Teachers' Perspectives on English Language Teaching (ELT) in Libyan Public Schools.

Mr Ahmed S Shahoot [*], Mr Suliman Abdelaty [**]

[*] University of Benghazi, ahmed_shahot@yahoo.com, 00218945520324
[**] University of Benghazi, Suliman.abdelaty@mail.co.uk, 00447480067677

Abstract- This research paper explores the perspectives of English language teachers in Libyan public schools on English Language Teaching (ELT) and the challenges they face in the classroom. The study aims to identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of ELT, the role of pedagogical strategies, and the impact of socio-political context on the teaching process. The research uses a mixed-method approach, involving a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, to gather data from teachers working in various regions in Libya. The findings suggest that teachers face numerous challenges, including lack of resources, inadequate training, and socio-political instability, which negatively impact ELT in Libyan public schools. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy and practice to improve the quality of ELT in Libya.

Index Terms- Libyan public school, Pedagogical strategies, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Technology Integration; Computer-assisted language learning (CALL),; Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL); Conflict-affected contexts; Assessment practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Context:

English has become the lingua franca of international communication, commerce, and academia, leading to a growing demand for English language education worldwide. As a result, English language teaching (ELT) has become an area of interest and importance for policymakers and educators in countries seeking to integrate themselves into the global community. Libya, a North African nation with a rich cultural heritage and a complex socio-political history, has been no exception to this trend. The Libyan education system has seen significant transformations in recent years, with ELT gaining prominence as a key component of the curriculum.

However, the quality of ELT in Libyan public schools has been subject to various challenges arising from the country's socio-political context. The 2011 Libyan revolution and the subsequent political instability have had significant implications for the education sector, leading to disruptions in schooling, a shortage of resources, and inadequate support for teachers. Moreover, the Libyan education system has been grappling with issues related to curriculum development, teacher training, and the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process. These factors have influenced the perspectives of teachers on ELT in Libyan public schools and have shaped the challenges they face in the classroom.

1.2. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of this study is to explore the perspectives of English language teachers in Libyan public schools on various aspects of ELT, such as its effectiveness, pedagogical strategies, and the role of technology in facilitating language learning. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom and to identify potential solutions to improve the quality of ELT in Libya. To achieve these objectives, the research focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of English language teachers on the effectiveness of ELT in Libyan public schools?
2. What pedagogical strategies do teachers employ in their ELT practices, and how do these strategies relate to the broader context of English language education in Libya?
3. How does the socio-political context in Libya influence teachers' perspectives on ELT and the challenges they face in the classroom?
4. What are the potential solutions to improve the quality of ELT in Libyan public schools, as suggested by the perspectives of English language teachers?

By addressing these research questions, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of the current state of ELT in Libya and provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders involved in the field of English language education in the country. The study also seeks to inform future research on ELT in Libya and other countries facing similar challenges in their education systems.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of the key issues and trends in English language teaching (ELT), with a particular focus on the challenges faced by teachers in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts such as Libya. The review is organized into four main sections: global trends in ELT, pedagogical strategies, the role of technology, and challenges faced by teachers in challenging contexts.

2.1. Global Trends in ELT:

English has increasingly become a lingua franca, with an estimated 1.5 billion people using the language worldwide (Crystal, 2003). As a result, the demand for ELT has grown significantly in recent years, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries (Graddol, 2006). This growth has been accompanied by several global trends in ELT, including the adoption of more learner-centred and communicative pedagogical approaches, the integration of technology into language teaching, and the increased focus on the context-specific adaptation of ELT practices (Richards, 2015).

2.2. Pedagogical Strategies:

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift away from traditional grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods of language teaching towards more learner-centred and communicative approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Key pedagogical strategies that have emerged in the field of ELT include:

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): CLT focuses on the development of communicative competence and emphasizes meaningful interaction between learners and the use of authentic language (Savignon, 1991).
- Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT): TBLT is an approach that involves learners in the completion of real-world tasks, with a focus on meaning rather than form (Willis & Willis, 2007).
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): CLIL is an approach that integrates the teaching of content from other subject areas with the teaching of a second or foreign language (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

These approaches share a common emphasis on the development of learners' communicative competence and the use of authentic language in context. However, the implementation of these approaches can be challenging in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts, where teachers often face constraints such as large class sizes, lack of resources, and outdated curricula (Wedell, 2008).

2.3. The Role of Technology:

The integration of technology into ELT has been a significant trend in recent years, with the potential to transform language teaching and learning (Chapelle, 2001). Key areas of technology use in ELT include computer-assisted language learning (CALL), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), and the use of digital tools for collaboration and communication (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). Technology can support language learning in various ways, such as providing access to authentic materials, facilitating individualized learning, and fostering interaction and collaboration among learners (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

However, the effective integration of technology into ELT is not without challenges. Teachers in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts may face barriers such as limited access to technology, inadequate training, and poor internet connectivity (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). Moreover, the use of technology in ELT raises questions about digital inequality and the need for digital literacy skills among both learners and teachers (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

2.4. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Challenging Contexts:

Research on ELT in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts has identified several key challenges faced by teachers, including:

- Lack of resources: Teachers in these contexts often struggle with a shortage of teaching materials, outdated curricula, and inadequate infrastructure, which can hinder the implementation of effective ELT practices (Wedell, 2008).
- Inadequate training and professional development: Many teachers in challenging contexts receive insufficient pre-service and in-service training, leading to a lack of knowledge and skills in current ELT methodologies and pedagogical approaches (Borg, 2013).
- Socio-political instability: Conflict and political instability can disrupt education systems and create additional challenges for teachers, such as school closures, safety concerns, and trauma-related issues among learners (UNESCO, 2011).
- Large class sizes: In resource-poor contexts, teachers often have to manage large class sizes, which can limit the opportunities for individualized instruction, interaction, and feedback (Harmer, 2007).
- Assessment and evaluation practices: Traditional, summative assessment methods are often prevalent in challenging contexts, which can undermine the adoption of more learner-centred and communicative ELT approaches (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

These challenges underscore the need for context-specific adaptation and support for teachers in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts, as well as the importance of considering local conditions and constraints when adopting and adapting international best practices in ELT (Coleman, 2010).

In conclusion, this literature review has provided an overview of the key issues and trends in ELT, with a focus on the challenges faced by teachers in resource-poor and conflict-affected contexts such as Libya. The review has highlighted the growing importance of learner-centred and communicative pedagogical approaches, the role of technology in language teaching, and the need for context-specific adaptation and support for teachers. These issues are of particular relevance for understanding the perspectives and experiences of English language teachers in Libyan public schools, as well as for informing policy and practice in the field of English language education in Libya.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design:

This study employs a mixed-method research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore teachers' perspectives on ELT in Libyan public schools. Mixed-method research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, capitalizing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies while minimizing their weaknesses (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative component of the study involves semi-structured interviews with English language teachers, providing in-depth insights into their experiences and challenges in the classroom. The quantitative component involves online surveys, offering a broader perspective on teachers' views and experiences related to ELT in Libya.

3.2. Participants and Sampling:

The participants in this study include English language teachers working in public schools across various regions in Libya. Purposive sampling is used to recruit participants, ensuring that a diverse range of teachers with different levels of experience, educational backgrounds, and regional contexts are included in the study. The final sample consists of 30 teachers for the qualitative interviews and 200 teachers for the quantitative survey.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis:
3.3.1. Qualitative Interviews:

The qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews with the 30 English language teachers recruited for this component of the study. The interviews are conducted either in person or via video conferencing, depending on the participants' preferences and availability. An interview guide is developed to facilitate the interviews, including open-ended questions related to the teachers' perspectives on ELT, pedagogical strategies, challenges faced in the classroom, and potential solutions to improve ELT in Libya. The interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.3.2. Quantitative Surveys:

The quantitative data is collected through an online survey, distributed to the 200 English language teachers recruited for this component of the study. The survey includes questions related to the teachers' demographic information, educational background, years of experience, and perspectives on various aspects of ELT in Libyan public schools. The survey is designed using a combination of Likert-scale items and multiple-choice questions, allowing for both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

3.3.3. Data Analysis:

The qualitative data from the interviews are analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts are read and re-read to familiarize the researcher with the data, followed by an iterative process of coding, theme development, and refinement. The final themes are reported along with representative quotes from the participants to illustrate their perspectives and experiences.

The quantitative data from the surveys are analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, to provide an overview of the participants'

perspectives on ELT in Libya. Inferential statistics, such as t-tests and chi-square tests, are used to explore relationships between variables, such as the association between teachers' years of experience and their perspectives on ELT.

3.4. Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations:

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, various strategies are employed, such as triangulation of data sources (interviews and surveys), member checking (sharing the findings with participants for feedback), and reflexivity (acknowledging the researcher's biases and preconceptions). Ethical considerations are also taken into account, including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants.

IV. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in two main sections: teachers' perspectives on ELT in Libyan public schools, and challenges faced by teachers in the classroom. The findings are based on the qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys conducted with English language teachers in Libya.

4.1. Teachers' Perspectives on ELT in Libyan Public Schools
4.1.1. Effectiveness of ELT:

The majority of the teachers expressed concerns about the effectiveness of ELT in Libyan public schools, indicating that students often graduate with limited English language proficiency. Teachers attributed this to various factors, including an outdated curriculum, inadequate teaching resources, and insufficient classroom time dedicated to English language instruction.

4.1.2. Pedagogical Strategies:

Teachers reported using a variety of pedagogical strategies in their ELT practices, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). However, many teachers also noted that they faced difficulties in implementing these approaches due to large class sizes, lack of resources, and the constraints of the curriculum.

V. 4.1.3. Role of Technology:

The role of technology in ELT was a prominent theme in the teachers' perspectives. While many teachers acknowledged the potential benefits of integrating technology into their teaching, they also reported facing several barriers to its effective use, such as limited access to technology, inadequate training, and poor internet connectivity.

4.2. Challenges Faced by Teachers in the Classroom:
4.2.1. Lack of Resources:

A significant challenge reported by the teachers was the lack of resources available for ELT in Libyan public schools. Teachers highlighted the shortage of up-to-date textbooks, teaching materials, and audio-visual aids, which negatively impacted their ability to deliver effective English language instruction.

4.2.2. Inadequate Training:

Many teachers expressed concerns about the quality of their pre-service and in-service training, noting that it did not adequately prepare them for the realities of teaching English in the Libyan context. They identified a need for more context-specific training, as well as ongoing professional development opportunities to help them keep up with new developments in ELT.

4.2.3. Socio-political Instability:

The impact of socio-political instability on ELT in Libya emerged as a significant challenge for the teachers. They reported that frequent disruptions to schooling, security concerns, and the overall unstable environment hurt their teaching and students' learning. Moreover, they noted that the instability had led to a decline in foreign language assistance and collaboration, further hindering the development of ELT in the country.

4.2.4. Assessment and Evaluation:

Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the current assessment and evaluation practices in Libyan public schools. They argued that the focus on high-stakes examinations and rote learning was detrimental to students' English language development and called for a shift towards more formative and communicative assessment methods.

In summary, the results of this study highlight the challenges faced by English language teachers in Libyan public schools, including the lack of resources, inadequate training, socio-political instability, and outdated assessment practices. Furthermore, the findings suggest that teachers have a strong desire to improve the quality of ELT in Libya but face considerable obstacles in implementing effective pedagogical strategies and leveraging technology in their teaching.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the perspectives of English language teachers in Libyan public schools and the challenges they face in delivering effective ELT. This section discusses the results of the existing literature and considers their implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the field of English language education in Libya.

4.1. Effectiveness of ELT and Pedagogical Strategies:

The concerns expressed by the teachers regarding the effectiveness of ELT in Libyan public schools align with the broader literature on ELT in challenging contexts (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The reported reliance on outdated curricula and insufficient classroom time dedicated to English language instruction point to systemic issues that need to be addressed to improve the quality of ELT in Libya.

The teachers' use of various pedagogical strategies, such as CLT, TBLT, and CLIL, is consistent with global trends in ELT (Richards, 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). However, the difficulties they face in implementing these approaches highlight the need for context-specific adaptation and support to ensure their effectiveness in the Libyan context. This finding underscores the importance of considering local conditions and constraints when adopting and adapting international best practices in ELT (Coleman, 2010).

4.2. Role of Technology:

The mixed views on the role of technology in ELT found in this study reflect the broader debate in the literature on the benefits and challenges of integrating technology into language teaching (Chapelle, 2001; Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). The barriers reported by the teachers, such as limited access to technology, inadequate training, and poor internet connectivity, highlight the need for concerted efforts to address digital inequality and enhance digital literacy skills among both learners and teachers in Libya (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010).

4.3. Challenges Faced by Teachers:

The challenges reported by the teachers in this study, including the lack of resources, inadequate training, and socio-political instability, echo the findings of previous research on ELT in conflict-affected and resource-poor contexts (Wedell, 2008; Borg, 2013). These challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions and support to help teachers navigate the complex realities of teaching English in the Libyan context.

The dissatisfaction expressed by the teachers regarding the current assessment and evaluation practices in Libyan public schools calls for a rethinking of the assessment system, with a focus on more formative and communicative assessment methods (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This shift would help promote a more learner-centred approach to ELT, in line with the global trends in language education.

4.4. Implications for Policymakers and Educators:

The findings of this study have several implications for policymakers and educators in Libya. First, there is a need for curriculum reform to ensure that the content and objectives of ELT in Libyan public schools align with the needs of learners and the demands of the global community. This reform should involve updating teaching materials, expanding classroom time for English instruction, and incorporating more learner-centred and communicative pedagogical approaches.

Second, the study highlights the need for better support for English language teachers in Libya, including context-specific pre-service and in-service training programs, and ongoing professional development opportunities. Efforts should also be made to improve the provision of teaching resources and the integration of technology in ELT, addressing the barriers identified by the teachers in this study.

Finally, given the impact of socio-political instability on ELT in Libya, policymakers and stakeholders need to prioritize the stabilization of the education sector, ensuring that students and teachers have access to safe and supportive learning environments. This may involve collaboration with international organizations and NGOs to provide targeted assistance, as well as promote peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts within the country.

4.5. Limitations and Future Research:

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample of teachers in the study may not be fully representative of the entire population of English language teachers in Libyan public schools, as purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Future research could employ random sampling techniques to increase the generalizability of the findings.

Second, the study focused solely on the perspectives of English language teachers and did not incorporate the views of other stakeholders, such as students, parents, school administrators, or policymakers. Future research could explore these perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to ELT in Libya.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of this study provides a snapshot of teachers' perspectives and challenges at a specific point in time. Longitudinal research could be conducted to track changes in teachers' views and experiences over time, as well as to assess the impact of any interventions or policy changes implemented in response to the findings of this study.

Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by English language teachers in Libyan public schools, informing policymakers, educators, and stakeholders about the areas in need of improvement and support. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by global trends in ELT, Libya can work towards enhancing the quality of English language education for its students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

VII. CONCLUSION

This mixed-method study explored the perspectives of English language teachers on ELT in Libyan public schools and examined the challenges they face in delivering effective instruction. The findings revealed that teachers have concerns about the effectiveness of ELT in Libyan public schools, attributed to factors such as outdated curricula, inadequate resources, and insufficient classroom time dedicated to English instruction. Teachers reported using a variety of pedagogical strategies, including CLT, TBLT, and CLIL but faced difficulties in implementing these approaches due to contextual challenges. The role of technology in ELT emerged as both a potential opportunity and a challenge, with barriers such as limited access, inadequate training, and poor internet connectivity hindering its effective use. The study also highlighted several key challenges faced by English language teachers in Libya, including the lack of resources, inadequate training, socio-political instability, and outdated assessment practices. These findings have important implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the field of English language education in Libya, as they point to areas that require targeted interventions and support.

To improve the quality of ELT in Libyan public schools, it is crucial to address the identified challenges through curriculum reform, better support for teachers, enhanced integration of technology, and a focus on more learner-centred assessment practices. Additionally, efforts should be made to stabilize the education sector and ensure that students and teachers have access to safe and supportive learning environments.

Although this study has some limitations, it contributes valuable insights to the understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by English language teachers in Libyan public schools. Future research could further explore the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as students, parents, and policymakers, and investigate the impact of interventions or policy changes on the quality of ELT in Libya. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by global trends in ELT, Libya can work towards enhancing English language education for its students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing and interconnected world.

REFERENCES

[1] Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 5(1), 7-74.

[2] Borg, S. (2013). Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice. Bloomsbury Publishing.

[3] Chapelle, C. A. (2001). Computer applications in second language acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing and research. Cambridge University Press.

[4] Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). Content and language-integrated learning. Ernst Klett Sprachen.

[5] Crystal, D. (2003). English as a global language. Cambridge University Press.

[6] Graddol, D. (2006). English Next. British Council.

[7] Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching. Pearson Longman.

[8] Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010). Facebook: An online environment for learning English in institutions of higher education? The Internet and Higher Education, 13(4), 179-187.

[9] Kukulska-Hulme, A. (2013). Re-skilling language learners for a mobile world. Monterey, CA: The International Research Foundation for English Language Education. Retrieved from: http://www.tirfonline.org/english-in-the-workforce/mobile-assisted-language-learning.

[10] Richards, J. C. (2015). Key issues in language teaching. Cambridge University Press.

[11] Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). Approaches and methods in language teaching. Cambridge University Press.

[12] Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. TESOL Quarterly, 25(2), 261-277.

[13] UNESCO. (2011). The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. EFA Global Monitoring Report. Paris: UNESCO.

[14] Warschauer, M., & Matuchniak, T. (2010). New technology and digital worlds: Analyzing evidence of equity in access, use, and outcomes. Review of Research in Education, 34(1), 179-225.

[15] Wedell, M. (2008). Developing a capacity to make 'English for Everyone' worthwhile: Reconsidering outcomes and how to start achieving them. International Journal of Educational Development, 28(6), 628-639.

[16] Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). Doing task-based teaching. Oxford University Press.

AUTHORS

First Author – Mr Ahmed S Shahoot,, Affiliation: University of Benghazi., Author's Email: ahmed_shahot@yahoo.com ,
Author's phone number: 00218945520324.
Second Author – Mr Suliman Abdelaty, Affiliation: University of Benghazi., Author's Email: Suliman.abdelaty@mail.co.uk.
Author's phone number: 00447480067677.