher and her students to use other sources of information in order to enhance and activate their roles within both teaching and learning processes. Thus, the only scene that could be seen was of a teacher who stood in front of the class and lectured, and silent students who seated in lines. For students in the back lines, it seemed that it was difficult for them to listen to the teacher, as there were not enough spaces for the teacher to move and get closer to them.

This also affected the students' sight in terms of the distance between them and the whiteboard. At the end of the lecture, the teacher asked if there are any inquiries, some students continued being passive by saying no, others seemed to be more active by asking about the exam expectations to improve their test performance, which is one of the factors that teachers in teacher-centered classroom focus on, and which works against effective learning (Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge, 2007).

Unless we consider that students' thinking of performing well in exams is a sign of their starting point of being effective, this would seem to support the claim "in every classroom something works well" (Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge, 2007, p. 3). Another notable circumstance was of the repeated power cuts, because it directly touched the students' personal comfort, teaching instruments and devices (if existed), and the institution acceptability. The final stage of

this observation session was to ask students to answer a quiz contains two questions about the text previously explained.

4.2 Classroom Observation during the Jigsaw Implementation

This research mainly depends on cooperative groups technique of jigsaw in order to present comprehensive English course materials to university students. The researcher used the jigsaw strategy in order to let students work out and understand the main ideas of language origins and properties (a text from the students' course of Linguistics). Within two periods of time (lasted in two weeks), students were divided into 8 groups. The text was divided into 5 paragraph strips, so each group of students had the full text but divided into paragraphs. Then the researcher asked the students with paragraph 1 to come together, therefore, an expert group was organized, the new groups were: P1 group, P2 group, P3 group, P4 group, and P5 group.

After that, students were asked to preview the paragraph with group peers. The last step was to come back to their original groups, so that each group would have the full text again. They were asked to discuss their ideas and explain their own paragraphs to the other members. During the application of this activity, the researcher monitored and observed students while they were working together.

Another observation checklist was adopted from Scrivener (2005) and developed by the researcher to better clarify teachers' and learners' roles in this type of instruction. The adopted checklist contains categories about how teachers can influence the learning environment,

and modified by adding some categories related to the elements of cooperative learning. It was important to first teach students the steps of jigsaw to ensure that they would not be confused about what exactly to do during the activity, as “jigsaw falls apart if students are not prepared” (Ledlow, 1996, p. 1).

It is worthwhile to assess that the implementation of jigsaw activity needs no specific equipment in the classroom; thus, it would be conducted in the Libyan setting. It was obvious that the students liked to move their chairs and to change the usual way of setting. Shy students showed some passivity, as they used to set in the back of the room. Based on Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge (2007), “in order to get more activated learners, we need the learners to be involved in activating the classroom. This is a change in the balance of roles, but does not leave the teacher without a role!” (p. 79).

It was observed that the teacher’s role was to organize the students’ groups to guide them to complete each task, to support their understanding by explaining some ambiguous points in the text, and to encourage them to interact using English. In terms of students’ roles and accountability, it was seen that some students found it difficult to take the responsibility of their learning. They kept asking the teacher to make sure that the piece of information they shared with their peers was right.

In this vein Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge (2007) state that “the contemporary context has some important features that mean that the

goals of learning need to focus less on knowledge acquisition by individuals and more on knowledge generation with others” (p. 18).

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (Cited in Johnson and Johnson, 2013), “the barriers to effective cooperative learning are avoided when it is properly structured” (p. 4). The main challenge was for the teacher to make students perceive that they learn to teach other students, not to be tested. That was provided by applying the most important element of cooperative learning named positive interdependence, through encouraging students to work hard for a shared group goal.

In this context, Herrmann (2013) states that “such positive interdependence is assumed to enhance promotive interaction, that is, students encouraging and helping each other to reach their goals, students giving each other feedback, and students challenging each other's' conclusions and reasoning” (p. 179).

In relation to that, the researcher noticed a kind of individual practices among groups; for example, some students tended not to share their individual work, because they used to keep it from the sight of other classmates believing that it would affect their grades. Those students started to engage after knowing that they would be scored as groups not as individuals. Another issue of face-to-face interaction was the use of the students' mother tongue instead of English; they seemed to feel more confident while using Arabic language.

The other elements of cooperative learning that were examined are small group skills, group processing, and equal participation, by which according to Tasy and Brady (2010) students can develop and implement collaborative skills, communication, decision making, engagement and trust building. As well as assessing their performance as a team and identify the needed changes to work effectively. Although they lacked such skills, students worked hard to interact and achieve the final goal. It was the teacher's role to control students' participation. At the end of the experiment, groups were given quizzes to fill in to assess their outcomes as groups.

4.3 Semi-Structured Interview

The interview session lasted in two weeks. Thirteen students were interviewed by asking two open-ended questions to get descriptive answers about their opinions of being part of cooperative groups, and the positive or negative impacts they encountered during the experiment. The questions "What is your opinion of working together in groups?" and "Could you please tell me what positive / negative features group-work has had?" were posed to the participants. It was optional either to answer in Arabic or in English.

5. Findings

Based on the data analysis, the following findings have been obtained:

5.1 Classroom Observation

Because of the dominance of lecture-teaching method, Libyan university classes were far away from applying strategies that promote effective learning such as cooperative learning techniques. It was evident that university classroom lacked the suitability for upgrading the students' outcomes, both in terms of the required teaching aids and equipment, and the classroom practices (classroom atmosphere, activities, teacher's and learners' roles). There were no real chances or efforts to create better conditions for effective learning.

Therefore, it was concluded that the current Libyan university classroom conditions can prevent learning. Throughout the experiment, despite of that, students were affected by their background experience of individual practices, as their instructional environment does not require them to act collaboratively. They cooperated actively to get their tasks done.

Moreover, students showed a kind of satisfaction towards working together in groups. Although they suffered from their insufficient social skills, they proved that they trust each other in terms of learning, performance, being accountable and responsible, and processing the groups, that is, they discussed how well they can improve their performance in order to achieve the groups' goals. It was also found that there is a significant role of teachers in applying group work activities, as it was clear in this experiment that the teacher was the supervisor who monitored the whole process.

5.2 Students' Outcomes through Quizzes

As mentioned before, the students' performance was documented and assessed. A new assessment scale was designed by the researcher. Two types of scores were obtained: the individual score of each student before the cooperative activity (after the normal lecture), and the group score as a teamwork after the experiment. The following tables show the difference between individual and group scores:

Student Number	Score out of 10	Student Number	Score out of 10	Student Number	Score out of 10	Student Number	Score out of 10
S1	4	S12	4	S23	2	S34	5
S2	4	S13	4	S24	6	S35	2
S3	4	S14	3	S25	4	S36	4
S4	5	S15	4	S26	8	S37	5
S5	5	S16	5	S27	3	S38	4
S6	3	S17	3	S28	5	S39	6
S7	4	S18	5	S29	3	S40	7
S8	5	S19	4	S30	4	S41	5
S9	5	S20	2	S31	6		
S10	5	S21	5	S32	4		
S11	3	S22	3	S33	5		

Table 1: Students' Individual Scores

Group Number	Score out of 10
1	7
2	8
3	9
4	9
5	8
6	8
7	9
8	7

Table 2: Groups' Scores

Based on findings from Tables 1 and 2, it was evident that there is a significant difference between individual student scores (Mean = 4.365) and group scores (Mean = 8.125).

5.3 Semi-Structured Interview

According to their opinions about cooperative group work, the students positively expressed their feelings in terms of opinion sharing, understanding the text, talking together in groups, enjoying learning with friends, facilitating exams, relaxing and feeling confident, and providing chances for acquiring vocabulary and skills. They described the activity as an interesting experience, beneficial teamwork, good idea, better than individual work, and useful discussion.

No students expressed any negative feelings towards group-work except student 10 who stated “Firstly when we framed as group and everyone read his own piece of paper trying to grasp the general concept, was such a confused feeling! And then step by step when we understand from each other the concepts, we felt so surprised and we love what your idea to send us these information”.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

With regard to the literature review of this paper, it is clear that CLT and CL are matched in a way that makes them an integrated instruction of EFL, as they share the same goal of teaching and learning language communicatively by using cooperative techniques and activating the student's role.

By comparing students' performance after both lecture-teaching method and cooperative technique of jigsaw, this study proved that this integration plays a significant role in enhancing students' levels of achievement and helps with the lack of classroom participation.

Moreover, the data drawn from observation and interviews show that working in groups has good impacts on Libyan university students' personal feelings. It is recommended that CL strategies have to be the base of EFL instruction in Libyan universities; that is, these techniques can reach students' ultimate goals of grasping the academic content and acquiring the skills by which they can use language.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to recommend that students should be taught the social and collaborative skills in order to participate in group work.

According to Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984) "teaching cooperative skills is necessary for implementing cooperative learning groups into a classroom. We recommend that only a few skills be taught each semester" (p. 66).

For EFL teachers, it is counseled to provide them with training courses of CL to learn how to implement these strategies. They should be trained how to spend almost all the class time in structuring cooperative situations, other teaching methods as competitive and individualistic may be used as a means of variegation and change.

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Appendix 1

Classroom Observation 1

OBSERVATION TASK 1 Classroom snapshot

Ask permission to go into a colleague's class for just five minutes. Your aim is to gain a 'snapshot' image of what is happening. Persuade the teacher not to prepare any special activity for this time.

For the first questions, aim to describe factually as far as you can (rather than interpreting or finding positive or negative aspects). Add your more subjective impression in answering the last question.

1 Describe how the learners are seated/standing in the room.

2 Describe generally what is happening (e.g. 'A tape is being played and learners are writing answers to printed questions').

3 Who is talking? Who is doing any other things?

4 Describe (a) the atmosphere; and (b) levels of engagement in the room.

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Appendix 2

Classroom Observation 2

OBSERVATION TASK 2

What helps people learn?

What is there about the classroom, the activities, the teacher and the learners that helps to create conditions for effective learning? What things do you observe that seem to play a part in preventing learning?

The classroom

Make notes on seating, sight lines, space, air, warmth, light, whiteboard, equipment, etc.

The activities

Make notes on the kind of activities used, the nature of student involvement, balance of students doing things and teacher doing things, etc.

The teacher

What personal qualities does the teacher have (i.e. not teaching techniques)? What kind of rapport does this teacher have? What is the personal psychological atmosphere generated by this teacher? What is it like to be a student in this classroom?

The learners

How motivated are the learners? Why? To what extent are they taking an active part in their own learning? To what extent are they expecting the teacher to do the work for them?

Appendix 3

Classroom Observation 3

OBSERVATION TASK 6

How can a teacher influence the learning environment?

The table lists some ways a teacher can influence the environment in which students learn. Choose a few of these headings (four or five is probably enough). Observe and make detailed notes about what the teacher does/doesn't do to help learning. Where possible, note specific concrete examples of techniques, e.g. what precisely does the teacher do to help create a warm classroom atmosphere?

Aspects of the learning environment	The teacher's role
Classroom atmosphere	The teacher can help establish and maintain an appropriate, warm, focused working atmosphere.
Organisation	The teacher can take an active role in organising how time, space, materials, etc. are used.
Encouragement and support; promoting participation	The teacher can provide positive, realistic support and encouragement to take an active role.
Promoting guided discovery	The teacher can elicit answers, construct questions, offer partial examples, encourage hypotheses, etc. that lead the students to work out answers for themselves.
Presenting content information	The teacher can explain, lecture, answer questions, etc. on areas of the learning content.
Provision of samples of language	Instructions, comments, questions, stories, etc. in the target language provide language exposure for the learners.
Materials and tasks	The teacher can propose, suggest or select what work is done in class and the texts and other materials used.
Monitoring	The teacher can monitor what is happening in class.
Informative feedback	The teacher can offer objective information that may help the learning process; for example, information about errors made, information about how language is formed or used, information about how a task was performed, suggestions for future work, etc. The teacher can notice and help to draw attention to progress made, problems encountered, etc.
Habit of learning	As part of a regular timed lesson, the teacher can help provide a sense of form, regularity and concreteness to an otherwise more formless learning process.
Selecting, packaging and grading	The teacher can plan that new material is met and worked with in ways that students may find more manageable than if they had to deal with the entire language in one go.
Structuring and sequencing	The teacher can suggest or help select what to study and how to organise the programme of learning and the shape of individual lessons. →

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Appendix 4

Observation Checklist of Cooperative Learning Elements

Elements of Cooperative Learning	Students' and Teachers' Roles
Positive interdependence	
Accountability	
Positive face to face interaction	
Small group skills	
Group processing	
Equal participation	

Errors Made by Libyan Learners of English in Terms of the Article System: Case Study on Students at English Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Benghazi

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Abstract

It is a matter of fact that most English language learners (ELLs) fear of mistakes and errors when they try to use English. This fear hinders students from using English either in classroom or reality. This fear of making mistakes puts pressure on them to learn English well. Hence, this paper is presented to analyze students' errors. Error analysis is utilized in this paper in order to achieve the following aims: (1) Analyze and classify errors made by Libyan learners of English, (2) What errors in the English article uses might be the most frequent and why? (3) Causes that may lead to making errors in the use of the English article system. The participants in this study were 90 male and female Libyan learners of English at the University of Benghazi. They were asked to write two composition paragraphs in order to analyze their errors in terms of the article system. The results revealed that there were three types of article errors: Omission errors, Unnecessary insertion of errors (Overgeneralization), and Confusion errors. The omission of the indefinite article *a/an* was the most frequent error category in this study followed by the unnecessary insertion of *the*.

Keywords: *Error Analysis; omission; confusion; insertion of article system*

1. Introduction

The emergence of error analysis (EA) became the optimal option in preference to contrastive analysis from the 1960s up until recently. This did not entail an absolute rejection of contrastive analysis; this method still remains, as it provided a means of analyzing errors. Corder (1967), Gass and Selinker (1994), Wetzork (2000), and Johnson (2001) claim that EA is of considerable significance, as it is concerned with the learner's developing language. They suggested that when researchers classify learners' errors, they learn more about the process of SLA by adopting learning strategies that learners use to acquire a language. Moreover, EA shows the stage the learner has reached in the process of learning, what kind of difficulties are being faced. and consequently, how these problems can be solved.

The study of errors has had an enormous impact in the field of second language learning. Some researchers (Corder, 1967; Johnson, 2001; and Abi Samra, 2003) present three views for this impact. Firstly, errors that learners make should not be considered as evidence of failure. They should be viewed as a mark of students' learning progress. Secondly, errors provide facts about how a language is learned. Thirdly, errors are seen as devices by which students are able to determine the rules of the target language. That is, learners of a second language occasionally apply previously acquired rules to the target language without proper knowledge of their application. Consequently, they make errors.

2. Literature Review

In the literature, few studies have focused on errors made by Arab learners in the use of the English article system. The majority of other studies of Arab learners have in general concentrated on verbal morphology. Those which concentrated on the English article system have led to considerable disagreement as some of these studies (for example, Crompton, 2011) suggest that interference is the key source of errors in the use of articles by Arab learners of English; whereas, other studies (Bataineh, 2005; Al-maloul, 2014) showed that overgeneralization and developmental errors were the crucial causes of errors. Therefore, this study is carried out to determine the sources of errors in the uses of the English article system by Libyan learners of English.

2.1 Error Analysis

When the CAH failed to account for some of the learner's errors, EA emerged as an alternative. Corder (1967), Gass and Selinker (1994), and Johnson (2001) believe that EA is of great significance since it concerns the learner's developing language. They suggest that when researchers classify learners' errors, they learn more about the process of SLA by inferring learning strategies, which learners use to acquire a language. EA is a technique used to identify, classify, and systematically interpret the learners' deviant forms of the target language (TL).

The essential task of error analysis is to explain how learning takes place by investigating the learner's output, and this includes learners'

correct and incorrect utterances. In addition, Corder (1974) states that EA has two branches: the theoretical and the applied. The former investigates the process of language learning, as well as the strategies in terms of similarities with first language acquisition. The latter aims at organizing remedial courses with suitable materials and teaching methods based on the results of the theoretical approach. As error analysis studies and analyses learners' errors, a look at what an error means and its role in SLA is required.

2.2 Role of Errors in Second Language Acquisition

The term error has been defined by various linguists and researchers. For example, a classic definition comes from Corder (1973) who regarded errors as 'breaches of code'. This means that they are the marks of an imperfect knowledge of the code because learners have not yet mastered the formation of the TL rules. Brown (1994) considers an error to be "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner" (p. 205). In addition, Richards and Schmidt (2002), see that an error is "the use of a linguistic item in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning" (p. 184).

It can be concluded from the above definitions that in traditional second language teaching situation, errors are seen as an incorrect or inappropriate use of language patterns which are deviant from the norms produced by a native speaker. In accordance with this belief,

many second language teachers basically correct individual errors as they take place, with little attempt to seek the reasons for the errors.

At present, however, with the development of linguistics and applied linguistics, second language teachers' attitudes towards errors have changed to a very great extent. Instead of viewing errors as problems to be solved or eradicated, most of today's second language teachers tend to consider errors as proof of the learners' levels in their target language (TL) development, which can present information that can be used to order items for teaching or to plan remedial lessons (Ellis, 1997).

As previously mentioned, in the 1960s the behaviourist theory and CAH maintained that errors were undesirable and should be avoided. However, this opinion changed when errors were considered to be normal and unavoidable. Corder (1967); Dulay et al. (1982); Lightbown and Pienemann (1993); Gass and Selinker (1994); Ellis (1997); and James (1998) believe that errors are considered to be an unavoidable part of language learning, which can reveal learners' underlying knowledge of the TL and provide evidence of how a learner uses a language.

Ellis (1997) suggests that errors are significant for several reasons. First, they are a conspicuous feature of learner language, raising the important question of 'Why do learners make errors?'. Second, "it is useful for teachers to know what errors learners make. Third paradoxically, it is possible that making errors may actually help learners to learn when they self-correct the errors they make" (p. 15). As errors that L2

learners make may be useful and indicate facts about second language learners, many researchers consider analyzing errors to be a vital activity that assists in showing the reasons for learning difficulties as it reveals sources and causes of errors. EA is a crucial factor for understanding how second language learners use TL. Thus, many researchers confirm the importance of EA in the literature.

Schachter (1974), for example, outlines two EA goals: (1) presenting the difficulties which learners face which may cause errors in learners' production, and (2) repeating specific kinds of errors which are evidence of their relative difficulty in learning. In other words, the frequency (or repetition) of errors in learning grammatical elements is a sign of the challenges of these elements for learners. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) state that "EA highlights the multiple origins of errors, in providing evidence that not all second language learners' errors are due to their first language" (p. 138).

On the contrary, there are other kinds of errors such as developmental errors (which are explained later); also, EA indicates which particular difficulties learners may face in producing TL, thereby affecting the ability of learners to communicate effectively. According to Ringbom (1987), the importance of EA is that: "errors analysis is not sufficient on its own, but it may yield a better understanding of what is going on in the learner's mind, especially if it is combined with other types of investigation, such as frequency counts, contrastive analysis" (p. 71).

2.3 Errors and Mistakes

Chomsky (1965) distinguishes between two types of errors: competence errors, and performance errors. Competence errors are systematic and result from a lack of knowledge of the language rules. Performance errors are not systematic and result from factors such as fatigue. According to Corder (1967), Ellis (1997), and Brown (1994), mistakes are performance errors which result from slips of the tongue when learners know the grammatical rules but fail to use them correctly.

Norrish (1987) refers to errors as “systematic deviation that learners make while developing knowledge of the second language rule system” (p. 7). He emphasizes that errors are more crucial than mistakes as they show evidence of the learners’ knowledge and are relevant and vital in language acquisition. He further argues that native speakers make mistakes not errors; whereas, L2 learners make both errors and mistakes.

Errors are classified by some researchers in the literature. For instance, Corder (1974, p. 277) classified errors into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

A. Omission Errors: They refer to non-occurrence of necessary structures; that is, the absence of an item that should appear in a well-formed sentence. (see sentences 1 and 2)

- 1) He in the kitchen.
- 2) She lives in big house.

The above examples illustrate that learners omitted the auxiliary verb *is* from sentence 1 and the indefinite article *a* from sentence 2. Thus, they are ill-formed sentences. Thomas (1989) conducted a study on the use of the English article system. He tested participants with different L1 backgrounds. They were divided into two groups. The native language of the participants in group 1 contained articles (German and Spanish), whilst the language of the group 2 participants lacked articles (Korean and Japanese). The results revealed that learners whose L1 lack articles tended to omit the English articles. Thomas argued that the reason for this behavior can be attributed to the influence of their L1.

B. Addition Errors: They refer to the appearance of grammatical elements that should not appear. One kind of addition error is that of double marking errors which refer to “using the same feature of two elements” (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 156). (see sentence 3)

3) This the car is old.

Most Arab learners of English tend to make the type of error highlighted in sentence 3 because of the influence of their L1; for example, when an Arabic sentence contains a demonstrative pronoun such as *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* the noun that follows may start with the definite article. For this reason, some learners may transfer this rule and implement it into an English sentence.

C. Malformation Errors: They refer to the supplement of the wrong morpheme; that is, the use of the wrong form of grammatical

element. An example comes from the wrong use of the singular form of the demonstrative before a plural noun (see sentence 4).

4) That books are mine.

D. Disordering Errors: They refer to the wrong position of morphemes in a sentence (see sentence 5).

5) Bought Mary a book.

Moreover, Brown (1994) classified errors in terms of memory as either global, (these which cannot be understood) or local (those which can be understood). Global errors lead to the disintegration of the structures of a sentence, which, therefore, become difficult to understand and process. (see sentence 6)

6) The policeman was in this corner whistle.

Thus, sentence 6 is not understood as its structure is wrong. By contrast, local errors can be made in a small part of a sentence such as the wrong use of a verb, but the error does not affect the meaning of the sentence (see sentence 7).

7) I hungry very much

In another approach as regards the classification of errors, Dulay et al. (1982), Richards (1974), and Kaweera (2013) divided errors in terms of intralingual errors, (they are also called developmental errors) and interlingual errors, (which result from transferring L1 rules into L2). These two types of errors belong to the category known as interlanguage.

Selinker (1972) defined interlanguage as “a systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of the learner’s first language and the TL” (p. 106). It is a system which is neither of the native language nor of the TL, but falls between them and is based upon the learner’s attempt to produce TL structures. Similarly, Brown (1994) defined interlanguage as “the separateness of a second language learners’ system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and the target languages” (p. 215). Errors may occur; the causes of which are either that of transferring patterns of L1, (also known as interlingual transfer or interference) or extending patterns within the TL such as over-generalization of one rule over another (also known as intra-lingual errors).

According to Richards (1974), intra-lingual errors are:

Items produced by the learner which reflect not the structures of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner in this case, tries to derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language. (p. 6)

To clarify, Richards means that the errors result as an outcome of the development of interlanguage by the learners; thus, all L2 learners may make such errors regardless of their L1. He believed that these types of errors should be called developmental errors due to similarities

discovered in errors produced by children when they are acquiring TL as their first language.

In addition, Lo Coco (1975) states that “intra-lingual errors occur when L1 does not have a rule which L2 has, and the learner applies an L2 rule (i.e. over-generalize), resulting in an error” (p. 99). In Lo Coco’s opinion, the absence of an equivalent L1 rule may lead to errors being made in learning. An example comes from learners whose L1 lacks, or does not have, certain grammatical rules, (Chinese and Japanese languages have no article system) where learners may over-generalize a rule in L2 as they have not yet mastered the grammatical rule.

Moreover, Krashen (1982) believes that intra-lingual errors “reflect the mental mechanisms underlying the learner’s general language development which usually coincides with the type of strategies employed by children learning the target language as their first language” (p. 171). Thus, he argues that intra-lingual errors may result from applying the wrong hypotheses to L2 because of insufficient exposure to it. Over-generalization errors are examples of intra-lingual errors. They refer to the deviation of structures on the basis of the learner’s experience of certain TL structures. An example of this can be seen in the addition of the plural sign (s) to nouns such as **childs* and **informations*.

Taylor (1975) suggests that over-generalization errors can be placed in a transfer errors category. Both errors arise due to the same underlying process, (transfer of previous knowledge into a new

learning situation); the only difference between these two kinds of errors being of an over-generalization error, the transfer taking place from the same language (TL), whilst in the transfer error condition, the transfer occurs from the learner's first language L1 into the TL.

What is more, Dulay et al. (1982) emphasize that some errors made by L2 learners are developmental errors. The studies carried out by Huebner (1985), Thomas (1989), and Humphrey (2007) supported this view. Their studies concerned the use of the English article system by L2 learners of English. The results show that the subjects may over-generalize and over-use one article in preference to another. This can be attributed to the fact that L2 learners may fluctuate between definiteness and specificity in the use of the English article, and that learners associate 'the' with specificity. The following examples illustrate this point:

1. [+ specific, + definite] as in:

I would like to meet the author of the novel someday. I watched an interview with her on TV, I really like her.

2. [- specific, + definite] as in:

I would like to meet the artist of that painting. Unfortunately, I do not know who it is because there is no signature on it.

3. [+ specific, - definite] as in:

I am here for two weeks. I am visiting a friend. Her name is Monica David, and she lives in Newcastle now.

4. [-specific, - definite] as in:

She is staying with a friend, but she did not tell me who that friend is.

The above examples show that the English article system has a generic as well as a specific reference. [+specific] can be used with *the/a* (definite and indefinite articles), and [-specific] can also be used with *the/a*. Sentences like 2 and 3 may confuse a second language learner of English: with sentence 2, a learner may think that this sentence requires an indefinite article or the zero article because the person who wants to meet the author of the painting does not know who the artist is. Whereas, in sentence 3, a learner could think that this sentence requires the definite article because of the name of the person in the sentence.

Some studies (Ionin, 2003; Ionin et al., 2004) concurred with this opinion, believing that the use of specificity and definiteness may cause variations in the use of the article system. It can be noted that a learner may overuse *the* and *a* in the situation [+specific, -definite] such as in sentence 3 and overuse *a* with a non-specific definite such as demonstrated in sentence 2.

In addition, the other type of error is that of the inter-lingual errors. They are defined by a number of researchers, such as Norrish (1983), James (1998), and Spada and Lightbown (1999) as being errors which can be traced back to the learners' native language. Inter-lingual errors result from a negative transfer of linguistic patterns of learners' first language and the use of them in TL.

Additionally, Brown (1994) states that some errors made by L2 learners result primarily from the assumption that some L2 learners

believe that the linguistic patterns of L2 are similar to their native language. Such a belief may result in the negative transfer of rules when L1 rules differ from those in L2. The results of studies such as Al-Naimi (1989); Diab (1997); Noor (1996); Aljarf (2000); Abisamra (2003); Mohammed (2004); and Qaid (2011) support Brown's view. These studies show that the majority of errors that L2 learners in general and Arab learners in particular tend to make are inter-lingual as they can be traced back to their L1.

The transfer of rules from learners' L1 to L2 can lead to errors occurring and, as a result, learning problems arise. For example, an Arab learner may write a sentence such as, *water is necessary for life* in a generic sense. In English, this sentence requires no article in this context as words like *water* cannot be pre-modified by the article *the* when referring to a generic reference. The reason why Arab learners may make such an error can be due to the influence of their L1, whereby Arabic requires the addition of the definite article *the* in such sentences.

Generally, EA distinguishes between inter-lingual errors and intra-lingual ones. As discussed above, inter-lingual errors result from a negative transfer of the learners' native language, namely from the differences between L1 and L2. Intra-lingual errors result from incorrect learning (incomplete development) of TL not only from a language transfer; but also from within the language itself (TL).

2.4 Process of Error Analysis

Different error analysis procedures are used by various researchers such as Corder (1987), Gass and Selinker (1994), Hubbard (1996), Ellis (1997), and Brown (1994). According to Corder (1974), EA data can consist of three kinds: spoken data; written data; and both spoken and written data. Written materials can be either spontaneous production (free composition) or controlled production (such as translations).

In order to identify L2 errors, it is necessary to distinguish between errors and mistakes (Ellis, 2006). As discussed previously, mistakes are slips of the tongue which can be attributed to reasons such as tiredness or carelessness and which can be corrected; whereas, errors reflect gaps in the learners' knowledge. Errors occur because learners have not yet mastered the language and cannot detect and correct them.

Ellis (1997) believes that errors and mistakes can be distinguished in two ways: first, the consistency of learners' performance indicates the type of deviation a learner may make. Thus, if deviant linguistic items are produced regularly, it is an indication of a lack of the learner's linguistic competence, and they can be classified as errors. If learners sometimes use the correct form and sometimes apply the wrong one, this is a mistake. The second method is to ask learners to attempt to correct their incorrect statements. If they are unable to correct them, this is an indication of errors; however, if they are able to correct them, this indicates that mistakes have been made.

When errors are identified, they can be described and classified. Ellis (1997) presented two different ways of describing errors. First,

errors can be described by classifying them into grammatical categories. Thus, one may gather all the errors which relate to a particular linguistic element (such as the article system) and then identify the kinds of errors which apply to the linguistic element. The second method is to classify errors according to their occurrences. For example, when L2 learners omit a necessary linguistic element in a sentence, such an error can be called an '*omission error*.'

3. Methodology of the Study

The researcher uses a qualitative research method to conduct this study. The researcher uses literature review as a secondary resource and testing 90 students in article system in English as a primarily resource. The study was conducted in the Department of English at Faculty of Arts at the University of Benghazi.

3.1 Importance of the Study

The importance of the study comes from the importance of the topic of the article system in English. The researcher sees that the topic of Article system in English is important; hence, this study gets its importance from the importance of the topic itself.

3.2 Problem of the Study

Based to research and studies regarding teaching and learning English in Libya, the researcher sees that most Libyan learners of English encounter challenges in using article system. Most Libyan learners of English confuse using article system when they speak or write in English.

3.3 Participants of the Study

The research subjects were 90 male and female first-year Libyan students, majoring in English as a foreign language at the University of Benghazi. The participants were divided into three different groups. Each group included 30 students, aged 19-23, native speakers of Arabic. The participants shared similar socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds, educational systems, and fields of study.

4. Data Collection

The participants were taught the article system using different teaching strategies. They were provided a pre-test before teaching and two tests (post-test 1 and post-test 2) after teaching. In all tests, the students were asked to write two composition paragraphs. The main goal of this task was to identify and classify the students' errors with regard to the article system found in their writings. The secondary goal was to investigate the sources of the misuse of the English article system made by Libyan learners in this study. In other words, it aims to find out whether mother tongue interference causes students to make article errors or not.

The participants were given two topics in this task, and were asked to answer them both. The two topics were as follows: 1) *What did you do last weekend?* 2) *Describe one of your relatives.* These questions were presented in the three tests. They were chosen so that the students could write different answers in each test. Although the tasks included written instructions, the researcher provided the participants with verbal instructions in English and Arabic before each task. Moreover, an

explanation of unfamiliar words was presented in Arabic, in order to avoid the possibility of a lack of vocabulary having an effect on findings.

5. Findings of the Study

Types of Article Errors of the Composition Task

1. Omission of Articles

Errors of omission were of two types: omission of the indefinite article *a/an* and omission of the definite article *the*. The following table presents more details in relation to each group's types, frequencies, and percentage of errors. The frequency and percentage of types of errors were obtained by looking at the number of contexts in which a particular article is required and then computing errors and their proportions raised. The percentage of errors was achieved by dividing the number of errors by the total number of answers x 100 i.e. $\text{Wrong answers} \div (\text{wrong} + \text{correct answers}) \times 100 = \text{percentage } \%$

Table 1 The Most Frequent Article Errors in Each Test

Category	TEI G1			DT G2			GG G3		
	Pr	Po 1	Po2	Pr	Po 1	Po 2	Pr	Po1	Po2
Om. of a/an	85	82	81	83	34	37	87	84	93
%	56	51	52	53	28	28	54	52	55
Om. of the	22	26	26	28	5	9	26	30	28
%	27	29	29	31	9	10	26	28	29

Omission of *a/an*

The results of the composition task showed that the errors of omission of *a/an* were more common than the omission of *the*. Regarding the TEI group, Table 1 shows that students omitted *a/an* considerably more than *the*. The frequency of errors of this group in post-test 1 and post-test 2 was almost similar and from pre-test to post-test 2 the errors decreased slightly. The results of the DT group showed that the errors of this group had been notably reduced from the pre-test to post-test 1 and post-test 2. The case with the CG was entirely different from that of the TEI and DT groups. Although this group's errors decreased in post-test 1, they increased in post-test 2.

Omission of *the*

The results of these kinds of errors are as follows: With regards to the TEI group, Table 1 showed that the frequency of errors increased slightly in post-test 1 and post-test 2. The errors of the DT group decreased greatly in post-test 1 and post-test 2. The errors in the CG increased in post-test 1 and decreased slightly in post-test 2.

2. Unnecessary Insertion of Articles (Overuse)

The following table shows the total number of unnecessary insertion of articles each group made in the three tests.

Table 2 Unnecessary Insertion of Articles

Category	TEI G1			DT G2			GG G3		
	Pr	Po1	Po2	Pr	Po1	Po2	Pr	Po1	Po 2
Unnecessary insertion of a/an	76	74	72	84	51	40	77	75	73
%	38	44	40	39	57	53	39	39	38
Unnecessary insertion of the	132	117	109	127	17	21	119	115	117
%	61	70	61	60	19	28	61	60	61
Total	199	167	180	211	89	75	196	193	192

Table 2 showed the number of errors each group committed in the pre-test, post-test1 and post-test 2 and that the errors of unnecessary insertion of *the* were greater than the errors of unnecessary insertion of *a/an* in the TEI group and CG.

Unnecessary Insertion of *a/an* (Overuse of *a/an*)

Errors in the use of *a/an* with unmarked plural, (people and children), adjectives, and with uncountable nouns, (information, hair) were used with high frequency in all groups in the pre-test. The results of the TEI group demonstrated that the errors reduced very slightly from pre-test to post-test 2. Nevertheless, the DT group performed better in post-test 1 and post-test 2. Moreover, the case with the CG was similar to that of TEI group with their errors slightly reduced from the pre-test to post-test 2.

Unnecessary Insertion of *the* (Overuse of *the*)

This kind of error was frequent in all groups. Learners tended to use the definite article in situations which require Ø. Although the TEI

group and CG reduced these kinds of errors in post-test1 and post-test 2, the DT group outperformed them notably. Table 2 showed that errors in the DT group decreased remarkably in post-test 1 and post-test 2.

Confusion

Table 3 shows the total number of confusion errors of each group in the three tests.

Table 3 The Total Number of Confusion Errors in the Three Tests

Category	TEI			DT			GG		
	Pr	Po1	Po2	Pr	Po1	Po2	Pr	Po1	Po2
a/an instead of the	19	15	18	28	7	6	22	26	24
%	28	32	33	41	15	11	32	55	44
the instead of a/an	10	11	9	12	4	4	9	7	9
%	32	69	50	39	25	22	29	44	50
a instead of an	5	4	4	3	1	2	2	5	3
%	50	40	44	30	10	22	20	50	33

Using *a/an* Instead of *the*

As shown in Table 3 in the three groups, examples of misusing *a/an* to replace *the* are far more than those of misuse of *the* when the gap actually requires *a/an*. The performance of the TEI group indicates that this group improved very slightly after 6 months of instruction.

However, the performance of the DT group improved considerably and achieved a relatively high accuracy rate in using *a/an* immediately after the instruction and 6 months afterwards. As for the CG, their errors increased slightly in post-tests 1 & 2 than in the pre-test.

Using *the* Instead of *a/an*

There were few errors of this type in the three groups. The DT group made the fewest errors in post-test 1 and post-test 2, whilst the TEI group and CG produced almost similar results in the three tests.

Using *a* Instead of *an*, or *an* instead of *a*

This type of error was made the least in this study. Table 3 showed that the performance of the DT group outperformed the other two. The primary cause of the wrong selection of *a* for *an*, or *an* for *a* is obviously of intra-lingual origin.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, this study also aims to: determine which article use will prove to be more problematic (overused / underused) for Libyan learners during the learning process. Based on the evaluation of the results of this study, the article use that might be challenging for Libyan learners is presented in below.

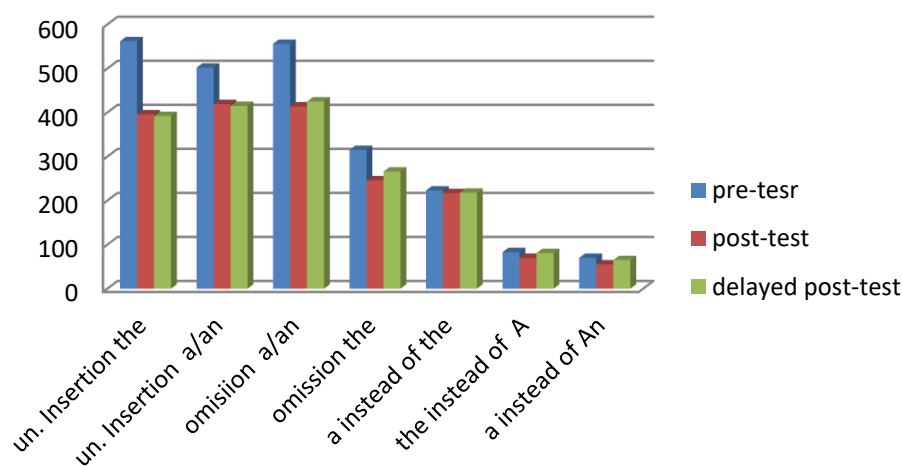
The Article that Might be Problematic for Libyan Learners

To determine which type of article error might be overused / underused, the errors in the two tasks had been counted in the three tests of the three groups. The results are shown in Table 4. Errors in the following table are arranged from the most frequent source to the least.

Table 4 The Frequency of Errors Arranged from the Most Problematic to the Least

Type of Error	Pre-test	Post-test1	Post-test2	Total
Omission of <i>a/an</i>	556	414	425	1395
Unnecessary insertion of <i>a/an</i>	502	419	415	1336
Unnecessary insertion of <i>the</i>	562	369	392	1323
Omission of <i>the</i>	315	246	226	787
<i>A</i> instead of <i>the</i>	223	217	218	658
<i>The</i> instead of <i>a/an</i>	83	70	81	234
<i>A</i> instead of <i>an</i>	70	55	65	190

Figure 1.1 The Frequency of Errors in the Three Groups



As shown in Table 4 and figure 1, the omission of the indefinite article *a/an* was the most frequent error category in this study (1395). This indicates that the acquisition of the indefinite article seems to be problematic and might not be easily acquired by Libyan learners. Although the improvement in performance was better in post-tests 1 & 2 than in the pre-test, errors of this type were challenged in post-tests 1

& 2. This means that the instruction strategies used in teaching the English article seem to have made little difference.

Interestingly, the unnecessary insertion of the indefinite article is ranked the second problematic (overuse) aspect to be acquired. That is, the participants in this study either considerably added the indefinite article in situations where it should be absent especially with uncountable nouns or omitted it (underuse) in situations that require its presence.

The analysis showed the errors made by students and based on the errors, the area of the article system that might be problematic is shown. However, it is necessary to recognize the correct uses of the article system in order to determine how many times they used *the* for *the*, *a* for *a* and \emptyset for \emptyset . The following tables reveal the frequency of the correct usages for each group in the three tests.

Table 5 Frequency of Correct Usages of Group TEI during the Three Tests

TEI	The / The		A(an)/ A(an)		\emptyset / \emptyset		Total
Pre-test: $\emptyset > a > the$	40	22%	52	28%	92	50%	184
Post-test1: A > the > \emptyset	79	31%	96	38%	78	31%	253
Post-test2: The > \emptyset > a	72	40%	48	26%	62	34%	182

Table 6 Frequency of Correct Usages of Group DT during the Three Tests

DT	The / The		A(an)/ A(an)		\emptyset / \emptyset		Total
Pre-test: a > \emptyset > the	44	26%	67	40%	57	34%	168
Post-test 1: a > \emptyset > the	91	29%	120	39%	98	32%	309
Post-test 2: \emptyset > a > the	89	27%	101	31%	138	42%	328

Table 7 Frequency of Correct Usages of Group CG during the Three Tests

CG	The / The		A(an)/ A(an)		Ø / Ø		Total
Pre-test: a>the > Ø	63	37%	64	38%	42	25%	169
Post-test 1: The > a= Ø	59	35%	55	33%	55	33%	169
Post-test 2: The>a> Ø	60	36%	56	34%	49	30%	165

As shown in table 5, for the TEI group, the use of the zero article attained the highest frequency of correct usage in the pre-test, the use of the indefinite article achieved the highest frequency of correct usage in post-test 1 and the use of the definite article attained the highest frequency of correct usage in post-test 2.

However, for the DT group (Table 6), the use of the indefinite article attained the highest frequency of correct usage in the pre-test and post-test 1, and the use of the zero article realized the highest frequency of correct usage in post-test 2.

For the CG (Table 7), the use of the indefinite article attained the highest frequency of correct usage in the pre-test; the use of the definite article achieved the highest frequency of correct usage in post-test 1 and post-test 2.

5.1 Explanation of Errors

The English article system is problematic for most L2 learners regardless of their native language, even for advanced learners who have learned other grammatical features perfectly (Master, 2002). In the literature, some facts are given in relation to the challenges faced in this area of grammar, which is considered “core in speaking a language.

People become helpless to use language unless they are aware of its structure, represented in its grammar” (Omar, 2020, p.2).

First of all, according to Master (2002), one of the difficulties in the article system is that the article system is multifunctional. It stacks multiple functions onto one morpheme leading to a complexity for learners. Moreover, Master (1997) states that amongst the frequent occurring function words in English are the English article words, causing “continuous rule application to be difficult over an extended stretch of discourse” (p. 232).

According to Chang (1987), the violation of rules which takes place in some idiomatic phrases and proper nouns may add to the difficulty with the English article system. In addition, a number of linguists (Sinclair, 1991 and Al-Saidat, 2009) reported that the difficulty of the article system for L2 learners may result from the negative transfer from the learners’ native language.

Finally, although learners may be aware of the rules of the English article system, they may not be able to apply the rules because of insufficient response time in actual communications. This suggestion may be a possible cause of the inconsistency found between learners’ knowledge and act of the use of articles.

The above-mentioned complications are general for all L2 learners regardless of their native language. This study adds a further difficulty and explanations for the making of errors and the details are presented below.

5.2 Explanation of *a/an* Omission Errors

Table 1 showed that a considerable number of Libyan students made omission errors of *a/an* whose use is required with singular countable nouns that entail the use of the indefinite article in English. This means that students show indefiniteness by not using an article at all.

For some reason, it is difficult to provide an absolute reason for learners' errors. First, it is not easy to read the learner's mind to recognize the cause behind errors unless an interview or response-comment is involved. Even in the case of an interview or response-comment a student sometimes has tacit knowledge about some grammatical rules where he knows the correct answer but is unable to identify the reason behind it.

Second, some errors can be ascribed to multiple sources; however, omission errors of *a/an* may be attributed to some sources, the most obvious of which could be first language transfer (i.e. inter-lingual interference from the native language). This result is in line with a number of results of other studies (e.g. Swan and Smith, 2001; Mourtage, 2004; Bataineh, 2005; and Al-haysony, 2012). Moreover, the target language simplification could also lead learners to make errors in their use of the article system.

5.3 Explanation of Errors of Omission of *the*

Omission of *the* was less than in the omission of *a/an*. This result may not be attributed to the learners' first language because Arabic has a definite article and the learners omitted it in the situations that require

its presence in both languages. The most likely explanation for errors of this kind is due to intra-lingual interference. This means that learners made errors within the same language. This result was based on the fact that there are some nouns which require the use of *al-* in Arabic and *the* in English, but the students use the zero article instead.

5.4 Explanation of Errors of Unnecessary Insertion of *a/an*

Although learners omitted the indefinite article in obligatory situations, they overused it in situations that did not require its presence. Such an error cannot be attributed to learners' first language for Arabic does not have its equivalent. Learners' overuse of the indefinite article is an intra-lingual influence which could be attributed to the fact that they use *a/an* with uncountable nouns on the grounds of structural similarity to the singular countable nouns, or they overuse *a/an* in order to avoid deletion and for fear of making errors.

Furthermore, they may overuse *a* because of the fact that the indefinite article *a* is more frequent than *an* in English. This overuse of *a* reveals that the learners were overgeneralizing and probably under the impact of the transfer of training¹.

Moreover, learners' use of *a/an* with adjectives, (e.g. She is a beautiful) can be attributed to the reason that they recognize the presence of an English structure in which the adjective is the head of a noun phrase. Learners may use *a/an* in places where they are not required because they may think that the adjective functions as the head of a noun phrase; however, it is used in the same way as a noun.

¹ Transfer of training refers to special emphasis in the input made by textbooks or instructors.

5.6 Explanation of Errors of Unnecessary Insertion of *the*

Table 2 revealed that Libyan learners have problems in using of the definite article. They (overuse) the definite article when the zero article is required. Learners misused the zero article and considerably overused the definite article instead. Learners overused the definite article *the* with plural nouns in the target language regardless of the distinction between generic and specific. Sentences like *the people are very kind* and *she likes the children* were used frequently.

5.7 Explanation of Using *a/an* Instead of *the*

This kind of error can be explained as an intra-lingual error due to the fact that Arabic does not have an indefinite article. Such errors occur because learners may keep in their minds the grammatical suggestion that the initial word of the sentence is an indicator that the phrase must be preceded by indefiniteness. This thought could be concluded from the use ‘*Anaphoric reference*’.

5.8 Explanation of Using *a* instead of *an*

This kind of error occurred in few cases in the two tasks. The use of *a* instead of *an* occurred in phrases which require *an* where the first letter is silent and followed by a vowel. For instance, the phrase *an hour ago* was written as **a hour ago* in most cases. However, the use of *an* instead of *a* was very rare. The reason for the use of *a* instead of *an* can be attributed to the students’ lack of knowledge of the words in which the first letters are silent. For instance, in this study there were some words in which the first letter was not silent, but the students used

an instead of *a* because they were unaware that this letter was not silent, (e.g. I went to an hotel).

Moreover, the use of *a* instead of *an* occurred in places where the use of the indefinite article depends on phonetic rules. For example, the phrase *an MA in Italian literature* was written frequently as *a MA in Italian literature*.

5.9 Sources of Errors

From what has been previously reported, it can be noted that the English article poses a problem for Libyan learners of English. The goal of this study was to investigate the causes behind such difficulty. It was established that the sources of the errors committed in this study were due to: inter-lingual interference from the native language and intra-lingual interference within the same language (i.e. English). These sources seem to be the causes of the erroneous selection of the article system. The intra-lingual errors may include:

Omission of the definite article,

Using the indefinite article (*a/an*) with unmarked plural,

Using the indefinite article (*a/an*) with marked plural,

Using the indefinite article (*a/an*) with uncountable nouns,

Using the indefinite article (*a/an*) with adjectives,

Substituting the indefinite article (*a/an*) for the definite article,

Substituting *a* for *an*.

Omission of the indefinite article (*a/an*), and

Substituting the definite article (*the*) for the indefinite article (*a/an*).

Inter-lingual errors may include:

Omission of the indefinite article (*a/an*), and

Substituting the definite article (*the*) for the indefinite article (*a/an*).

All in all, the results revealed that the English article system is problematic for Libyan students. Moreover, they presented the types of errors committed in this study and furthermore, which type of article use could be problematic in terms of overuse and underuse. The sources of these errors are also indicated.

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The Improper Placement of Word-Stress: Case Study on Students in Department of English, University of Ajdabiya

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Abstract

Individuals who speak English as a second language vary in their ability to produce appropriate stress, which often impedes their intelligibility. This study takes into account a particular aspect of stress that has not been researched adequately in Libya. The study aims to identify the incorrect placement of English word-stress generated by Libyan university students in the Department of English at the University of Ajdabiya. This study tests the hypothesis that a majority of Libyan students in the Department of English at the University of Ajdabiya have problems in word-stress. The participants of this study are 45 undergrad students from the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ajdabiya. A diagnostic test was used as the instrument to collect the data. The main scores were calculated and highlighted, using the tool of descriptive statistics. The results show that the majority of the participants encountered difficulties in English word-stress. The study recommends teachers to help and raise the students' awareness of the stress and its importance. This study provides insights and encourages teachers of English to develop their teaching strategies to reduce or eliminate the problems regarding English word-stress pronunciation.

Keywords: *Stress; pronunciation; segmentals; suprasegmentals*

1. Introduction

Erazmus (Cited in Eltrug, 1984) believes that “the need for pronunciation improvement is so great for our students. We should resolve that every language teacher consciously works on being a pronunciation teacher” (p. 20). The difficulty of pronunciation can be attributed to a number of factors: some are due to mother tongue interference, that is, the pronunciation habits of the first language. Other factors can be traced to the students themselves such as the poor motivation to study or their carelessness. The number of oversized classes is another factor.

Furthermore, there are factors owing to the teaching curriculum, the time which is, in turn, a major factor in teaching and learning pronunciation. The lack of specialized trained teachers in preparatory and high schools is another factor that affect the background and knowledge of the students before joining the university. Kelly (2000) mentions that there are two main problems with pronunciation teaching. The first is not due to teachers' lacking interest in teaching pronunciation, but rather to their feeling of doubt as to how to teach it.

The second problem as Kelly (2000) states is that “a lot of pronunciation teaching tends to be done in response to errors which students make in the classroom” (p. 13). Another major factor is the lack of well-equipped laboratories. In addition, students rarely have enough practice or study in the laboratory when they are in high schools because of their teachers' lack of knowledge of how to use the

laboratory and also because of the school administration's carelessness, which does not properly pay attention to this major device in teaching.

2. Literature Review

Pronunciation is a very essential component of speech. In fact, acquisition of good pronunciation in learning a new language is vital. Yet, an exact pronunciation is not important to communicate; the aim is that learners should be able to speak successfully with natives, but not to have a native accent. Kenworthy (2002) confirms the same idea by claiming that in choosing intelligibility as the goal rather than native-like pronunciation, which means that we are aiming at something that is close enough. The goal of pronunciation improvement is not to fulfill a perfect imitation of a native accent, but to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other competent speakers (Ur, 1999).

2.1 History of Pronunciation Pedagogy

Approaches to the teaching of pronunciation have changed considerably during the recent history of language teaching, moving away from a highlighting on the precise production of individual speech sounds to focusing more on the broader, communicative aspects of connected speech (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

Kelly (Cited in Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1997) considers pronunciation the “Cinderella” area of foreign language teaching. He comments that linguists and philologists have studied grammar and vocabulary much more than pronunciation. Therefore,

teachers have understood them much better than pronunciation, which began to be studied regularly before the beginning of the 20th century.

Later, many methods appeared that focused on the teaching and learning of pronunciation. Table 1 below (Morely, 1994) shows history of pronunciation pedagogy by methods of teaching.

Method	Pronunciation Pedagogy
Grammar-translation method Reading-based approaches	Pronunciation is irrelevant
Audio-lingual approach	Pronunciation is very important. The teacher models and students repeat; however, the teacher has the assistance of a structurally based teaching device: the minimal pair drill.
Cognitive code approach	Emphasized pronunciation in favor of grammar and vocabulary because of the conventional wisdom of the late 1960s and 1970s. Native like pronunciation could not be achieved anyway, and, by extension, it is argued by many that should not be taught at all.

Some specialists in language reject the idea of learning and teaching pronunciation on the grounds that acquiring a native-like pronunciation is neither possible nor required (Aktor, 2007). Therefore, pronunciation is often seen by them as an extremely complex area of language learning and teaching. On the other hand, many specialists of

language realize that pronunciation is both desirable and vital for learners of any language for the following reasons:

- It helps students understand the spoken language they hear and helps them make their own speech more comprehensible and meaningful to other speakers as well. Croft (1972) emphasizes that one cannot even hear a new language correctly until one has learned to pronounce it reasonably well oneself.
- For Kenworthy (2002), pronunciation is important for it may help learners who want to approach a native-like accent because of the nature of their work that requires them to deal with native speakers. It is also important for learners who want to become teachers of English whose pronunciation is needed to approximate a native accent.

For the last thirty years, the phenomenon of perceiving and mastering foreign accent in the speech of second language (L2) learners have been examined in several increasingly detailed experimental studies. As Thompspon (as cited in Yates, 2003) maintains, there are good reasons to study this phenomenon for it may help resolve theoretical issues important for second language pedagogy. These reasons are the follows:

1. Critical Period: Guion, Harada, and Clark (2003) said, “Many studies have shown that late learners tend to speak a second language with a heavier accent than early learners. The age of second language acquisition seems to be the most important predictor of degree of foreign accent” (p. 3). Kenworthy (2002)

argues that learners under the age of puberty pronounce a second language like a native if they have continued exposure in authentic context. Conversely, they will maintain a foreign accent even though they master other aspects such as syntax or vocabulary.

2. Native Language: It is clear that the native language is the most influential factor affecting a learner's pronunciation. The native language, according to Kenworthy (2002) "is an important factor in learning to pronounce English: this is clearly demonstrated by the fact that a foreign accent has some of the sound characteristics of the learner's native language" (p. 4).

Brown (1994) declares that "if you are familiar with the sound system of a learner's native language, you will be better able to diagnose student's difficulties. Many L1 - L2 carryovers can be overcome through a focused awareness and effort on the learner's part" (p. 284). Thus, when the teacher knows the native language of the students, he will be able to diagnose errors in pronunciation as a carryover from the native language, that is, mother tongue interference.

3. Amount of Exposure: Based to Yates (2003), "exposure to a second language is researched as two different variables in L2 pronunciation: the length of residence and the amount of interaction the L2 learner encounters in daily life" (p. 9). Smit (2000) argues that the lack of personal experience can hinder learner's progress in second language learning. In this regard, Smith advises students to spend time where the L2 is spoken a lot.

4. **Personal Attitude and Identity Toward the L2 Culture:** Yates (2003) believes that “pronunciation learning goes deeper than merely acquiring something new; it encompasses the whole being and has an impact on the learner's identity” (p. 10). Yates adds that when learners retain identification with their own culture or social category, they may unconsciously or consciously retain a foreign accent as a marker of in-group affiliation. Acquiring a new accent implies a certain readiness for acquiring a different identity revealing a high amount of integrativeness. Furthermore, Brown (1994) argues that “learners need to be reminded of the importance of positive attitude toward the people who speak the language”, and more importantly “students need to become aware of and not afraid of the second identity that may emerge within them” (p. 285).
5. **Innate Phonetic Ability or Linguistic Aptitude:** Having a good ear for language can simplify the learning process. This skill, as Kenworthy (2002) states, has been variously termed, “aptitude for oral mimicry, phonetic coding ability or auditory discrimination ability” (p. 6). Brown (1994) maintains that if a person has been exposed to a foreign language as a child, this knack is present whether the language is remembered or not.
6. **Motivation and Concern for Good Pronunciation:** Kenworthy (2002) speaks in favor of motivation as one of the good indicators that affects language learning. In this regard, she states that “when we talk in terms of strength of concern for pronunciation, we are really

pinpointing a type of motivation . . . the desire to do well is a kind of achievement motivation” (p. 8).

2.2 Structure of English Syllable

A syllable is a general phonological concept. Each word consists of at least one syllable, and many words have two, three, four or more syllables. Each syllable has a structure, a sequence of some of the phonemes of the language. Every English syllable has a center or peak, known as the nucleus, an element which is (+ syllabic) and is always a vowel. This peak may be preceded by one or more non-syllabic elements, that is, consonants, which constitute the onset of the syllable, and it may be followed by one or more non-syllabic elements, which constitute the coda. The peak and the coda together are called the rhyme. In terms of notation, the syllable looks like this: (C) V (C) (Kreidler, 2004). Table 2 below shows structural properties of the syllable.

Parts	Description	Optionality
Onset	Initial segment of a syllable	Optional
Nucleus	Central segment of a syllable	Obligatory
Coda	Closing segment of a syllable	Optional

Syllables in English may be strong or weak. When we compare between syllables, we find that the vowel in the weak syllable is shorter, lower in intensity, and different in quality. For example, in the word *father* /f ɑ:θə/, the second syllable is shorter than the first, less louder, and has a vowel that cannot occur in strong syllables, which is schwa /ə/. Thus, this is a weak syllable. Any strong syllable has its

peak, one of the vowel phonemes (or possibly a triphthong), but not /ə/, /u/, or /i/. If the vowel is short, the strong syllable will always have a coda as well. On the other hand, weak syllables can only have one of the very small number of possible peaks, and they can have no coda (Roach, 2000).

Weak and strong syllables can be found in these words:

1. 'fɑ:. ə *father*
2. 'hæp.i *happy*
3. 'θæk ju *thank you*
4. 'bɒt.l *bottle*
5. 'θret.n *threaten*

/ə/, /i/, and /u/ do not occur in strong syllables nor do syllabic consonants like /l/, /n/, /m/, /ŋ/ and /r/. The specific information is now given for vowels that do not appear in stressed syllables (Roach, 2000).

1. /ə/ is a mid-central lax vowel (the lips are in neutral position). It can correspond to many different spellings: a, ar, ate, o, or, e, er, u, ough, ou. For example, *attend*, *molar*, *intimate*, *carrot*, *forget*, *violet*, etc.

2. /i/ is a close front vowel. It occurs in:

- i) -y, -ey and in morphological related words as in /'hʌrin/.
- ii) unstressed re-, pre-, de- + vowel as in /ri'ækt/.
- iii) -iate, -ious as in /ə'pri:. ʃi.eit/.
- iv) he, she, we, me, be, the (+ vowel) (all unstressed)

3. /u/ is a close back vowel. It occurs in:

- i) *you*, *to*, *into*, *do* (all unstressed and not immediately preceding a consonant)
- ii) *through*, *who* (all unstressed)

iii) within a word: before another vowel as in /ɪvæk.ju'eɪ.ʃən/

4. /l/ in less common words or more technical words.

i) /əl/ can be used instead as in /'bɒt. l/ vs. /ə'kwɪt.tɒ l/

ii) /ŋ/ is most common after alveolar plosives and fricatives

iii) /m/ and /ŋ/ occur only as a result of processes such as

assimilation and elision as in /h æm, brəʊk ki:/

iv) /r/ is very common in rhotic accents

Syllabic consonants can be found together: /næf ɳl/

2.3 Stress in English

Kingdom (1966) defines stress as “the relative degree of force used by a speaker on the various syllables he is uttering. It gives a certain basic prominence to the syllable, and hence to the words, on which it is used, and incidentally assists in avoiding monotony” (p. 1). Eltrug (1984) concurs when he writes that stress refers to “the most prominent part of a syllable or a word.

It is, thus, different from ‘prominence’ which refers to the degree of general distinctness of syllable” (p. 67). Ladefoged (1993) explains stress in the following manner: “A stressed syllable is produced by pushing more air out of the lungs in one syllable relative to others. A stressed syllable thus has greater respiratory energy than neighboring unstressed. It may also have an increase in laryngeal activity” (p. 113).

Eltrug (1984) labels degrees of stress as follows: (1) primary stress that represents the maximal prominence of a syllable; (2) secondary stress that indicates the second degree of prominence of a

syllable; and (3) unstressed stress that shows the smallest degree of prominence of syllable.

Stress placement differs from language to language. In Finish, for example, the first syllable of the word is stressed; in Polish, stress falls on the next-to-last syllable; in French, the last syllable is stressed; and in Czech, stress is usually the first syllable. In this regard, Eltrug (1984) emphasizes that English “has a far more complex system of stress contours ... English word-stress is free in the sense that it may fall on any syllable, but it is fixed for some individual words” (p. 68).

To further our knowledge of stress, a brief summary of some rules for word-stress outlined by Kreidler (2004) and Roach (2000) is presented as:

1. Basic Stress Rule for Verbs

Two Syllable Verbs

- If the second syllable of the verb is strong, it is stressed, such as apply /ə'plai/ and attract /ə'trækt/
- If the second syllable is weak, the first one is stressed, such as enter /'entə/ and open /'əʊpən/

Three syllable verbs

- Stress the final syllable if it is strong, such as entertain /entə'tein/ and resurrect /rezə'rekt/

- If the last syllable is weak, and the penultimate syllable is strong, this syllable will be stressed, such as *encounter* /in'kaʊntə/ and *determine* /di't ɜ:min/
- If the second and third syllables are weak, the stress will be on the first one, such as *parody* /'pær ədi/

2. Basic Stress Rule for Nouns

Two Syllable Nouns

- If the second syllable includes a short vowel, the stress will be on the first syllable, such as *money* /'mʌni/ and *product* /'prɒdʌkt/
- If the second syllable contains a long vowel, and it is strong, the stress is on this syllable, such as *estate* /i'steit/ and *balloon* /bə'lu:n/

According to Kreidler's (2004) basic stress rule for nouns, the penult is stressed whether the ult vowel is free (as in *statue* /'stætʃu:/ and *textile* /'tekstail/) or not as in (*carven* /'kɑ:vən/ and *focus* /'fəʊkəs/).

(Note: free vowels occur in closed and open syllables. They are i:, ei, ai, a:, u:, əu, ɔ:, ɔi, and au).

Three Syllable Nouns

- If the final syllable is weak or ends with 'əʊ', it is unstressed. If the syllable preceding this final syllable is strong, the middle syllable will be stressed, such as *mimosa* /mi'məʊzə/, *disaster* /d: 'zɑ:stə/, and *potato* /pə'teitəʊ/

- If the second and third syllables are both weak, the first syllable is stressed, such as quantity /'kwɒləti/, custody /'kʌstədi/, and cinema /'sinəmə/

3. Basic Stress Rules for Adjectives

Two Syllable Adjectives

- If the final syllable is weak, the first is stressed, such as lovely /'lʌvli / and even /'i:v ən/
- If the second syllable is strong, it is stressed, such as divine /di'vain/ and correct /kə'rekt / (Eltrug, 1984).

There are exceptions, as with most stress rules (Roach, 1983); for example, the words '*honest*' ('ɒnist) and '*perfect*' ('pɜ:fɪkt) end with strong syllables, but the stress is on the first syllable.

Three Syllable Adjectives

- Roach applies to adjectives the same rules applied to three syllable nouns, such as opportune /'ɒpətʃu:n/, derelict /'derəlɪkt/ and insolent /'ɪnsələnt/

3. Methodology of the Study

Methodology is the specific steps that a researcher follows in collecting the data from the sample of the study. The data are analyzed according to the type of data collected. After analyzing the data collected from the sample, the researcher draws conclusions and summarizes the results of the study. This study depends on quantitative results; thus, it is regarded a quantitative study.

3.1 Relevant Research

Nowadays, researchers and language specialists have realized the important role that suprasegmentals play in the intelligibility of a second language. Very little research has been done regarding the difficulties Arabic speakers face when learning English pronunciation. Arabic speakers have far greater difficulties in learning English since the Arabic writing system is completely different from that of the Indo-European languages (Smith, 1987).

Smith (1987) argues that

The Arabic and English phonological systems are very different, not only in the range of sounds used, but in the emphasis placed on vowels and consonants in expressing meaning. While English has 22 vowels, and diphthongs to 24 consonants Arabic has only eight vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants. (pp. 142-143)

Eltrug (1984) maintains that “many Arabic speakers of English, even after spending several years in learning the language, have a problem of continuous mispronunciation of English utterances, both in isolation and in context” (p. 147). The sample of Eltrug’s study was 25 Arab students who were selected randomly from the Arabs, who were enrolled in the Applied English Center at the University of Kansas. Their ages ranged between 18 and 36 years. They came from eight Arab countries. The data collection technique was to ask the students to record orally a list of 139 words and 23 sentences. The purpose of his study was to pinpoint and list the kinds of errors of pronunciation

committed by the majority of Arab learners especially in two areas of suprasegmentals, namely stress and intonation. His results can be summarized as follows:

- Arabic speakers often mispronounce bisyllabic and polysyllabic words.
- Arabic speakers have problems with the compounds that have three elements. For example, '*waste-paper basket*.
- Noun /Verb words are confusing for the Arab students.
- Arabic speakers have severe difficulty in learning English sentence rhythm.
- Arabic speakers have a tendency to delete stress from some function words when they occur at stressed positions in the sentence.

Aziz (1980) conducted numerous descriptive studies which investigated the problems facing the Iraqi learners of English in pronunciation. He claims that these problems may be due to mother tongue interference. He states that the placing of stress in English is unpredictable, while in Arabic it is governed by certain rules. Some of his results can be summarized as follows:

- Iraqi learners tend to shift the stress in single-stressed words to the long unstressed syllable. For example, '*abbreviate*, '*amplify* are pronounced *abbre'viate*, *ampli'fy*.
- They do not distinguish between Noun/ Verb words.
- They do not put stress on the prefix in double-stressed words like '*re write*, which is pronounced *re'write*.

- They tend to give some sort of stress to the unstressed syllable. For example, /ə'baʊt/ would be pronounced as /'æbaʊt/, /'beisikli/ would be /bei'sikæli/.

3.2 Problem of the Study

Most Libyan students still cannot achieve good pronunciation of English even though they have spent six to seven years learning English in preparatory and secondary schools. They encounter a number of phonological problems while speaking, especially in the area of suprasegmentals, namely stress. Therefore, this study is devised to investigate the improper placement of word-stress generated by students of English at the University of Ajdabiya.

3.3 Importance of the Study

The majority of research conducted previously concerned sounds in isolation, namely segmentals. This study takes into account a particular aspect of pronunciation which has not been researched adequately among Libyan students, namely stress. Thus, this study may be the first of its kind to investigate this subject among Libyan university students.

3.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify the incorrect placement of English word-stress generated by Libyan university students in the Department of English at the University of Ajdabiya.

3.5 Questions of the Study

This study is based on the supposition that most Libyan students in the Department of English in Ajdabiya have problems in pronunciation, particularly problems relating to stress. Thus, the questions of the study are stated as follows:

1. What effect, if any, does the sound system of Arabic have on learning of the English system of stress?
2. What are the problems encountered by Ajdabiya University students in learning stress?

3.6 Population and Sample of the Study

The population chosen for this study were undergraduate students from the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ajdabiya. They were all native speakers of Arabic. The sample consisted of 45 students from the final semester. The results obtained can be generalized to the whole population. The sample was chosen in a random manner according to the total number of the students.

3.7 Instrument of the Study

The diagnostic test of the current study was constructed according to the various kinds of difficulties and errors of ESL students that were discussed in the literature review. The main goal of the study is to discover if Libyan students at the University of Ajdabiya face the same kinds of difficulties and errors that other foreign students have faced. The researcher was greatly influenced by the diagnostic test used by Eltrug in his PhD dissertation at the University of Kansas. The same

format was adopted. The test consists of a list of 130 words and ten questions selected on the basis of the number of the syllables, taking into account the students' levels.

The test is divided into two parts. The first part, Part A, contains a list of words. Section number 1 includes ten words of two syllables with stress on the first syllable. Section number 2 also includes ten words with two syllables, but the stress is placed on the second syllable. Sections number 3, 4, and 5 consist of three syllable words with stress placed on the first, second, and third syllables, respectively. Sections number 6, 7, and 8 contain words with certain common suffixes.

Section number 9 includes ten compounds with a variety stress patterns. In section number 10, words ending in long unstressed syllables were included in ten words. Section number 11 includes 12 words with stress shifts and with a change in vowel quality. The second part, Part B, contains ten questions which focus on words that function as both nouns and verbs in order to examine the students' stress placement and their ability to distinguish between them in spontaneous speech.

3.8 Procedures of the Study

Each student was given a group of four papers on which the instructions of the test and the list of words and questions had been typed. The instructions were typed on the first page. Part A is on the second and the third pages; whereas, Part B is on the last page. The participants were asked to read the words silently first in order to be

aware of the nature of the test and to become familiar with the material. Then, each participant recorded the test items on a cassette recorder in the language laboratory. The participants were told to pronounce each word once as loudly as possible with a normal speed.

The researcher attended the testing. Individual recordings took about 15 to 20 minutes. The total period of testing amounted to three days. Ten participants recorded in one session, and every participant sat in the language lab apart from other participants to avoid noise. After completing the recording, each participant wrote their identification number on the cassette and the papers given.

4. Data Analysis

After presenting the constructed test and collecting the data, the researcher began to analyze the data by listening to every cassette and marking the test items. Notes were made about the kinds of problems that the students face in word stress.

5. Findings of the Study

The current part is proposed to analyze the raw speech data obtained from the participants of the study. Only accurate pronunciations were noted while inaccuracies were ignored. Each correct pronunciation was added up to provide a total.

5.1 Analysis of the Diagnostic Test

1. Bi-syllabic Words

Examples of the bi-syllabic words that were tested were: *almost*, *brother*, *captain*, *very*, *useful* which have stress on the first syllable;

words having stress on the second syllable were, *about, forget, today, admit, remain*. The mean of the 2-syllable words, in which stress is on the first syllable, was 94.00. The mean of the 2-syllable words, in which stress is on the second syllable, was 79.14.

According to the above means, it can be seen that the students' scores for 2-syllable words fluctuate from excellent to good. The first mean indicates that students' performance is better than the second mean. This high performance indicates that students do not face difficulties in pronouncing two syllable words, in which stress is on the first syllable. The reason may be that in the student's first language, stress is put on the first syllable in two syllable words when the syllables contain two short vowels.

However, students seem to have a bit of difficulty with the second syllable stressed words with a mean of 79.14. It should be noted that most speakers put the stress on the first syllable rather than on the second syllable of the common word *forget*. There are some words where some students frequently inserted an unstressed vowel, an epenthetic schwa between the two syllables, *captain, useful, question*; this is most likely due to some constraint in Arabic which disallows certain consonants such as /s/ and /f/ being followed by other consonants or makes it difficult to pronounce them together.

2. Tri-Syllabic Words

Some of the three syllable words that were tested were: *accident, beautiful, educate, agency*, having stress on the first syllable; *ambition, tomorrow, discover, deliver, familiar* where stress is on the second

syllable; and *afternoon*, *disappear*, *understand*, *engineer* bearing stress on the last syllable. The mean of the stress on the first syllable was 57.43; the mean of the stress on the second syllable was 76.29; and the mean of the stress on the third syllable was 67.43.

Scores show that students have problems, especially in the area of stress on the first syllable. For stress on the second syllable, students show an advance with a mean score of 76.29 compared to their performance of the stress on the first syllable. However, students' performance with words having third syllable stress is less with a score mean of 67.43. The researcher notices that there is a tendency to stress the first syllable of the word *develop* instead of the second syllable. This may suggest that students associate the letter e with unstressed syllables when it is between two consonants; however, this is merely a hypothesis.

There is a frequently incorrect placement of stress in the word *educate* where students put the stress on stress-neutral suffix *-ate*. The word *familiar* was also badly pronounced by students; *familiar* was often mispronounced with two syllables instead of three, where students missed the second i and stress was wrongly placed on the first syllable. There was also a tendency to overstress 're' at the beginning of some words. There is sometimes too much secondary stress on the last syllable, such as *disappear*, and this difficulty could be attributed to a tendency to stress the last syllable in the students' native language. Furthermore, there is very strong segmentation, i.e. pronouncing every syllable alone with a strong stress.

3. Suffixed Words and Words Ending with Long Stressed Syllable.

Some of the tested suffixed words were: *application*, *prosodic*, *abolish*, *apologize*, *document*, *federalist*, *refugee*, *shampoo*, *Portuguese*. The mean of the words that end with long stressed syllable was 40.31. Stress in suffixed words is considered to be one of the most common problems faced by the students. The words that the participants did not get right were mostly words that they probably did not know, such as *prosodic*, *conscious*, or words that are foreign loanwords in English, such as *refugee* or *picturesque*, both of which involve stress-bearing suffixes.

The words that were also commonly mispronounced were *abolish*, where it was often given two syllables instead of three, e.g. something like *abolsh* without the final vowel. It may simply be that the words were unfamiliar to the students, so they misread them. Most of the students pronounced the dissyllabic words *café* and *shampoo* with stress on the first syllable, replacing the long stressed vowels by their short equivalents. If we trace the interference of the mother tongue, we find that final stressed syllables ending with a long vowel occur in standard Arabic, but in the colloquial Arabic in Ajdabiya this long vowel in these loan words is replaced by its shorter equivalent.

Hence, the words are pronounced with two short syllables that in Arabic put the primary stress on the first syllable. Another example of the difficulty faced by students is the word *ma'teria,lize*, where the primary stress is on *ter*, and the secondary stress is on *lize*. Students put too much stress on the last syllable. The reason for this may also be

attributed to the students' first language, where the words that end in long syllables have stress on this final long syllable .

This low performance could be because the participants consider a suffixed word as one word without a suffix. There is also another strong possibility: the difficulty could be because of reading errors, i.e., students could not read many of the words as if they faced them for the first time because of their low level in the language.

4. Compound Words

The compound words that were included in the test were composed of two items. They were words like *good-looking*, *homesick*, *set up*, *blackbird*, *first-aid*. The mean of these words was 65.43, which reveals that the performance is low. The difficulty of this section of the test can be traced to the fact that compound words rarely exist in Arabic. Students considered them as separate words. It is noticeable that there is too much of a break between words, i.e. single-stressed compounds consisting of two independent elements are sometimes pronounced by Libyan learners as double stressed words with a primary stress on each element.

5. Words Ending with Long Unstressed Syllables

This section tested words with long syllables which do not receive primary stress, such as: *imitate*, *empire*, *expert*, *capsule*, *solitude*, *incline*, *occupy*. The mean of these words was 28.31. This performance represents the lowest mean scores among all the other sections of the test. English words ending in long unstressed syllables pose a problem for the Libyan learners, who tend to shift the stress to the long final

syllable. The reason for this shift in the placement of stress is that in the spoken Arabic language of Libya as well as in the standard Arabic, words ending in a long syllable, CV:(C) or CVCC, have the stress on the final long syllable. The great majority of the students pronounced some words wrongly, putting the stress on stress-neutral suffixes such as *-ate* in *imitate* and *concentrate*. Many had difficulty with *amplify* and *occupy*; they put strong stress in the last syllables.

6. Words with Stress Shifts

Example of these words were *economic*, *economical*, *economy*, *photograph*, *photographic*, *photography*, *explain*, *explanation*, *explanatory*. The mean of these words was 37.94. The performance is considered to be low. Some students got some words right, but most applied the stress to the same syllable in all of the words – i.e. they did not shift the stress as appropriate. For instance, there were many who got *economy* right, with the stress on the second syllable, but they also put the stress on *co* in *economic* and *economical*, which was wrong as the stress should have shifted to the third syllable in these two words. In *democrat*, *democratic* and *democracy*, the participants tended to stress the third syllable, so their pronunciation was correct for *democratic* but not for *democrat* or *democracy*.

In general, we would say that stress shift was poorly realized. Students have difficulty in using the reduced form of the unstressed syllables. They tend to give full vowel quality to all vowels because the vowels of all syllables are given their full value in the students' native

language. This habit is often transferred to English the pattern which results in unstressed syllables receiving some sort of stress.

7. Words with Variable Stress

These words were included in the second part of the test. They were included in questions in order to find out whether students distinguish the grammatical function to these words, i.e. whether they were used as verbs or nouns. Examples are as follows:

1. Is there a strange *object* in the box?
2. Will anyone *object* if we start the meeting?
3. Do you have her *present* address?
4. Did you *present* this report to your partners at work?
5. Was your *progress* on the journey very slow?
6. Didn't the patient *progress* as we expected?

The mean of the words with variable stress was 48.97. Students' scores for the words that function as nouns and verbs are low. Most of the students in both groups tend to put the stress on the last syllable. Most speakers had difficulty in differentiating between the two different stress patterns. They tended to pronounce both the noun and the verb in the same way – although which syllable the stress placed on was not consistent. For instance, with *object*, most speakers put the stress on the first syllable for both noun and verb, i.e. it was noun-like, but for *record*, most speakers stressed the second syllable for both noun and verb, i.e. it was verb-like.

In words where the syllable that did not have the primary stress had secondary stress rather than being unstressed, the difference between correct and incorrect was less clear-cut – e.g. when *progress* is a noun, the second syllable still has a full vowel, and carries secondary stress – so it sometimes sounded right even though some students had slightly stressed the second syllable instead of the first.

This difficulty is attributed to the fact that in Arabic, this form of noun/verb pair does not exist. Therefore, students are not used to making this distinction. Stress in English has phonemic value, i.e. if we change the place of stress of a word or an utterance, its meaning changes. In Arabic, however, stress has no phonemic value, i.e. no two Arabic words are distinguishable solely by the placing of the stress.

This study has investigated the incorrect placement of English word stress by Libyan students in Department of English at Faculty of Arts at the University of Ajdabiya. In response to the questions of the set for the study, the findings indicate that there is a low level of intelligibility or accuracy in their pronunciation and the main reasons behind this was: (1) the interference of the mother tongue; (2) letter-based pronunciation; and (3) the other factors like the amount of exposure, the lack of motivation, the lack of laboratories.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the researcher presents some recommendations as:

- Teachers should raise the students' awareness of stress and its vital importance.

- Teacher should take into account that some learners love to learn about the technical side of language, while others like to feel or see the language more, hearing the music of word stress or seeing the shapes of the words.
- Stress patterns should be introduced to students as early as possible. This would help them avoid the wrong accentual habits and build a strong foundation for language activity.
- Students should also be taught the IPA system in order to understand the phonetic script as used in dictionaries.

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Libyan Students' High Marks and Low Academic Performance: Case Study in the English Department at Sirte University

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Abstract

This study was set out to explore the reasons behind Libyan students' obtaining high marks in their exams but low achievements in their academic performance. In doing so, the study adopted a mixed of quantitative and qualitative research design for investigating the issue under study. A total of 26 male and female students majoring in English participated in this study. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that rote-learning (i.e. memorization), the testing system (i.e. content replication vs. content relevance), and the mal-practice (i.e. cheating in exams) were mainly responsible for why Libyan students tend to obtain high marks but their academic performance is relatively low. The study concludes with some pedagogical implications which should be taken into consideration by teachers, students, parents, and policy-makers in Libya in a hope to improve the current situation with regard to the issue under study.

Keywords: *Libyan students; high marks; low academic performance; rote-learning*

1. Introduction

It has been observed that many students in Libya seem to do rather well in their exams and obtain unusually high marks, but the same students tend to perform poorly when tested in real-life situations. For example, most of students in the department tend to obtain high marks in grammar courses but fail to produce grammatically sound sentences.

Hence, Elwerfalli, Omar, and Alarefi (2019) wonder that “a number of grammar instruction strategies and techniques are presented to improve learners' productive and receptive English skills. Yet, the existing problem of teaching grammar is whether to teach it explicitly or implicitly” (p. 61).

In fact, many students commit so many minor errors when they write or speak despite having obtained very good marks in their grammar tests.

It is a generally accepted fact that obtaining high marks in exams means that the testes' knowledge of that particular subject is good. In other words, obtaining a high mark in an exam or a test often shows that you have a good knowledge of that subject. This is, to some extent, true since the sole reason for having exams to test or measure the students' knowledge about what they have learned throughout the course.

However, this rule seems to be broken in the Libyan context where it has often been observed that students, at all stages of education, tend to get high marks in their exams, but these marks do not usually reflect their actual performance. In other words, it has often been the case that

students obtain noticeably high marks; whereas, their performance is low. This phenomenon, if we could call it so, is a wide spread in Libya, and many parents, teachers as well as students are complaining that their high marks in the exams do not often reflect their performance in real-life situations. In other words, there seems to be a gap between Libyan students' competence and performance which seems to have a negative impact on the quality of the Libyan educational system outcome.

However, despite its widespread, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no research conducted in Libya to find out the possible reasons behind this issue. This study, therefore, aims to look at this issue and attempts to explore the possible reasons which could be responsible for this problem. It is hoped that by exploring the reasons behind the issue under study, it could be the first step in improving the current situation. Moreover, the significance of this is, as far as the researcher is aware of, it is the first of its kind to be conducted in the Libyan context and therefore it could pave the way for future studies to look at the issue in more details.

2. Literature Review

This part of the study covers the literature review that is relevant to the theme of the study.

2.1 Rote-Learning

Cohen and Feigenbaum (Cited in Li, 2004) define rote-learning as simply a memorization. Moore (Cited in Li, 2004) also argues that rote-learning is a method involving repetition and memorization. It is

commonly believed that rote-learning has a negative impact on children's cognitive abilities because it enhances the development of memory skills at the expense of so-called higher cognitive skills such as logical and creative thinking.

Biggs (Cited in Moore, 2006) highlights that there are differences between rote and repetitive learning. He explains that rote-learning is generally described as learning without understanding; whereas, repetitive learning has the intention to understand the meaning. Most psychologists and educators differentiate between rote-learning and meaningful learning. In recent years, it has become popular to criticize the use of rote-learning methods, partly because the learner may commit to memory information which is not understood and is, therefore, of no functional value. Material that is forced into memory by drill-type repetition without understanding tends to remain isolated within the learner's long-term memory, rather than being connected with prior knowledge (Rosenshine, 1995).

Moreover, Westwood (2004) argues that the information stored by rote learning is not easily retrieved when needed. Rote-memorized materials are also easily forgotten unless rehearsed frequently and is unlikely to generalize to new contexts. Students who lack effective learning strategies frequently resort to rote-learning even when its use is not appropriate. Craik and Lockart (Cited in Li, 2004) claim that rote-learning is understood as the mechanical use of the memory without necessarily understanding what is memorized; and learning by rote, in this sense, means surface level learning.

Having that said, rote learning is not always a bad strategy for learning especially in the initial learning stages. For this reason, some authorities do support the place of a certain degree of memorization within our classrooms because memorization (i.e. rote learning) is very important, as mentioned above, in early stages of learning important factual information or processes which need to be mastered to a high level of automaticity for use when performing higher-order cognitive tasks (Bourke, 1989).

Such material might include definitions of important terms and concepts, mathematical or other symbols and notations, basic number or facts, foreign language vocabulary, the correct spelling of frequently used irregular words, and safety checks on equipment (Westwood, 2004). Having this information instantly retrievable from long-term memory reduces the cognitive load placed upon working memory when planning a strategy, solving a problem or carrying out a task (Tuovinen and Sweller, 1999).

Bourke (1989) relates the issue of memorization to teaching by arguing that, although the procedure may have been over-emphasized in the past, assisting students to memorize core material should still have a place in the repertoire of instructional methods used by any teacher at appropriate times. Whenever students are required to memorize information, it should be linked always with meaningful content. The learner should always appreciate why it is important to commit the given information to memory and how the knowledge thus acquired will be useful (Westwood, 2004).

Pound (1999) points out that all effective learning depends on making connections and seeing relationships. In meaningful learning, new information and new concepts are connected with the learner's prior knowledge. Meaningful learning thus contributes in a major way to the development of what is referred to as 'intellectual skills' and 'cognitive strategies'.

2.2 Memory

Silver and Hagin (2002) define memory as the persistence of learning in a state that can be retrieved later. Most memories are not just mechanical recollections of information or events but rather constructs built on a whole body of relevant prior experience (Westwood, 2004). According to Eric Jensen (Cited in Westwood, 2004), "learning and memory are like two sides of a coin to neuroscientists. You can't talk about one without the other. After all, if you have learned something, the only evidence of the learning is memory" (p. 14). Similarly, Baddeley (1999) argues that "memory does not comprise a single unitary system, but rather an array of interacting systems, each capable of encoding or registering information, storing it, and making it available for retrieval" (p. 19).

In general, there are three types of memory as:

1. Short-term Memory

Taylor (2002) defines short-term memory as "our immediate consciousness" (p. 237). A typical example is looking up a telephone number in a directory and remembering it just long enough to dial the number correctly. Short-term memory is often assessed in intelligence

tests by using digit span items that require the individual to repeat progressively longer strings of numbers. It is commonly believed that most individuals can hold between five and nine items of information in short-term memory span at one time. Westwood (2004) points out that in most models of memory, short-term storage is represented as a necessary first step towards long-term storage, but a vast amount of information that enters short-term memory does not need to be transferred to long-term storage and is very rapidly forgotten.

2. Working Memory

Leahey and Harris (2001) suggest that working memory processes appear to function mainly in the prefrontal cortex of the brain. Working memory is sometimes conceptualized as ‘mental working space for thinking’. It involves those perceptual and cognitive processes that enable a person to hold visual and verbal information in an active state while processing it for a particular purpose or integrating it with other information.

In relation to learning, Sweller (1999) claims that “the major, perhaps the only, factor determining ease or difficulty of understanding may be the working memory load imposed by the material” (p. 23). The cognitive load on working memory increases when the elements of a problem or task interact and need to be processed simultaneously. Working memory, where all conscious cognitive processing occurs, is involved in all acts of thinking, reasoning and problem solving. For example, working memory is a key factor involved in reading

comprehension and in understanding and communicating through spoken language (Westwood, 2004).

Ratey (2001) suggests that working memory enables us to maintain continuity in our attention and thoughts from one moment to the next in our brain, memory, and intelligence daily lives. Working memory capacity is known to be restricted in persons with intellectual disability. Working memory is conceptualized as having a central 'executive' component that controls the individual's attention and focuses it on the relevant information being processed or rehearsed (Westwood, 2004).

3. Long-term Memory

Long-term memory represents information that is stored for considerable periods of time. Psychologists usually distinguish between different types of long-term stored information, for example by describing it as *episodic memory*, *semantic memory*, or *procedural memory* (Baddeley, 1999). *Episodic memory* refers to the memories we have for times, events, and places. Such information is often stored as images that can be recalled quite easily. Even before the age of two years children demonstrate ability to store and retrieve memories of events (Bauer, Wenner, Dropik and Wewerka, 2000).

Procedural memory refers to our ability to recall the steps in a particular process, skill, or strategy. The part of the brain storing this type of memory is believed to be the cerebellum. *Semantic memory* refers to our memories of meaningful facts, rules, definitions, concepts and principles. Most learning within the school curriculum involves semantic and procedural memory. Most procedural and semantic

information becomes stored in long-term memory as a result of repetition (practice). The practice may occur as deliberate rehearsal, but it is more likely to occur through natural repetition when information, skills, or strategies are applied in everyday situations.

According to Roediger and Meade (2000), learning is based on memory traces within the nervous system, and these memory traces become stronger with repeated practice. In this regard, Sprenger (1999) suggests that all factual information is stored in the brain section termed the hippocampus. Semantic memories tend to be organized effectively into schemata that allow new information to be added at any time to what we already know and remember. Schemata may also provide the necessary links between episodic, semantic, and procedural memories. Existing schemata can have powerful effects on a learner's comprehension of new situations (Pressley and Schneider, 1997).

2.3 Content Replication & Content Relevance Testing Systems

There are different types of testing. Some of these types are what is known as content replication and content relevance. Content replication means copying the test content from the textbook content while mainly drawing on the memory of the test taker in answering the test items while the content relevance implies that content of the test is 'pertinent' to the content of the book while trying to assess the language knowledge and ability of the teste (Nazari, 2002).

2.4 Competence versus Performance

Chomsky (Cited in Stern, 1983) argues that performance refers to the infinitely varied individual acts of verbal behavior with their

irregularities, inconsistencies, and errors. The capacity of the individual to abstract from these acts of performance and to develop system and performance is competence. Language competence is a term which includes the linguistics or grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistics competence, and what might be called as textual competence.

Language competence refers to the knowledge of a language, cognitive aspect in learning a language, and of course the ability to use that language to produce meaningful production and language performance. Competence is used to describe the learner's capacity to produce a language. Whereas, language performance can be realized by the meaningful of the students' classroom activities, assignment, and task as the implementation and application of language competence (knowledge) they have as a result of learning the language grammatical rule, structure, and vocabulary.

3. Methodology of the Study

This part of the study is dedicated to the methodology used to reach findings and submit recommendations.

3.1 Design and Method of the Study

To achieve the present study's aim and to answer the research question stated above, a mixed of quantitative and qualitative design was adopted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue under study. A semi-structured interview was selected as a method to collect the needed data as it is believed to be the most appropriate methods for exploring the issue in deeply.

3.2 Participants of the Study

Twenty-six male and female students (4 males and 22 females) from the English Department at Sirte University (from 5th to 8th semesters) participated in this study.

3.1 Question of the Study

The present study is set to address the following research question:
What are the possible reasons behind the Libyan students' high marks and low academic performance?

4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants were analyzed qualitatively using thematic approach. The themes emerged from the data are presented as follows:

4.1 Rote Learning

The data analysis shows that all the participants think that rote-learning is one of the main reasons that lead to the high marks and low performance. One of the interviewees says, "the teachers give the students number of questions in the exams and then the students will memorize answers without understanding." On the other hand, other interviewees claim that most students memorize the answers from textbook (or sheets) with little or no understanding, or as the interviewee puts it "the students memorize the information available in the sheets without any understanding."

4.2 Testing System

The data analysis reveals that all the participants claim that the testing system is one of the reasons that lead to the issue of high marks and low academic performance. All the interviewees agreed that the style of the exams' questions tend to be direct replication of the content of the textbook. As one of the interviewees claims "most of the questions in the exam are direct questions (define, mention etc.) and when you see such questions, you tend to memorize rather than understand in order to pass."

In addition, some students' participants claim that "the types of questions lead to high marks and low performance as they require memorization rather than understanding". As the interviewee states, "the questions types in exams encourage for memorizing because they ask for definitions and mentioning points and this will lead to get high marks". Other participants have reiterated the same point by saying that the type of questions in the exam does not require any creativity and some teachers encourage the students to memorize.

4.3 Mal-Practice

The data analysis reveals that all interviewees believe that mal-practice is one of the reasons that might lead the students to obtain high marks and low performance. One of the interviewees claims that mal-practice is one of the important reasons for this issue. A participant states that

the mal-practice is one of the common reasons that lead the students to get high marks and low performance and the

evidence is the secondary school students for the year 2011-2012, their marks were very high, but when they did the admission test in the department, they got low marks which means they probably cheated in the exams.

Another interviewee states that mal-practice could lead to high grades and poor performance because the students copy something without understanding, or as she puts it “cheating in exams is big problem because the mark you get is not mark and it is real reflection of your level”. Interesting, students’ participants also blame teachers for mal-practice and they claim that teachers may not be honest and professional in what they give to students which also labelled as “cheating”. As one of them argues “the teacher simplifies the curriculum for the students and gives them number of questions for the exam and this is considered as cheating. In this case the teacher helps the students to get high marks and low performance at the same time.”

5. Discussion

This part of the study is dedicated to the discussion of the findings obtained.

5.1 Rote Learning

The data analysis presented above revealed that rote-learning is one of reasons for why Libyan students tend to get high marks but their performance is low. This was, to a large extent, unsurprising result because as was earlier, rote-learning has often been criticized because it simply means that learners memorize information which is not understood and this information becomes of very little or no value to

those learners. This information learned through memorizing remains isolated within the learner's long-term memory rather than being connected with prior knowledge (Rosenshine, 1995).

This means that students who memorize would be able to retrieve information for the exam as the period between exams and their memorization is often short. But those same students would be unable to make use of this information soon after the exams because, as was mentioned in the literature review, the information stored by memorization is not easily retrieved when needed. Rote-memorized materials are also easily forgotten (Westwood, 2004).

Moreover, as pointed earlier, most information that is learned through rote-learning strategy enters the short memory but a vast amount of this information is not transferred to long-term storage, and it is forgotten very quickly. Thus, it is probably for this reason Libyan students do perform well in exams and get high marks, but their performance afterwards is low as they cannot make use of the information they have learned through rote-learning.

The question here, however, is why do students resort to rote learning? Although the focus of this was only on exploring reasons of why Libyan students tend to get high mark but their academic performance is low, I could only speculate that on why Libyan student tend to heavily rely on rote learning as their almost the only learning strategy. One reason could be the lack of awareness among Libyan students of the other and more effective learning strategies. This means

that Libyan students may resort to this strategy because they have no other options to use.

Another reason could be due to the culture of the Holy Quran memorization. In other words, we all know that the Holy Quran is memorized by heart which has probably had an effect not only on the students but also on the Libyan education system as a whole which tends to favor rote-learning strategy.

In fact, this takes us to the next possible reason for why Libyan student tend to follow rote-learning strategies which is the teaching methods being used. The teaching methods that are being followed in the Libyan institutions tend to encourage, directly and indirectly, students to memorize. As Aldabus (2008) argues that English is learned just only for passing exams. Therefore, in order to improve the situation, there needs to be a national plan/strategy which moves our students away from their ‘addiction’ to the seemingly harmful rote-learning strategies. Other strategies and teaching methods which lead to more effective learning should be adopted.

We have discussed earlier that rote learning is part of learning and has a positive side especially in the earlier stages of learning. Some authorities, in fact, encourage the place of a certain degree of memorization within our classrooms as an initial stage of learning. In a nutshell, a balance need to stroke between rote learning and other learning strategies. New and more effective teaching methods need to be followed in order for our students’ performance to reflect their marks and grades which they get in exams.

5.2 Testing System

As was stated earlier, the testing system was believed to be as one of the causes for why students obtain high marks and low performance by the study's participants. In other words, the participants think that the current tests/exams/questions are designed in a direct way which require very little or no creativity from the students' part. Most questions are content replication asking students for defining terms/concepts or mentioning certain points. Such questions require straightforward answers.

Content replication questions mean simply copying the test content from the textbook content while mainly drawing on the memory of the test taker in answering the test items. This in fact takes us back to our discussion of rote-learning issue. Such exams/questions require students to mainly memorize information as they require no understanding or creativity from the student's part. Moreover, this is a good example of what some of the study's participants who claimed that some teachers also encourage the use of rote-learning. Teachers should be more creative in their exam questions.

We are mindful of the fact that exams are the necessary devil in the Libyan context and teachers have no freedom in opting for other types of assessments, but teachers can and should try to design questions which require a bit of creativity and understanding rather than merely memorizing. As for the Ministry of Education, it should realize that it is a high time to move away from the traditional system of testing students in the form of exams and use instead other and more effective

methods of assessments. This may help in reducing the rote-learning strategy, eliminating the mal-practice and the improving the testing system which are believed to be the causes of the issue under study which is why Libyan students get unrealistic marks.

5.3 Mal-Practice

The results revealed that the mal-practice (cheating) is one of the factors leading to the high marks and low performance. This again was, to a large extent, an expected result as it is unfortunate to say that the mal-practice is a widespread phenomenon in most Libyan educational institutions. It is needless to say that the spread of such phenomena would eventually lead to the situation we are in which that students' performance in exams is not a real reflection of their actual abilities.

Students who cheat just copy information in their answer sheets with no understanding, and the mark they are rewarded for their answers is not a reflection of their actual knowledge of the subject matter. This will result in students getting marks and in many cases high marks, but those marks are misleading as they do not actually represent that those students have a hold on certain subject which what exams are supposed to test.

So, it is sensible that the current study indicated that cheating is one of the causes for the high marks and low academic performance. Although the Ministry of Education in Libya has recently taken some tough steps, albeit controversial ones, in an attempt to reduce the mal-practice in General Secondary School Certificate exams, much more is needed in order to combat this widespread and very harmful issue to

our students, education system, and country's future. This should be done at all stages in education and should not be restricted to the GSSC. We should not, however, expect that eliminating mal-practice from the Libyan education system will make the current an ideal, but it will certainly improve it to a reasonable extent.

6. Recommendations

In the light of the present study findings, there are some recommendations implications which, I believe, are worth considering for all parties involved in the educational process such as teachers, students, parents, and policy-makers in Libya. These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Teachers should try to find out other strategies which make the students avoid overusing rote-learning strategy.
- Educational institutions in Libya should seriously think of abandoning the exam system as a method of evaluation and replace it with other methods which aim at testing the students' 'knowledge' rather than students' 'memory'.
- Laws and regulations must be enforced regarding the widespread of cheating among students in schools and universities due to its negative and disastrous effect on education.
- Parents should not exert too much pressure on their children to pass exams, and they should not see their children failure as a disgrace or disaster, but they rather should see it something normal and could happen to anyone.

- Further studies should be conducted in different cities in Libya with larger sample to get more in-depth account of the issue.
- More investigations could be done to find out the reasons why Libyan students tend to follow rote learning as their sole learning strategy.
- The testing system in Libya needs to be tested in order to see to what extent it has been effective in measuring the students' actual knowledge and abilities.

7. Conclusion

This study has been set out to investigate one of the serious problems facing the educational system in Libya which why many Libyan students at different educational stages tend to receive high marks but their academic performance is rather low. The findings revealed that rote-learning (memorization), the testing system (content replication vs. content relevance) and the mal-practice (cheating in exams) were mainly responsible for why Libyan students tend to obtain high marks but their academic performance is relatively low.

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