

Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first-year Libyan university students' challenges in the learning of English

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, who always support me and encourage me to go further in life. I always use their advice and their experiences as a reference in my life.

To my husband, Dr. Omar Moumin, who always gives me sound advice on all my endeavours, and he is always standing beside me when I need him, and to my children who are a blessing from Allah in my life.

To extended family as well as my family-in-law who could not be here to share this achievement with me. I know they are proud of me.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify the challenges that lecturers and students faced in developing English language communicative competence for academic purposes at a university within the College of Humanities situated in Zliten city in the north of Libya.

This research canvassed students' and lecturers' experiences and perceptions in the teaching and learning of academic English in a foreign language context. Within a case study approach, a convergent mixed methods research design was used. Data was collected through qualitative and quantitative methods in an interpretative paradigm. The study employed three data generation methods, a semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, and questionnaires.

The findings suggest that the qualitative and quantitative findings in this study can be classified into four categories of EFL Libyan learning challenges namely: linguistic, cultural, institutional, and structural challenges. Linguistic challenges are those related to language issues confronted by both lecturers and students. Most participants (lecturers and students) agreed that Arabic and English are linguistically dissimilar. They are unable to comprehend academic literature in the English language because of the phonological differences between Arabic and English. It is considered the most common linguistic challenge with respect to student anxiety and inadequacy regarding the attainment of academic English proficiency. The cultural challenge manifests as a dissonance between students' cultural predilections and the decoding required for meaning making in English as a foreign language. A cultural insistence and expectation for Arabic hegemonic communication exacerbates the development of communicative competence in the target language. Institutional challenges are described as the general position of higher education in Libya, and the problems students encounter when joining this education system. The effect of insular politics also negatively impacts effective institutional operations. Finally, structural challenges were related to the overall teaching program coherence. This included the lack of appropriate curriculum design standards and poorly designed policies of English language teaching and learning. The study concludes by making suggestions to improve communicative competence in the target language at the research site.

Keywords: Learning English as a foreign language (EFL), challenges in learning English language, Arab (Libyan) challenges in English learning, Libyan undergraduate.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and background of the study

English is the language of international commerce and wider communication today. It has also become the preferred language of higher education in many countries. An interesting development is the growth of non-native speakers of English which have today come to outnumber native speakers of English. This changing demographic is also evident in Libya, the research site of this study. This must be understood in the context of globalisation as Libyans seek to advance their linguistic dexterity to access educational and vocational opportunities.

Factors that advance this are as follows. The international exchange of information between countries, such as science and medical development, business, and other fields, is mainly conducted in English (Khalid, 2017; Abuklaish,2014). This has accelerated the drive toward English becoming an international lingua franca.

In Libya, Arabic is the mother tongue, and English is studied as a foreign language (EFL) (El-Hawat, 2009; Kalid, 2017). Many challenges are experienced both in the learning of English and the use of English in higher education in Libya. Several studies such as Moghani and Mohamed (2003), Al-Hussein (2014), Azarnoosh (2014), Abuklaish (2014), Hawedi (2015), and Khalid (2017) have found that Libyan students suffer from low levels of English, a factor which serves as a disadvantage when they pursue higher education. Moreover, the Libyan Higher Education Ministry Review Report, 2003-2016 (2016) also indicated that several areas of poor students' performance and academic difficulties reside in written, oral, and comprehension in English language subjects leading to poor performance and poor results. Therefore, the problem of this study is that Libyan students are confronted by challenges in English language learning, something that hinders their progress when they pursue higher education opportunities. According to Gadour (2006), the Libyan students moving from school to university encounter several learning challenges in English learning; also, it includes engaging with teaching and learning at university, which is entirely different from the school system.

This study seeks to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya and how these challenges impact on effective academic performance. The quality of EFL education for learning demands exploration as this is a prerequisite for success in higher education, particularly in countries where the language of learning is different from the language speakers use for social and other communicative uses (Bialystok, Craik, and Freedman, 2007). Consequently, the focus of this study is on the challenges Libyan Arabic speakers face in learning English as a foreign language at a university in Libya.

This chapter is an introduction to the study and details the structure of the entire thesis. Firstly, I will present the background, rationale, significance, and aims of the study. After that, the research objectives, and questions, grounded in the literature review and theoretical framework are presented later in this thesis. This is followed by key operational definitions of terminology used in the study. Finally, as a conclusion to the chapter, content outlines for the remaining chapters are explained.

1.2. Background to the EFL landscape of Libya

In Libya, English is a foreign language (EFL) and a medium of instruction in the educational system, starting from grade five to tertiary education. The use of the English language in Libya dates back to 1954, after the end of the second world war (Al-Hussein, 2014, Khalid, 2017). On 19.02.1968, the Minister of Education decided to make a committee for reviewing the Libyan educational system. It aimed at making English the language of instruction in science courses in secondary school and university. In 1960, a new English language programme and textbooks were needed to change and improve the whole process of teaching English as a foreign language in Libya (Al-Hussein, 2014). Arabic (the national language) was adopted as the country's official language and English as a foreign language. Thus, the monolingual state technically became an EFL state. Thus, for a developing country to progress into a modern state, there was a need for it to adopt an already major world language in addition to Arabic.

In Libya, the education system is divided into four main levels: preschool education for pre-schoolers, primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary (high school) education for general

education, and universities and colleges at the tertiary level. Pre-school education is mainly for children who are five years or younger. Primary school education is divided into lower and senior primary levels and takes six years, and in the last year, students sit for the Primary School Certificate (PC) examination. After primary school, students proceed to junior secondary school, which is three years. The final three years of senior secondary school (High School) are pre-university training. Tertiary education in Libya comprises universities, technical and vocational colleges, teachers, medicine and nursing colleges, and business colleges. In all the different levels of education in Libya, the medium of instruction is Arabic, with some subjects taught in the English language. Curriculum development in Libya has not considered the factors such as materials, language teacher views, and learners' needs that should be included in rational curriculum development. The first series of English language books used in Libya was "English for Libya", in which they chose the English culture as a vehicle for the English language teaching. In 2005/2006, a different English textbook was proposed to the 3rd primary class; English was taught in the third class for only one year. It was stopped but introduced to fifth and sixth classes in the year 2006/2007.

This textbook combines a "student book" consisting of studies for the English class with the teacher and a "workbook" in which students practice the exercises individually at home without the teacher's assistance. The evaluation of the Libyan schools' English books considered the situation in Libya where there is a lack of qualified teachers and sufficient textbooks (Khalid, 2017), hence, teachers are forced to follow the textbooks quite religiously. The teacher's guide takes control over the teachers, resulting in the materials being taught with less quality, and it can lead to teachers with inadequate teaching experiences. Historically, there was some training led by the universities, and with the cooperation of UNESCO, teachers were regularly sent abroad for training (Al-Hussein, 2014).

With this current situation within the Libyan educational system, Libyan EFLs still experience difficulties with the spoken and written English language even though these skills are formally assessed in the classroom and are vital components in the English language curriculum (Examinations Council of Libya 2016). Learners are expected to perform tasks that require them to define and explain events in writing and efficiently express their ideas during classroom

activities in their curriculum. Researchers such as Hidi & Hildyard (1983), Pu (2006), and Sun (2008) assert that one probable source of these difficulties lies in the perception that written and verbal language differs from the language they use at home. However, it is unknown whether that stems from English learners limited second language proficiency or language learning needs. Language practitioners such as Educators, speech-language pathologists, and others may have difficulty concluding whether their low learning attainment is related to limited second language proficiency or specific language learning needs.

Other challenges affect the standard of EFL teaching and learning proficiency and prevent the achievement of the goals of the Libyan curriculum (Al-Hussein, 2014). These challenges include, in addition to the curriculum, English teaching strategies, students' motivation, anxiety, and students' hesitation to learn English, which could be considered essential factors that affect the standard of learning and teaching practices in Libya. Abuklaish (2014) recommended that there is a necessity to re-assess the learning and teaching context in public schools and universities in Libya and to agree on new materials which can reflect the demands of learning English in the community, taking the Libyan students and teachers' needs into account.

1.3. Geographical background

Libya is an Arabic nation located in the center of North Africa. Egypt borders it to the east, and the southeast is Sudan, Chad, and the Republic of Niger to the south. Its west is Tunisia and Algeria, and to the north is the Mediterranean Sea with a coastline of nearly 250 kilometers (Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017). Libya has an estimated area of about 1.9 million square kilometers, with a population density of 3.4 people per Km square (Abuklaish, 2014). According to Khalid (2017), Libya is the fourth largest part of African countries and the seventeenth among the world's countries. Tripoli is the capital city of Libya, located in the country's north-western region with around 1.5 million citizens. Libya's weather is characterised by the Mediterranean climate in the north and dry, desert in the country's south. Fig (1.1) shows Libya's map, which illustrates Libya's leading site-related properties.



Fig 1.1. Map of Libya

The population in Libya is approximately 7,040,748 million (Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017). Most of the residents live close the coastline and, in the country’s, northern region, particularly in Tripoli and Benghazi, as they are the most prominent cities. Also, Sebha, Musrata, Zliten, Alzawia, and Derna are considered the biggest cities in Libya (Khalid, 2017). It is essentially saying that Arabic is the official language spoken in all the country’s regions, and its religious conviction is Islam.

1.4. Historical background

Libya has been colonized by Turkish Muslim rule from 1550 to 1912 and Italian colonization from 1912 to 1942. Also, from 1942 to 1951, it was under impermanent British military rule (Clark,

2004, p. 1). Libya attained its independence on the 24th of December 1951 and was called the United Kingdom of Libya, a constitutional kingdom under the first and the only country's ruler named King Idris Senussi. King Senussi's rule period lasted 18 years from 1951 to 1969. While he was in Turkey for medical treatment, he was expelled in a 1969 military revolution, organized by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi', who ruled for 42 years and who later was deposed and killed during the revolution against him (he was killed following the so-called Arab Spring Uprisings that overpowered the governments of several Arab leaders, including Colonel Muammar Gaddafi). The recent official name of the country after the events of the Arab Uprisings is the State of Libya (Khalid, 2017).

1.5. Purpose of the study

The determination to adopt English as a foreign language for teaching and learning in Libya has presented several linguistic-related problems in an Arabic-speaking country. It has thus become crucial to investigate reasons for the widely known weak performance of Arabic speakers learning English. This study is concerned with the field of language acquisition. More specifically, this study seeks to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in the learning of English at a university in Libya and the imperative reasons these challenges impact effective academic performance.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the problems existing with lecturers and students by gathering data, evaluating the potential of the problems, providing a set of suggestions to reduce the deficiencies, and describing the prospects of teaching and learning English in a Libyan university. As the research exposes challenges concerning Libya's cultural, social, and national aspects, it can let the educationists determine the innovative forms in improving the EFL teaching and learning process.

In addition, English, being a global language, has a robust status as a medium of instruction in almost all world countries since it is an international language. It is also becoming a mandatory subject in the syllabi in universities of most countries. It is the language that helps us expand our trade and relations with the rest of the world. Indeed, such efforts should have been made to give it a proper place in Libya's society, an important developing country of the world, according to

the new modern challenges of the world. The implication the teaching of English in Libya has faced many challenges. These challenges are in its learning and its teaching methods, which is why our learners face barriers in learning the language.

This research used the case study approach to understand a single case and explain the phenomenon of learning English at the selected university. This approach will require an in-depth investigation of all the interlinking or interdependent parts of the emerging patterns. I made use of an evaluative case study. This means that a single case was studied in-depth to provide educationists, lecturers, and students with information that will help them judge the advantages and disadvantages of specific policies, practices, and programmes concerning English learning through the systematic and reflective documentation or presentation of evidence from the data obtained. Therefore, this study explores the challenges and obstacles that create a barrier to learning the English language. This attempt not only points out obstacles faced but also contributes recommendations. Also, there is a need for involving students in taking full responsibility for having good proficiency in the English language as not only lecturers and education institutions are responsible for these challenges.

1.6. Rationale for the study

This study tried to provide empirical evidence on the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university. It investigated the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya, which impacts effective academic performance. Recently, more interest has been centred on the concerns, challenges, and needs of Arab learners studying English in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Palestinian. However, it has been relatively unexplored in Libya; hence this study seeks to address that gap. Thus, there is no previous study on EFL students' challenges in learning English at Libyan universities. This is supported by various researchers such as Moghani and Mohamed (2003), Al-Hussein (2014), Azarnoosh (2014), Abuklaish (2014), Hawedi (2015), and Khalid (2017) who have strongly indicated that Libyan students confronted by challenges in the English language learning, something that hinders their progress when they upgrade to higher education. Thus, they recommended and indicated a crucial need for further studies to explore these challenges, in which it would then be valuable to

investigate and identify students' problems in English language learning. Therefore, conducting this study may help Libyan educationists and language therapists identify the challenges that hinder the EFL Libyan learners' progress in English learning and try to overcome them. Therefore, it must provide the students with at least one of the existing languages with their home language to enable them to communicate with other people from other cultures and obtain knowledge and sciences globally.

1.7. Significance of the study

The main contribution of the present study is to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English within an educational environment where English is not the native language. This study would be significant in different ways to enrich development and research in a Libyan context. It is significant within its setting because it is the first time both the stakeholders and students at this Libyan university have been involved in a discussion concerning students' challenges in English language learning. It is hoped that their perceptions will provide insight into their problems and challenges in English learning.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the study's findings will be used to improve language teaching and learning in the Libyan education setting, which can be used as the basis for designing appropriate courses and curriculums that enable students to improve their academic performance and to deal with language demands in their study. The methodology used in this study may also be applied to further studies in similar contexts worldwide.

1.8. Research objectives

The main research objectives are to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in the learning of English in Libya are:

1. To explore the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university.

2. To elicit learners' perceptions regarding the challenges in learning English at a Libyan university.
3. To investigate why students face these challenges.
4. To determine lecturers' perceptions regarding the challenges of their students in learning English at a Libyan university.

1.9. Research questions

The main research questions underlying the current investigation are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

1.10. Research methodology/approach to the study

This is a mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) study investigating the challenges EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan University, which is situated in Zliten city of Libya. These methods are used in this thesis to gather, record, and analyse the data, in which the data collection methods that are suitable for a mixed-method design are explained (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). The participant's perspective is thus critical as they tell their story or worldview, mainly because no two contexts are the same, hence the reason why the findings of such a study cannot be generalised.

The study further employs the case study approach since the research aims to develop an in-depth understanding of students' views on their challenges in learning English and how they tried to overcome these challenges. Christiansen et al., (2010) define a case study as an in-depth study of

one individual, a group of individuals, or an institution. It is in-depth in the sense that the researcher concentrates on a specific entity that has been selected for the purposes of that study, gathering as much data as possible and further analysing it without generalizing the findings because the social reality that exists in one context will never be the same in another context. Therefore, in a case study, the researcher focuses on the entity and studies it in detail, hence offering a wealth of knowledge (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010).

For this study, purposive sampling has been used to make samples of the larger population. The researcher will sample six lecturers and twelve students to get their experiences and perceptions of the challenges they face in learning English in Libya. Two lecturers shall be selected from each of the three faculties resulting in a total of six lectures in all. As Libyan students are EFL learners, lecturers who will participate in this study will be English teachers who have experience with EFL teaching. In addition, these lecturers should be teaching the students who will participate in this study to gain more insights into their challenges in the learning of English. Four students shall be selected per faculty, and this will result in twelve learner-participants in all. The four students will be selected based on gender per faculty in order to give a balanced student- perception of their challenges in learning English. It is worth mentioning that the students that the researcher met in one-to-one interviews will not participate in the focus group interviews to enable me to gain more insights and information from the students.

An interview schedule, questionnaires, and a focus group discussion shall be employed to collect data from the participants. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of questions and other prompts to gather information from participants (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It is a suitable research instrument because it allows for quick gathering of the data from the participant. Therefore, the questionnaire required personal responses to twenty-six questions on their challenges in the learning of English.

Interviews are verbal conversations between two or more people or more to collect relevant information for the purposes of research (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The individual interview will be semi-structured. There were twelve interviews because each of the six learners and six lecturers will be interviewed separately in order to find their views and experiences on their challenges in

the learning of English. Each interview will range in length from thirty to forty minutes. These will be conducted in an isolated venue in the English department where the possibility of being interrupted will be minimal. Rapport will be created with the learners by first asking them general questions about themselves and explaining what the whole session was all about throughout the whole conversation. The conversation will be recorded using an audio-recording instrument. After the session, the researcher will listen to the recording to ensure that each respondent's views have indeed been captured. The data will then be translated and transcribed.

A focus group refers to people brought together and asked about their perceptions, opinions, or beliefs about a particular subject (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Focus group discussion usually produces both qualitative and observational data where analyses can be required. Focus group discussion needs a team consisting of a skilled facilitator and an assistant. The facilitator is central to the discussion by managing current relationships and creating a relaxed and comfortable environment in a separate venue. Similarly, the assistant's role includes documenting the general content of the discussion; thereby, it will be two focus groups, one with the six lecturers and the other with the six students. The main methods of data collection during a focus group discussion include audio and tape recording and note-taking. Both the interview and focus group allow the researcher to ask and further probe the participant to get as much information as possible. The researcher will engage the participants in focus group discussions because these offer a more relaxed environment, allowing them to be freer to express their views regarding the challenges they face in learning English.

For qualitative data analysis, the constant comparison method of employed to analyse data in this research (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 557). The constant comparative approach is the analytic technique of qualitatively comparing and contrasting data from various data sources in a bid to develop categories and to look for patterns among the categories (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). For quantitative data analysis, the responses to the questionnaire surveys were manually decreased, coded, and categorised in the Microsoft Excel manuscript according to the predetermined classifications. The researcher will first read and re-read data collected through interviews and questionnaires to code the data and find common responses, ultimately generating themes that will help comprehend the phenomenon.

1.11. Location of the study

This study was conducted mainly at the school of Arts and in two faculties (Education and law), which are a substructure within the College of Humanities. The School of Arts and the two faculties are located at a Libyan university, situated in Zliten city in the north of Libya. They are multi-cultural campuses from other Arabic countries, predominantly Arab students, and Libyan students from diverse provinces in Libya. The majority of students are Arabic language students. Data was collected from first-year students in the English studies department. It is purposively selected from a total of three faculties at the university.

1.12. Theoretical Framework

Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition Theory is chosen as the theoretical framework for this study as it attempts to answer the crucial theoretical question of how we acquire language. It is also essential because it may answer many of our everyday problems in second language instruction at all levels. This framework will enable me to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning and acquiring the English language at a Libyan university.

The theory details the important five hypotheses about Second Language Acquisition. First, *the Acquisition-Learning Distinction hypothesis* states that adults have two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language. The first way is language acquisition, a process similar to the way children develop ability in their first language. Another way to develop proficiency in a second language is achieved through language learning. The second hypothesis is *that the Natural Order Hypothesis* is about acquiring grammatical structures that proceed in a predictable probable order. Third, *the Monitor Hypothesis* suggests that acquisition and learning are used in particular ways. Generally, the acquisition is responsible for our utterance, and our fluency and learning change in the form of our utterance. The fourth hypothesis is that *the Input Hypothesis* attempts to answer the critical question in this theory: how do we acquire language? It says we acquire by "going for meaning" first, and as a result, we acquire structure. Lastly, *the Affective Filter Hypothesis* hypothesis states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process.

Language acquisition means picking up a language including implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning (Krashen, 2009). Hence, to develop competence in a second language is by language learning. Learning entails knowing about a language, such as grammar or language rules and some synonyms, etc. Some second language theorists have assumed that children acquire, while adults can only learn (Krashen, 2009). Therefore, this research looks for the challenges that EFL learners face when they learn and use the English language.

1.13. Definition of terminologies

This section defines the most central terms for the following discussion, which are:

- **1.13.1. Mother tongue (MT):** The language that is first acquired by a child from their mother when they are born. Many studies concern the positive and negative effects of Mother-Tongue on English learning. On one side, Van Wyk & Mostert (2016) assert that the mother tongue language should not be ignored for second language learners to reach adequate proficiency. Students can properly learn subject material when the content is transferred through their mother tongue. Learners should be able to learn in a language that they know well. Considering that the mother tongue creates an essential part of the learner's environment, it is the fundamental basis for developing verbal skills (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). On the other side, Qutob (2020) indicates that the lack of awareness of the difference between the mother tongue and second or foreign language in terms of linguistic system makes learning writing and speaking skills more difficult for learners. This lack of awareness of different characteristics and features is likely to confuse the EFL students, leading them to fall back on their L1 to imitate some of its features and structures and employ them in L2 writing. Uddin (2017) found that most Bangladeshi students are exposed to their mother language. They produce incorrect pronunciation due to first language interference. Also, they do not get good chances to listen to and speak in English. Therefore, some studies indicate the positive effects of Mother-Tongue on English learning, and some did not, as it harms EFL learning.

- **1.13.2. First language (L1):** The language that a child acquires at birth and continues to acquire high literacy levels in it.

In the last decades, the spread of English across the globe has produced changes in the sociolinguistic profile of the language and implemented new varieties of English (Al-Mutairi, 2020). In 1985, Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model of English Language has caused a great debate. It is one of the most significant models for understanding the use of English in different nations. It describes how English is used in three concentric circles: The Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle.

The Inner Circle shows the nations where English is utilised as a primary language and native language. These countries include the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle encompasses countries with past historical British colonial relations and where English is generally used in social life or the government sectors. Most of the countries that relate to this circle are former colonies of the British Empire, such as South Africa, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Ghana, Kenya, and others. The usage of English in these nations is similar to what is known as English as a second language. The third circle, The Expanding Circle, presents countries that use English as a foreign language in public and institutions such as schools and universities, primarily for communicating in English with the Inner and Outer Circles. Such countries include Libya, Saudi Arabia, The Emirates, Turkey, Japan, China, Korea, and others.

To distinguish English as a second language from English as a foreign language is language Proficiency. There are significant differences between people speaking English as a second language and those using it as a foreign language. Chances are speakers of a language as a foreign language may also be highly professional in English, yet the language proficiency of the general public in that environment is markedly low. A considerable percentage of people at large may not be able to speak a word in English, whereas most ordinary people at all levels of education own degrees of the language abilities revealing bilingualism in a people who is spoken as a second language.

- **1.13.3. Learning English as a foreign language (EFL):** The use of the English language by non-native speakers in countries where English is generally not a local communication medium. In other words, English is taught to people whose primary language is not English and who are in a country where English is not used. It refers to the study of the English language by non-native speakers in countries where English is generally not a local medium of communication (AlHussein, 2014). On the other hand, EFL is generally learnt in an environment where the verbal communication of the local area and school is not English. As a result, EFL teachers have difficulties finding ways to provide their students with English models. In Libya, private and formal schools primary and secondary schools can be described as EFL in that these schools are native speakers of Arabic. Learners' exposure to a foreign language needs an essential distinction for teachers to notice, acquire, and learn (Al-Jamal, 2014). Therefore, lecturers should distinguish between students' levels and abilities, motivations to learn English, way of thinking, characters, and attitudes. Working in pairs, in groups, or even independently is undoubtedly suitable for the students because seldom do they seem comfortable when dealing with each other more than interacting with a lecturer.

Learning a foreign language is a challenging, complex task for students requiring different language systems, cultures, and modes of thinking (Richards & Rodgers, 2017). The Oxford Dictionary defines learning as acquiring knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught. Al-Jamal (2014) reveals that learning requires the acquisition of skills that are not innate. Besides, learning depends on the experience associated with reactions from the environment. Learning involves some practice, maybe augmented practice.

Alhmadi (2014) divided EFL learner demands into two main kinds. Objective needs relate to those exercises given out by the teacher to diagnose the student's ability and language proficiency and to work with the student's knowledge by providing the proper level of language instruction. Another kind is subjective demands; these include the student's wishes, desires, and expectations. Learning a foreign language is a cyclic process because motivation, positive attitudes, and efforts in productive learning may increase language

achievement. Nalliveettil (2014) points out that language acquisition and maintenance depend on instructional factors relating to how the language is initially acquired. He adds that learning a foreign language is different from learning other subjects; any approach to teaching a new language has to consider the needs of the learner and the circumstances in which the language is taught. He asserts that the requirements and conditions differ not only from country to country but also from period to time within the same country. University students' features to each learning environment essential to active learning are students' previous knowledge, metacognitive abilities, motivational levels, and interest in studying. The learning environment depends on the designated texts for the classroom teaching and learning process (Nalliveettil, 2014).

Learners' exposure to a foreign language needs an essential distinction for teachers to notice, acquisition, and learn (Al-Jamal, 2014). According to Crystal (2010), learning a foreign language is a conscious use of language in a defined condition, whereas an acquisition happens in a natural communicative context. Learners become focused on specific language features and practices as they are exposed to the target language. Achieving proficiency is uncertain; consequently, teachers' preparation of tasks determines their students' learning quality. Al-Jamal (2014) illustrates that L2 exposure is essentially a learning type of experience that tends not to develop the same general proficiency as those who have had more of an acquisition type of experience. As Brown (2007) states that any learning state can be meaningful if it refers to two things: learners who have a significant learning set and a task that is probably meaningful. The learners' understanding is strengthened when it is presented with a clear repertory of activities.

- **1.13.4. Defining 'Learner Language':** In the words of Bashir, Yunus & Ibrahim (2018), the term learner language mentions to any formation of language produced by learners via written or spoken and para-linguistic (such as gestures) ways of communication. The language created through these modes of communication served as the primary source of data employed to study second and foreign language acquisition. From its essential elements, learner language is 'not monolithic', but rather a highly various phenomenon including many variables that address how learners learn a particular language, the

procedures, and strategies, issues and prospects concerned. It is mainly concerned with data analysis as an essential component of the research process (Bashir et al., 2018). It is formed by the research purpose and the theoretical principles that control the preferred method of inquiry. The more practical approach in second or foreign language study might be to know what learners do, as objected to what they believe they do; this would be by ordering samples of learner language, that is, the language that learners have when they are named on to utilise EFL in speech or writing and analyse them accurately. There has been researched interest in analysing learners' language in second and foreign language studies (Bashir et al., 2018).

Therefore, the primary goal of learning the English language is to equip learners with the language knowledge used to communicate it virtually and accurately. Knowledge of syntax, morphology and phonological rules by English foreign language learners (EFL) is meaningful (Bani Younes & Albalaw, 2016). For instance, learning how and where to allocate stress in terms of efficient communication will be very helpful. Meantime, listeners process speech more efficiently if stress is perfectly inducted. Despite the significance of stress on words or sentences, it is sometimes ignored in most teachers' classes (Bani Younes & Albalaw, 2016).

For language learning to occur, four conditions should exist namely exposure, chances to utilise the language, motivation, and education. Students require opportunities to express what they believe or feel and experiment in supporting conditions using a language they have heard or seen without feeling intimidated (Bani Younes & Albalaw, 2016). With improved exposure to the English language, learners progress from developing social language to a more complicated academic language. Social language is regarded as everyday conversations, contextualised, and developed within two to three years. Learners should drive themselves to understand, using their existing proficiency to the highest. They should try to avoid confusion in the communication due to incorrect pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary; and use techniques for identifying and addressing communication difficulties. The academic language combines cognitive skills and satisfying knowledge

required for thriving academic performance at secondary and university levels (Bani Younes & Albalaw, 2016).

- **1.13.5. English teaching-learning challenges** are obstacles and difficulties that face EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students while learning English during the years of the study program. These problems include the student language skills, structure, and organization of the EFL study, teaching-learning process, students' and teachers' assessment, and the physical learning environment (Davini, 2008). Students of English learning as a foreign language struggle with many teaching-learning challenges. These challenges may hold factors related to students' lack of academic and language background knowledge and English academic skills, instructors' teaching and linguistic competencies and pedagogical methods, the course syllabus and learning materials used to provide learners with content in terms of culture and linguistic difficulty, and the physical learning environment where the teaching-learning process is carried. Other factors might include learners' age, anxiety as an obstacle to learning, and availability.

Studies indicated that EFL learners' challenges in English learning in schools and universities had been noticed (Khalid, 2017; Hossain, 2019; Muhamad & Rahmat, 2020). They conducted studies to find out what specific language skills are observed to be most problematic to their English as a Foreign Language of students' academic learning. Their outcomes revealed that students experience significant challenges in English academic listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Particularly, understanding classroom tasks, giving oral presentations, and communicating an obstacle, comprehending the main ideas, and the details of texts were identified as most challenging for the students in academic listening, speaking, reading, and writing, respectively.

1.14. Chapters outline

This thesis is divided into seven chapters as follows:

Chapter one provides the introduction and background to the study, the context, its purposes, rationale, and significance. It also states the objectives and key research questions used to underpin the study.

Chapter two aims to provide a review of the related literature and to establish the relevance of the study further. Relevant literature is reviewed keeping in view the research questions and the focus of the present study in terms of the issues that it aims to explore.

Chapter three discusses the theoretical framework used in conducting the study which acts as an exploratory or explanatory tool for findings associated with this study. Important concepts used in this framework will be introduced.

Chapter four sets out to describe in detail the research methodology adopted in this study. This includes a description and critique of the chosen research design, the paradigmatic, as well as the ontological and epistemological considerations that underpin my research. Moreover, I present the choices made for research methods and techniques, discuss sampling issues, and describe access to data sources and the data collection itself. Subsequently, I present my data analysis techniques and procedures, ethical issues relevant to the study, and issues regarding the validity and reliability of the study.

Chapter five aims at a presentation and analysis of the findings (the questionnaire results, individual interviews, and focus group discussion) gathered from the participants in this study. Also, the data is presented and analysed in the light of the main research questions using quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.

Chapter six brings a detailed discussion of the study's findings. It provides all the quantitative and qualitative data findings together. It is assumed that such a presentation will be coherent and transparent for both the researcher and the reader.

Chapter seven which is the last chapter contains the conclusion of my research study and presents recommendations that are generated on the basis of my results. It contains concluding remarks about the study and this thesis as a whole. Possible limitations of the current study are discussed and suggestions for how these limitations can be overcome are proposed. Finally, I suggest ways for further research, based on the insights which I gained from this study.

1.15. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the contents of the current study. This chapter explored the background, the purpose, the rationale, and the significance of this study. Also, the definitions of some critical concepts will be used throughout the research. This chapter presented the research questions that I am addressing and the method that I used.

The significance of the study is thought to be in making recommendations based on an understanding of the reality of not only the lecturers' and students' experiences but also of any underlying challenges which may bring about this current crisis in education improvement in this country.

This research study hopes to address this gap and add some measure to the existing knowledge of English learning in developing countries. These findings might also be used to inform language and education policy decisions at Libyan universities.

The next chapter discusses the literature reviewed in the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one provided an opportunity for the researcher to inform the reader of the rationale for this study and offered an explanation of the main constructs. This chapter presents a detailed review of available literature on this study. In the words of Hart (1998, p.13), a literature review is a selection of existing published and unpublished documents on a specific topic, that contains data, concepts, information, and evidence written from a specific viewpoint to achieve certain purposes or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the study being proposed. The importance of a literature review is to acquire an understanding of the chosen field of study (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). In line with this, Wellington (2015, p.56) explains that conducting a literature review allows researchers to:

- Define what the field of study is, by identifying the theories, concepts, research, and ideas with which the study connects.
- Provide a historical and geographical context.
- Establish what research has already been done which relates to the research question or field of study.
- Identify and discuss methods and approaches that have been used by other researchers.
- Identify the gaps or further contributions that the present piece of research will make (note that the metaphor of a ‘gap’ can be a risky one).

Part of my purpose in this chapter is to constitute a critical review of the theories and research studies in resonance with my research questions, which are:

- What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
- Why do students have these challenges?
- What are EFL lecturers’ perceptions of students’ challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

This chapter offers further details to substantiate arguments that have already been introduced in the first chapter and to locate this study strategically within the recent empirical research literature. This literature includes local and global studies that are relevant to the concept of English as a foreign language (EFL) challenge of English learning. In addition, this chapter seeks to provide a context for this study by investigating English language learning and teaching from a Libyan perspective.

The researcher is aware that, there exists voluminous and extensive literature on EFL challenges with English language learning internationally (Abuklaish, 2014; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Vyomakesisri, 2017; Khalid, 2017; Hossain, 2019; Muhamad & Rahmat, 2020). However, Khalid (2017) argues that the literature on EFL difficulties with learning of the English language in developing countries such as Libya is very limited. It would be true to say, then, that, it has been relatively unexplored in Libya; hence this study seeks to address that gap. The chapter begins with the importance of English as an international language and its teaching and learning as a foreign language. In addition, the views of lecturers of EFL will be canvassed as well.

This chapter also seeks to give a brief history of formal education in Libya. This section comprises certain information about Libyan higher education in general; whilst providing some insights into education-related, specifically to aspects affecting the use of English as a medium of communication within the Libyan context. The study sought to substantiate whether or not Libyan learners have challenges in learning the English language. This is the main concern of the present research. However, this study is further limited to investigating the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya.

As an orientation to this chapter, the next section (2.2) will provide the importance of English as an international language. Section (2.3) provides the importance of English in the Middle East and North Africa. Section (2.5, 2.6) will further elaborate on EFL learners' perception of learning English alongside their English s' teachers. The finale to this chapter looks at previous studies on EFL challenges in an Arabic and international context.

2.2 English as an international language

According to Mayor & de Swann (2001) cited by Khochen-Bagshaw (2017), out of the approximately 6,000 languages spoken today, some 100 occupy a central global position as world languages. Of these, English occupies the most prominent position across most regions of the world. For example, the United Nations (UN) has adopted six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. These languages are used in intergovernmental meetings and documents, but English and French are the two working languages across the organisation. It is, however, English, rather than French, that is seen as a means for attaining professional growth. 'By general consensus, English has become, if not a global language, then at the very least a lingua franca (Solak & Bayar, 2015, Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017). Indeed, English is increasingly becoming the language of general communication; a language used by persons not sharing a mother tongue. In addition, English is also becoming essential for building cross-cultural relations and for accessing the global job market (Borg, 2011; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Hossain, 2019; Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna, 2020). According to the British Council, English is critical for a country's successful participation in the global economy, in that it provides individuals with access to crucial knowledge, skills, and employment opportunities and enables organisations to create and sustain international links.

English is not just the language of certain countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), or the United States of America (USA), but it is also considered as the most recognisable language globally (Al-Hussein, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Vyomakesisri, 2017; Khalid, 2017). These authors further note that the English language is highly recognisable globally due to several factors. One of the factors is that the British colonised several countries and the supremacy of the USA in the international community. Alfehaid (2014) argues a strong correlation between the global extent of English and Western imperialism. English is maintained and developed to be practised around the world, particularly for political and economic goals. This argument makes what he describes as English linguistic imperialism. English linguistic imperialism as the domination of English is advanced and supported by the establishment and continued reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Alfehaid, 2014).

It is, therefore, no wonder to find several countries that have compulsory courses in English that learners must pass in order to progress to the next stage of their academic careers (Khalid, 2017; Crystal, 1997). Hence, an estimated 80 percent of speakers of English are believed to be bilingual

speakers (Crystal, 1997; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Vyomakesisri, 2017; Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna, 2020). Libya is no exception in this regard, as English is predominantly the mode of communication in oil, manufacturing, and other transactional global trade. The English language has also become used in various areas of students' social as well as professional lives (Al-Hussein, 2014; El- Hawat, 2009; Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017).

In addition, the Libyan populace has access to the internet and international satellite television channels, which predominantly converse in the English language (Khalid, 2017). The Libyan government has started supporting English learning and teaching across the country. Asker (2012) refers to how current Libyan learners recognize the real worth of learning the English language more than the previous generation. People are more aware of the importance of the English language; however, some Libyan citizens are dissuaded due to their low level of English competence (Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017), as evidenced in the later section of this chapter that describes the struggle of Libyan students to learn English as a medium of communication at school.

Alhmali (2007) mentions that there is an increasing level of anxiety over Libyan learners' who would like to learn the English language. Alhmali (2007) investigated the attitudes of 2000 Libyan mid and high-school learners towards four subjects in their curriculum, namely Arabic, English, Sciences and Mathematics. His findings indicated that these learners were more curious about English learning than the other three subjects (Arabic, Science, and Mathematics). For the researcher, this preference to learn English is due to the value attached to English as an international language and Libyans realise its value.

It is noteworthy that more than 1.5 billion people of the world's 8 billion populace can converse in English (Khalid, 2017). This shows the relevance of the English language, and it also implies that the inability to speak or write in English may have some adverse consequences on individuals' educational attainment; career opportunities, or other desirable opportunities (World Population Review, 2021). Therefore, the English language is broadly recognised as an international language and people find it necessary to study it for personal, economic, and academic growth. For a Libyan who may be able to converse in English, this may provide employment opportunities internationally (Khalid, 2017, Hossain, 2019; Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna, 2020).

2.3 The importance of English in the Middle East and North Africa

The dominance of the English-speaking countries in different fields helps it be predominant over other existing languages. English is presently the dominant language of worldwide relations, security and travel, media, education, and communications. This widespread usage of English in these areas makes it necessary for any country to become part of the global community (Alfehaid, 2014). This is simply noticeable from the rising numbers of people today who need to learn English to benefit from speaking English opportunities.

The majority of Middle Eastern and North African countries view English as a vital foreign language and many Middle Eastern people appreciate the worldwide application of English in business, education, and in general communication (Malallah, 2000; Hamdan & Hatab, 2009). For example, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States carried out a study that looked at the importance of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Oman. The study found that Omani graduates consider English as essential to enter the business sector and for working in both the public and private sectors (Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1990). It did not find evidence to suggest that English was a threat to Arabic. Another study conducted by Alam Khan (2011) examined the attitudes of students, teachers, and parents towards EFL in public schools in Saudi Arabia. The study found positive attitudes towards learning English among students, teachers, and parents. The majority of the participants recognised the global growth of English in business, education, and communication (Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017, Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna, 2020).

Jordanians are similarly motivated to learn English, believing that it helps them to study and/or work abroad, or, alternatively, to secure a well-paid job in Jordan. For example, Hamdan and Abu Hatab (2009) conducted a longitudinal study into the status of English in Jordan. They examined newspaper job advertisements at 10-yearly intervals: 1985, 1995, and 2005. They then made judgements as to the increasing status of English through changed attitudes towards the language in these texts. In addition, the researchers reported a significant increase in the percentage of advertisements that make English proficiency a necessary requirement for employment. They found that by 2005 English was seen as a means of attaining professional growth by all workers in Jordan (Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017). Furthermore, the attention that many Jordanians pay to learning

English stems from an interest in being better informed about international events and the values and traditions of people from various parts of the world (World Bank 2007).

Researchers in a further study of English in Jordanian primary schools concluded that English language proficiency should be an essential requirement for professional development (Hashisho, 2009). The recommendations were based on a targeted sample from five public suburban and urban schools for boys and girls in greater Amman. The English language is often seen as being important in enabling people from diverse backgrounds to communicate internationally and to further their education. Evidence for this was suggested in a study carried out by Musa in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) who investigated the attitudes of 357 Emirati secondary students towards learning English. The study revealed that 75 percent of surveyed students reported liking English because they felt it was ‘important’ as an international means of communication and as a tool that enabled them to ‘keep in touch with foreign cultures and to pursue postgraduate studies (Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017). Furthermore, in some Arab countries where French has historically prevailed, such as in Tunisia, English has begun to assume greater dominance. The influence of English language skills on the lives of people is founded, in some instances, on the desire to access scientific and technical knowledge from the ‘original source’ rather than through the French translations of English language texts (Al-Khatib, 2008). Indeed, not only are many of the academic studies in general subjects written and published in English but, in addition, many international conferences, reports, and events have adopted English as a working language (Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017; Avsheniuk & Seminikhyna, 2020).

Nevertheless, there are some groups across the region that show less positive interest in learning English, especially those who do not need English for their future careers and those who intend to pursue postgraduate studies in an Arab university or who have a job that does not require knowledge of English. For example, Al Malallah (2000) explored the importance of learning English among Kuwaiti students. A questionnaire was given to 1,030 students that represented 11 per cent of the secondary school student population. The results reflected an unfavourable attitude towards English language learning by the majority of students and significantly, more than three quarters of the participants disagreed that English is necessary for a better job and for future business opportunities (Solak & Bayar, 2015; Khochen-Bagshaw, 2017; Hossain, 2019).

From the above studies, it can be deduced that the vast majority of Middle Eastern states consider English to be an important language. Such a presumption is premised upon the fact that learning English may be beneficial to their future career or may enable them to interact with the global community.

2.4 Learning English as a foreign language

In the last decades, the approaches, methods, and models for teaching a foreign language were performed by procedures whose primary purpose was to acquire the learner's linguistic code (Richards & Rodgers, 2017). Since the mid-twentieth century, much research has been conducted in language teaching; a communicative concept of the language that focuses more on the teaching process was introduced (Del Toro, Mercado, Manjarres, Noriega, Watts, & Sanchez, 2019). From this new perspective, the teacher and the student role have been progressively transformed (Del Toro et al., 2019). For this reason, new concepts like self-direction, autonomy, and self-regulation have been introduced. These concepts attempt to highlight the dominant roles of students in their development as foreign language learners.

In this order of concepts, such a change in the vision and purpose of teaching and learning languages presents significant challenges to the education system in general, not only to learners but also to teachers (Del Toro et al., 2019). It needs to expand its view of the teaching and learning processes of a foreign language. Realising that if you require to achieve a fundamental change in students, schools, and society; it is necessary to make clear that the initial step that teachers need to consider, is to get a change in themselves, their practices and their conceptions about teaching.

According to Krashen (1989, 2009), foreign language learning needs a multi-dimensional, multi-factorial, and integrative framework concentrated beneath two kinds of variables: (a) these merged to the context and (b) these merged to the subject. Contextual variables contain the linguistic, social, and educational contexts, including elements such as extensive usage of the foreign language, the period given to its investigation, shared social beliefs and perspectives regarding the foreign languages, cultural acuity, social net webs, access to cultural interests, educational approach; the school surroundings as well as the teaching technique (Krashen, 1989, 2009).

The exposure to other languages enhances how someone views different cultures; invariably, students learn different cultural practices worldwide (Mohammed, 2018). In this way, they can learn to accommodate and appreciate other cultures and languages. Moloji (2009) claims that most learners who learn English as a foreign language do not have the motivation of learning a language out of curiosity or hope of future employment benefits. Instead, such students learn English due to the necessity to communicate and to function in a community that, in most cases, is as new to them as the language itself. It can be deduced from the above that EFL students or non-English speakers learn English as an integrative strategy to adapt to an English-speaking society. In this respect, their learning is intended and directed. Hence, learners learn English as an integrative strategy to fit into society and establish and maintain relationships whilst discovering new cultural concepts.

In addition, to distinguish English as a second language from English as a foreign language is need to look at language proficiency. There are significant differences between people speaking English as a second language and those using it as a foreign language. Chances are speakers of a language as a foreign language may also be highly professional in English, yet the language proficiency of the general public in that environment is markedly low. A considerable people number in may not be able to speak a word in English, whereas most ordinary people at all levels of education display varying degrees of bilingualism in which English is spoken as the second language.

English as a foreign language is studied in different nation-states, in Asia, South America, the Middle East, and North Africa (Moloji, 2009). In this regard, Brown (2007) contends that various nations, such as South Korea make concerted efforts to teach English to learners from the age of six who are in primary school. At an early age, the learners are being taught English language proficiency. The same approach is being used in Japan and China, where private and public institutions are striving to cater for the rapidly rising demand for English teaching for all ages. The pedagogy adopted in South Korea, Japan, and China is yet to be adopted in Libya, thus hindering progress in the learning of English.

In the Libyan education system, English teaching as a foreign language is challenging for lecturers and teachers. When it comes to the places where English serves a minimal purpose, it becomes more crucial to teach and learn. So, there is need to develop students' English professional capability, increase their knowledge of different academic disciplines, and prepare them to participate in the international community (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018). In this context, the

English language is considered an instrument rather than a subject. Lecturers have encountered great difficulty getting students to understand the teaching content of English as a foreign language. This is because EFL learners need conscious effort to acquire it, and exposure to the English language is very restricted. This is a different case of learning their first language, Arabic language, and how they learn it quickly due to their environment and the tremendous amount of exposure to their first language. Lastly, Brown (2007) states that any learning state can be meaningful if it refers to two things: learners who have a significant learning set and a task that is probably meaningful. The learners' understanding is strengthened when it is presented with a clear repertory of activities. In Libya, students need meaningful teaching and learning at university to overcome English learning challenges.

2.5 EFL Learners' language perceptions and proficiency

Existing literature suggests that only a limited number of study programmes for English language proficiency are available to Libyan students (Mohamed, 2014; Khalid, 2017). Scholars such as Abuklaish 2004; Mohamed, 2014; Morad & Sabeti, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Khalid, 2017; and Hossain, 2019, claim that both secondary and university EFL students are similarly faced with the problem of acquiring English language competence. Abuklaish (2004) explains that most students from a science faculty in Libya who were taught through the medium of English struggled to express themselves easily, whilst many others struggled with common and technical vocabulary. These difficulties faced by these students may be attributed to what Gadour's (2006) findings reveal that include the inability of students to adapt quickly to make the transition from secondary school to university; the dissimilarity between the secondary school pedagogy and that of the university; amongst a host of other factors.

In terms of students' perceptions, it can be understood that the actual value of learning English (i.e., study, work, effort) has recently been realised and recognised by students. Turki (2004) notes that secondary school learners realise that English as an international language is a pre-condition or a necessity for travelling abroad, or for understanding foreign media, or even to facilitate the use of technological devices and appliances. Similarly, Abuklaish (2004) found that science students at the undergraduate level demonstrated little concern in ESP courses, which he proposed

was associated with their unrelated content in terms of resources and genres. It might also be related to the use of traditional teaching approaches, which are established pedagogy in Middle Eastern countries (Abuklaish, 2014). Another reason might be the form of reverence within the classroom, where learners are used to being calm and respectfully attending to the teacher, as is the cultural expectation in an Islamic community (Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). Abuklaish added that there are no textbooks or teaching aids given to the EFL lecturers concerning course books and teaching methods. Most of the teaching materials are taken from other texts. However, Alhmali (2007) states that school learners were often interested in learning English at an early age, as they consider English as a key to their career development. Dabia (2012) concurs with Alhmali (2007) that such an optimistic view shows that trainee teachers were innovative in their reflection of their teaching internship programme at secondary schools in Libya, particularly when they work together and co-operatively, which might indicate that Libyan teachers are not all using traditional teaching methods. Libyan higher education still encounters some challenges generally. It is noted that the education system does not appear to provide the skills needed for the different fast-growing sectors of the economy, and the investment in this area does not follow a clear policy (Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015).

Therefore, the researcher agrees with the writers mentioned above. Still, one can claim that such unfavourable opinions of lecturers and students regarding language proficiency in Libya may be adjusted progressively with options for re-adjusting teaching. As a consequence of the massive development and improvement in the approach to education, several students were sent to study abroad in English-speaking countries, and the researcher was one of them. There is a lack of expertise in this field, evidenced by a shortage of English language lecturers and teachers. Most English language lecturers who teach at Libyan universities have a master's in the English Language, and few have a PhD. This prompts the need for the present study to investigate the EFL students' perceptions of their challenges in English language learning in great depth.

The later portion (Chapter 5) of this study deals in greater depth on EFL learners' perceptions of the English Language and proficiency and in doing so the researcher correlates the data on this aspect which is drawn from mainstream literature with the views of the research participants.

2.6 EFL teachers' experiences and perceptions of their learners

Empirical studies have shown that teachers have particular views and experiences concerning how learners learn (Moloi, 2009; Morad & Sabeti, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Kouár, 2016) as teachers have a vital role in planning their learners' language acquisition. Teachers also have an essential role to play in their students' academic achievement, and the quality of their intervention can have a significant impact on students' results (Morad & Sabeti, 2014). Mohan (2001) concurs with Moloi (2009) that teachers have a central role to play in how their learners practice and learn a foreign language. Moloi (2009) further clarifies that what occurs in a foreign language classroom setting is normally the effect of a person's educational and social skills. Therefore, to understand the current social relations in teaching and learning, it is essential to have a good understanding of teachers' perceptions about their learners.

In addition, Davidson (2001) argues that it is imperative for teachers to be cognisant of their learners' challenges, and that they should learn how to address these challenges; whilst learning how to deal with linguistic diversity in their (foreign) classrooms. Thus, this will require specific training for teachers to cope with such circumstances (Davidson, 2001).

Furthermore, Davidson (2001) outlines reasons why teachers' experiences and perceptions of their learners are vital:

- A good understanding of learners' abilities and issues should enable the teacher to provide the needed assistance to the learner;
- To improve teaching methods that take into understanding the different cultural experiences and learners' backgrounds in the EFL classes;
- To develop cooperative working associations between subject teachers or classroom English teachers as a foreign language in schools.

The teachers have an influential role in their learners' foreign language acquisition. Such teachers should have a complete understanding and knowledge of the target language to make sure that their students acquire the language efficiently (Davidson, 2001; Morad & Sabeti, 2014; Kouár, 2016). Magno (2009) suggests that EFL teachers need to know how language is acquired, including strong beliefs about EFL learning, improving approaches towards the learning-teaching

method, and EFL teachers should have the strength, expertise, and skills to deal with emerging issues in the course. Othman & Aljuhaish (2021) added that the professional identities that teachers or lecturers allow themselves and others are essential to the materials they teach and their relations with their students (Othman & Aljuhaish, 2021). This implies that lecturers' identities are relevant in their decision-making about their role and how they prepare their teaching approaches. Lecturers' identities have also been demonstrated to substantially impact their development and performance (Yazan, 2019). Realizing how English language teachers construct professional identity is important because how they perceive themselves as specialists influences their pedagogical decisions and classroom practice.

Additionally, it is essential to look at how teachers develop or realise their perceptions. Moloji (2009) points out that considering teachers' experiences is necessary to influence practice. In the same vein, Johnson (1994, p. 444) cited in Moloji (2009, p. 86) found that teachers' opinions derived from:

Their experiences of formal language education, from their experience of informal language education, from themselves as language teachers, and also from the teacher preparation programme.

Investigating teachers' perceptions and assimilating these ideas into their classroom activities will then provide an in-depth consideration of why and when students act in a specific way. It is even essential in enhancing teachers' professional development and classroom practices. Therefore, the current study investigates in depth the EFL lecturers' perceptions of learners' challenges in English learning.

2.7 The educational context in Libya

This section describes the Libyan educational context in terms of the relevant history of formal education in Libya and the use of English in the higher education system. Due to the impact of the Arab spring on the Libyan educational sector, pertinent discussions are also provided in this regard (Libyan Revolution, 2011).

2.7.1. The historical context of Libyan education

According to Clark (2004), Mohamed, (2014), Abuklaish (2014), Youssef & Bose (2015), and Khalid (2017), Libya was one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of funding in the 1950s. There was only a small number in the population who were literate and well-educated. However, with the discovery of oil in 1963, this brought about investments and funding for the educational sector alongside other sectors (Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Khalid, 2017). Prior to 1960, a lack of funds prevented the Libyan government from providing adequate schooling for the populace. With the advent of oil revenue, Libya gradually metamorphosed from a poor state into a wealthy one. Thereafter, the Libyan government invested enormously in infrastructure. A sizeable amount was budgeted for the educational sector, and the construction of several schools materialised. By the end of 1969, school education was compulsory and most significantly, most Libyans had access to schooling for the first time (Clark, 2004; Mohamed, 2014). These new regulations and educational strategies have led to dramatic growth and a rise in the number of literate people (from 25 percent in 1951 to 83 percent in 2016). There are nearly 1.6 million school pupils in Libya (Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; and Khalid, 2017).

The objective of education in Libya can be summarised as follows (The General Peoples' Education Committees, 2016, p. 4-5):

- Assisting learners to achieve the accurate use of the Arabic language in all areas with interest in foreign languages to connect with the world;
 - Improving students' common understanding of nationwide identity and promoting their pride in belonging to an Arab nation;
 - Providing educational opportunities relevant to learners' potentials and interests;
 - Ascertaining the needs of the society in order to achieve sustainable human development;
 - Enabling students to obtain rational skills and to develop their thinking capabilities whilst also equipping them with science and technical development for a contemporary world;
- and

- Achieving a sense of balance between theoretical information and its practical application and organising connections and combinations between diverse fields of knowledge.

Libya has experienced various stages of development in its higher educational system. The first step was the launching of the first university in the city of Benghazi in 1955, named as the Faculty of Arts. Other faculties have been established through the period of 1962 to 1965. Faculties of sciences, agriculture, economics, and commerce as well as engineering, were also established in both central cities of Tripoli and Benghazi (Ministry of Education, 1974; Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). Moreover, other universities were launched in diverse parts of the country. Thus, higher education was spread across different regions of Libya, and it was not only established in the two major cities. By 1990, there were 14 universities around the country with a total of 91 faculties. In addition, more than 52 higher technical institutions have been established. Furthermore, in 2003 and 2004, an amendment was made to the higher education policy. This included the provision of seven main universities, three universities of a special nature, and 15 departmental universities. They were dispersed among the country's governmental regions.

Similar to other countries, there are three classifications of higher education institutions in Libya. Such a type of education manifests itself in a tertiary system that consists of three phases. The university offers three types of qualifications: Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, and PhDs (El-Hawat, 2009; Youssef & Bose, 2015). There are twelve universities in Libya; these universities are scattered across the country. In addition, Libyan higher education is not confined to public universities, as the country also has emerging private universities (Clark, 2004; Mohamed, 2014). Moreover, until recently, there was a focus on technological education; consequently, six technical faculties offer other degrees, particularly in proficient study areas. Additionally, there are ninety higher vocational institutions across the country; these institutions offer programmes in several vocational specialities. The graduates from these institutions are awarded higher technical diplomas (National Foundation for Technical and Vocational Education, 2017). In 2010\ 2018, more than 340 00 students were officially registered at both public and private Libyan universities. More than eighty-seven per cent of them were registered in a public university (Clark, 2004; El-Hawat, 2009; Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Khalid, 2017). This is an extraordinary and fast development attributable to a preparedness to make a serious investment in education.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the numbers of students that registered in the higher education institutions had increased and the size of schools were not big enough to satisfy these demands (Mohamed, 2014). Therefore, the higher education ministry took a decision to send a number of undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines to achieve their education abroad (El-Hawat, 2009; Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017). This overseas study privilege commenced in 1978 and it was only afforded to scholars in higher education who scored above 90 percent in their courses. These scholarships helped grow and improve the higher education in Libya. As a result, well-educated learners and scholars began taking up roles in the country's institution of higher education, which resulted in the provision of highly qualified undergraduate and graduate students (Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015).

2.7.2. Training programmes and teaching English in Libya

Training is a central element in the improvement of the implementation of the targeted employees and in human development (Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014). In the educational scheme, the lecturers or teachers are the central leaders in the teaching process, so they cannot improve their learners and communities without training. One of the issues that confront the method of teaching English in Libya is that elderly teachers require certain qualifying training sessions to revitalise their experiences whilst giving them the capacity to teach the new textbooks (Al-Hussein, 2014; Khalid, 2017). Thus, it should be an intense training programme that teachers should attend; teachers must be encouraged to attend the training programmes. For new graduates, they can have a specific programme to show them the more modern techniques for English teaching (Khalid, 2017). Due to the shortage of the quantity of teachers of various courses for all school phases, several training institutes were established in 1991 (Al-Hussein, 2014), which are supposed to teach graduating students how they could be effective teachers, in different specialisations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supplied a great deal of assistance and support to Libya between 1960 and 1970 to institute different educational systems, including founding higher teacher training institutions (Al-Hussein, 2014).

Considering that teachers are singularly the most important elements in education (Al-Hussein, 2014), the Libyan education ministry paid awareness to the teacher by preparing and harnessing

their knowledge and skills. This was essential as a means of keeping teachers up to the global standards in their respective areas of teaching, whilst adopting contemporary pedagogy (Mohamed, 2014; Al-Hussein, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). To achieve this, a specialised centre was founded for this purpose under the name The General Centre for Teacher Training (2006).

This Centre for Teacher Training, together with the Ministry of Education in Libya, outlines a specific route it intends to take in advancing the quality of education while improving the performance of all teachers through a set of training programmes. These are outlined on its website as follows (Al-Hussein, 2014):

- Changing and varying the routes of the teachers to be qualified teachers;
- Developing and improving the education system quality;
- Promoting the performance of the employees in the education sector;
- Considering the deficiency in the performance of workers in the education field; and
- Equipping teachers with the usage of recent technologies in the telecommunication field.

The first phase of training for English teachers lasted between 1960 and 1970 (Al-Hussein, 2014; Khalid, 2017). However, there were not enough training courses prepared by the Education Ministry in 1960. Hence, the training support received from the UNESCO as well as the British Council was significantly useful (Al-Hussein, 2014). In 2007, a tailor-made training course was prepared for English teachers; however, the teachers were not actually aware of the benefits of training. In general, it was not considered vital to participate in this training. The scheduling of the courses, four times during the vacation period, was not appropriate for the teachers as they mostly considered it as a holiday season. The primary agenda of this training course was to equip the teachers and up skill them in their teaching endeavours (Youssef & Bose, 2015; Khalid, 2017).

The Educational Reviewing Centre has not prepared any training courses for English teachers in 2013. For improving the teachers' performance among 18432 trainees, only 41 were English teachers. Could this training qualify all the Libyan English teachers at a level of linguistic competence? How will this number improve and develop the processes of English teaching in schools and universities? It is essential to arrange a programmed practical training that covers the majority of the teachers in very short periods, of not more than two years (Al-Hussein, 2014;

Khalid, 2017). Who assesses the outcomes of the training courses of the trainers? Who supervises the selected teachers in their institutes when they teach their learners? The Educational Reviewing Office in the Education Ministry mainly evaluates and follows up on the educational process at schools, the achievement of the learners, and the teachers' performance in the class. The supervisors have well regulated visits to schools, and they observe the learners and teachers. They make their own endorsements of the process of review (Mohamed, 2014).

The Educational Reviewing Office has its own centre for training to promote the competence of the teachers. The researcher is of the view that, through the establishment of regular, local, and global training sessions, teachers could possibly be capacitated and thus impact learners positively. Teachers should also have local conferences and training workshops where resources are published and distributed. Through interaction with conference attendees from other countries, these teachers are able to learn one or two aspects relevant to their teaching careers. Unfortunately, with the emergence of the Arab spring, every form of training was put on hold. The next section further provides insight into the effect of the Arab Spring on Libyan higher education.

2.7.3. The impact of Arab Spring (Libyan Revolution 2011) on the Libyan higher education

Within this subsection, readers are provided with some insights into the effects of the Arab spring with particular reference to Libya. The focus is further narrowed to the effect this revolt (Arab Spring) had on the Libyan educational sector.

According to Anderson (2011), the Libyan conflict was initiated in Benghazi city on the 15th of February 2011. What started in a neighbouring country was soon manifested across the whole of Libya. In the beginning, the protests were quiet, and the people were asking for political reform. Unfortunately, the current government at the time killed unarmed civilian protesters. This generated protests which developed into armed conflict with Gaddafi's government. (Prashad, 2012; Mohamed, 2014). After eight months of the revolution, Gaddafi was killed in his defence of Sirt city on the 20th of October 2011. After these occasions, the National Transitional Council announced the liberation of Libya and officially terminated the civil conflict on the 23rd of October 2011. It is important to note that the external military intervention in the Libyan uprising protected

citizens as permitted by the United Nations Security Council Resolution of 1973 (Prashad, 2012; Mohamed, 2014; and Khalid, 2017).

As a result of the Arab Libyan Spring, the scholarships programmes were deferred. All 12,000 Libyan students studying overseas were seriously affected by the conflict, due to the interruption in funding (Mohamed, 2014). Moreover, all local universities were closed, and some were modified to war-related activities or even munitions storage (Prashad, 2012). University students were forced to join the war, and hundreds of them died. However, after the civil war ended, several universities and schools reopened. Nevertheless, the infrastructure of the universities and the schools were affected, and several buildings were damaged (Prashad, 2012; Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017).

Therefore, it is clear how education has been affected by the 2011 revolution. Two years after this unrest, there was still no schooling (Mohamed, 2014). It was near impossible to reopen schools as infrastructure was seriously damaged; there was loss of life, all these to the detriment of a stable education environment (Youssef & Bose, 2015).

2.7.4. Using the English language in the Libyan educational system

Since 1954, the English language has been used as a medium of instruction for learners from age 10. This approach was used till they completed their secondary school education (Al-Hussein, 2014; Mohamed, 2014). However, by 1973, learners were only introduced to English at the age of 13. By 1985, the Libyan government felt the decision to introduce English only at the age 13 amongst learners was a setback, as this impacted negatively on the Libyan educational sector. Thereafter, the Gaddafi regime decided to stop the use of English in the educational sector as well as other sectors. This was contrary to most other regions of the world, where English was predominantly used in their respective educational sectors (Alterman, 2006; Mohamed, 2014; Al-Hussein, 2014; Aljoundi, 2015). This decision was made compulsory and applied to all of Libyan schools and universities. Gaddafi's decision continued for more than 10 years. The decision was related to Gaddafi's political differences with the West and with America (Alterman, 2006; Khalid, 2017). The main cause behind this decision was Gaddafi's sour relations with countries in Europe sympathetic to the West. Libya was accused of the bombing of Le Belle discotheque in West

Berlin, West Germany in 1986. This led to the death of a number of people, including American soldiers. A few days after the attack, the American government reacted by bombing Muammar Gaddafi's house in Tripoli (Alterman, 2006; Mohamed, 2014; Khalid, 2017).

It has been assumed that the generation that studied during the 10 years' prohibition of English teaching suffered a lot in terms of academic improvement. One of the predominant setbacks was that Libyan scholars were unable to comprehend some of the latest scientific achievements (Simons, 2003; Mohamed, 2014; Alterman, 2006). The ban created a massive communication gap, since learners were denied the opportunity to learn the language that is so crucial in global interaction. Some academics refer to this issue as the most painful period in the history of the Libyan educational sector (Simons, 2003; Alterman, 2006; Khalid, 2017). The negative influence of this ban is still observable in several aspects of the Libyan educational system up 'till now and it needs to be addressed very seriously (Simons, 2003; Khalid, 2017).

In this respect, some scholars have studied the effect of the current socio-political transformation in Libya on the students' learning of English (Mahjobi, 2007; Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). Mahjobi (2007) argued that despite the observation that Libya had experienced an important socio-cultural and political change which resulted in bringing Libya closer to the world, Libyan learners of English do not seem mainly to be motivated by the cultural features, such as English movies and music. The researcher expected that such an absence of motivation was affected by the students' low English language level. Learners' low level of English is an obstacle that prevents them from interacting with the world, which implies that learners stay closer to their own beliefs and traditions. For Mahjobi (2007), English learning and teaching must be maintained away from any governmental foreign policies. The non-governmental interference in the use of the English language is a widely accepted view as the banning of English, as once advocated during the Gaddafi regime, adversely impacted the Libyan educational sector (Embark, 2011).

Nevertheless, Mohamed (2014) asserts, that the adoption of English as a second language in Libya has widely been accepted by some in the populace, whilst the relations between the United States of America, and that of the United Kingdom with Libya has also improved. The Libyan administration realised its significance by reinstating English teaching into the school curriculum. Moreover, due to development in other sectors like tourism, the request for English language graduate speakers has risen. In recognition of this, the Libyan Committee for Higher Education

revised its policy concerning teaching the English language and presented a new curriculum for the English language for elementary and intermediate education. At present, the educational approach in Libya offers orientation to the English language by proposing English language classes in schools from grade three (primary school learners at age nine years) to the university phase (Al-Hussein, 2014; Mohamed, 2014).

At the same time, as stated by the General Peoples' Committees of Education 2016, the quality of teaching English has experienced two main issues. Firstly, the deficiency of the education and teaching approaches and techniques, is due to the teacher's weakness and his or her educational qualifications. According to the report, this has resulted in unqualified teachers teaching foreign languages. More so, in many of the cases, the Libyan schools rely on non-Libyan teachers coming mainly from Arabic countries or Asian countries who are at times also not qualified to teach English.

The second issue is related to the growth in pedagogical methods and techniques, to which the Libyan teacher has limited access. The teachers still depend on traditional techniques and methods, which rely on memorisation and recitation, learning by rote rather than by reason (Alhmali, 2007; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Khalid, 2017). Moreover, he indicates that teachers obtain no training to develop and enhance their teaching abilities or skills. Where development programmes have been presented, these manage to take place without carrying out evaluation field studies or without using assessment standards. The strategies are used without evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the context in which they are employed (Khalid, 2017).

The other related issue worth revealing in this respect, is that the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education started to end the scholarships programme to the Western universities. This step was reinforced in Libya at the time when a number of the students who got back from the scholarship programmes joined the opposition movements against the sitting government at the times (Al-Hussein, 2014; El-Hawat, 2009; Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017). During such time, there were no scholarships being granted to students. The end of the scholarship programmes made it challenging for the Libyan universities to progress. However, a few students had access to educational scholarships and those who had access to such scholarships were those whose parents or relatives were loyal to Gaddafi.

With this background, the standard of higher education in Libya was hindered or even diminished. The scholarships programme was terminated in 2008 when the second son of the former president Gaddafi, Saif Al aslam, was educated at the London School of Economics and was then awarded a PhD in 2008. Alongside Saif Al Aslam, an estimated 5,800 fellow Libyan students were granted scholarships to study overseas. According to the Libyan higher education ministry, around 12,000 Libyan students enrolled for a Masters or Doctoral programme overseas in 2009 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009). With the scholarship programme, most of the scholars who left the shores of Libya were often able to communicate better in the English language as compared to those who did not have the same opportunity. Hence, there is still a need to capacitate English teachers in Libya. The next subsection provides a discussion on this issue.

2.7.5. English language teaching at Libyan Universities

The first university was launched in the city of Benghazi in 1955, named the Faculty of Arts. Other faculties have been established through the period of 1962 to 1965, were also established in both central cities of Tripoli and Benghazi (Ministry of Education, 1974; Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). By 1990, there were 14 universities around the country with a total of 91 faculties across different regions of Libya (Abuklaish, 2014). Most universities consist of seventeen faculties, providing most of the facilities that lecturers, staff, and students need, such as libraries and laboratories for science departments (Al-Hussein, 2014). However, two important resources that are not available are computers and internet access. Computers, for instance, are only provided to computer science students or staff, and internet access can only be found in some faculties (Mohsen, 2015).

There is barely any information online or elsewhere on the teaching of the English language at some of the Libyan Universities (Mohsen, 2015; Al-Hussein, 2014). This scarcity of information emphasises the relevance of this study. Thus, English is the medium of instruction in some disciplines, such as medicine, but it is not used for general communication (Abuklaish, 2014). English is taught as EGP (English for General Purposes) rather than as ESP (English-specific purposes) and it is considered as a supplementary subject or module (Mohamed, 2014; Al-Hussein, 2014). The university provides such courses for some faculties, such as medicine, to provide students with strategies needed to meet their medical courses' requirements (Al- Hussein, 2014).

On the other hand, it does not provide these courses to other faculties such as the English department; however, most departments need these courses to improve the students' learning ability of English language skills (Al- Hussein, 2014).

Students are required to read some content-course materials in English in some faculties, such as law and education (Mohamed, 2014; Al- Hussein, 2014). However, the aims of the English courses have not been clarified in most institutions (Abuklaish, 2014). Mahjobi (2007) indicated that there is also an absence of appropriately qualified experts to develop these courses, and many significant challenges have arisen which have held back the process of developing educational approaches in the classroom or teaching materials that suit students' needs (Mohsen, 2015).

Concerning textbooks and teaching methods, there are no textbooks, and no teaching suggestions that are given to the EFL lecturers (Mohamed, 2014; Khalid, 2017). Khalid, 2017 stated that most of the teaching materials are adopted from other texts and are grammar and reading comprehension focused. Lecturers have the right to choose and to adapt the material to suit their students. Two textbooks entitled *English for law* and *English for science* were published for law and science students in the late 1990s, but these are no longer used because they were not appropriately designed (Abuklaish, 2014; Khalid, 2017).

The English department is supposedly meant to be in charge of all English courses at the university level, but few specialists are available in this field because of the shortage of English language lecturers in general (Mohsen, 2015). Most English language lecturers who teach at Libyan universities are Libyan and hold a master's degree in the English Language of (Applied Linguistics, Translation or Literature), and a few hold a PhD (Mohamed, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). In my opinion, teaching English should be provided with programmes developed according to international quality standards and academic accreditation, and to develop curricula based on a set of quality criteria.

2.7.5.1. English language proficiency and assessment at Libyan Universities

Assessment has been a critical element to rate the students' knowledge in the teaching and learning process, it describes students' understanding of specific subject material (Nalliveettil, 2014,

Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). Constructive feedback on students' progress and performance must be developed in all assessment activities (Nalliveettil, 2014). The language learning abilities of students improve when students receive appropriate and focused feedback continuously (Khalid, 2017). In EFL undergraduate programs, graded evaluation activities are scheduled at the end of learning experiences (Mohamed, 2014). Teachers usually find it hard to follow a specific rubric in communicative language teaching classrooms due to students' skills variations (Nalliveettil, 2014). Oftentimes, tasks and exercises given in the course books do not specify any model for assessment.

English teachers in EFL classrooms should use communicative activities to refine the receptive and affluent skills of the students through the effective use of constructive feedback (Al-Hussein, 2014; Mohsen, 2015). Nalliveettil (2014) asserts that these feedback sessions should highlight gaps in students' learning progress and performance. Nevertheless, EFL lecturers rarely use specific rubrics during communicative activities because they may focus less on the students' language expressions (Nalliveettil, 2014). Since the assessment is compulsory from students' undergraduate level, English lecturers assume that students are well aware of the pre-requirements of a classroom test. It is the responsibility of the lecturers to inform the students about the elements of the assessment and make them understand why an assessment is done in a particular way (Nalliveettil, 2014; Abuklaish, 2014). This is important because college students might have encountered different assessment processes during their schooling. The entry-level undergraduate education assessments should inform the students of a test outcome's educational content and effects (Abuklaish, 2014).

The awareness of learner responsibilities during assessment activities motivates EFL students to participate actively in an unsafe environment (Nalliveettil, 2014, Abuklaish,2014). Nalliveettil, (2014) asserts that the complicated nature of communicative tasks and activities makes it difficult for the lecturers to pre-arrange a specific assessment criterion for a communicative language teaching classroom. However, a particular standard of assessment can be useful to recognise students' progress and provide resourceful feedback about their level of competence (Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015; Nalliveettil, 2014). Students' feedback from mid-term exams must clarify their strengths and weaknesses and the areas where they should improve; several outcomes have to be evaluated by a language instructor (Khalid, 2017). It may take longer, and the learners

feel depressed and stressed. Using a combination of assessment methods may result in a different learning experience.

While the students change the period to undergraduate education, these students should be required to master minimum proficiency to understand, read, write, and speak English words and sentence structures (Mohamed, 2014; Youssef & Bose, 2015). As mentioned before, language exercises in English course books designated at the entry-level of undergraduate education are based on communicative language teaching. At the undergraduate level, course books are prescribed to give the lecturers and students directions to organise the learning environment. The content in the English textbooks is integrated with a wide variety of communicative activities to provide language input to the learners (Nalliveettil, 2014). The exercises given in the English textbook is designed to provide language exposure to university students. Nevertheless, these activities require students to have essential knowledge in word recognition skills, basic vocabulary, construct of English phrases and simple sentences (Nalliveettil, 2014). Khalid (2017) indicated that beginner EFL lecturers encounter challenges in facilitating the teaching-learning process due to unfamiliar classroom situations.

From my perception as a lecturer at a Libyan University, there is no apparent specific assessment criterion to follow in the English department. In other words, there is no criterion or model to prepare the assessment questions for every course; it is only about how many exams should be conducted in a term. It is two exams (mid and final exam per term). However, other departments and specializations such as sciences and social sciences have a clear plan for their assessment task for the entire term.

2.8 Teaching Methods and practices in EFL Education at international universities

Different universities use and practice different teaching methodologies in EFL that are practical and effective teaching approaches (Durán & García, 2021). As some studies deal with teaching methodologies and practices in the EFL field, including substantial teaching factors and error correction approaches. In Colombia, Durán & García (2021) have found that in some universities,

English language teaching is dominated by some methodologies which are focused mainly on grammar instruction. Except for Universidad Del Valle, the EFL teaching methodology was based on cooperative learning and the communicative approach. Moreover, Bastidas (2017) reviewed the methods and the approaches in EFL teaching history in Colombia, and he found that the methodologies have been primarily textbook oriented. Likewise, in China and India, Wang (2009) and Radić-Bojanić & Topalov (2016) revealed that textbooks are still being used as the main teaching material by EFL lecturers. Whereas Jr & Nunez (2020) declared that instrumental motivation was more common among English language learners at quality Leadership University, Panama. Albeit learning about new cultures has been the driving force with which students approach language learning, Panama students are not the exceptions. Hence, we can conclude that instrumental motivation has been recognised as a significant factor by students surveyed and interested in specific language learning for career advancement. In contrast, integrative motivation is associated with more general EFL language acquisition to benefit cultural integration.

In Asia, Nguyen, Warren, & Fehring (2014) affirmed that grammar-based instruction, boring teaching styles, and the lack of time for practising the English language hindered university students' learning processes. A study conducted in Ecuador by Anwar (2017) concluded that teachers' lack of training and overuse of the mother language hindered the learning processes. Two similar factors were corroborated in the Libyan university context by Khalid (2017), who revealed that grammar-focused instruction and untrained lecturers hindered EFL learners' English learning processes. Fereidoni, Baniadam, & Tadayyon (2018) asserted that in the view of Iranian universities' preference for the grammar-translation method and course books with grammar content. Likewise, Chien (2014) revealed that the communicative language teaching and the grammar-translation method, and the collaborative learning approaches worked effectively for university students' improvement of the four language skills and grammatical knowledge.

Usma, Ortiz, & Gutiérrez (2018) assert that several universities in Colombia have commenced formulating and implementing new foreign language education policies for the academic programs. As Universidad de Antioquia, the second-largest public university in the country, accounts for forty-six thousand students at the undergraduate level and about four thousand in a post-graduate program. The new foreign language policy at this institution, established in 2014 and performed in 2017, needs all university programs to redesign their curricula and include four

English courses as part of the compulsory credits for all students. As revealed in the new change, students are supposed to be proficient at a B1 level according to the CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and use the foreign language at an intermediate level by completing these four courses Usma et al., (2018). The current regulation has thus entirely changed the current graduation demands for all new university students. This includes indigenous students for whom Spanish may be their second or third language and who have been excused from the English language requirement in the earlier policy.

However, Khalil & Semono-Eke (2020) states that the education system in the Saudi context is still in progress and has come across many challenges and obstacles in teaching English as a foreign language. These difficulties may occur from cultural differences, educational background, lack of experienced instructors or teaching materials, and, more particularly, inadequate or unsuitable teaching methods. One of the critical issues faced in this area is choosing and implementing a relevant instructional plan for teaching General English (EG) and English for Special Purposes (ESP) at the undergraduate level in Saudi Universities (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2020).

Inductive and deductive approaches form the foundation of well-recognized teaching methods (Mallia, 2014). Learners and local educators in Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan preferred more strategies, balancing inductive communicative language learning developed through scenarios applying a Western socio-cultural context with more deductive traditional methods and a more significant local socio-cultural context. Such as in Egypt, located within the Kachru's expanding circle of English (Kachuru, 1985), education and language providers such as Cairo University in Cairo support the use of inductive practices besides those having a deductive approach (Mallia, 2014).

A study conducted by Mallia (2014) on the EFL college students from South Sudan found that students predominantly preferred the deductive approach. However, insignificant differences between the inductive and deductive groups' performance were observed, apparently related to the base use of local cultural contextualization while teaching both groups. The study reveals a deductive approach with brief descriptions and supported by the systematic use of concrete, meaningful examples during the procedure, mainly when extracted from an overall local cultural context, which is thriving and relates to learners' expectations. Educators can therefore make

grammar to their comments deductively through rules and socially related examples. Nevertheless, tasks that help grammar-noticing and knowledge-raising inductively were usually shown to be as effective, and the inductive approach was used successfully if local contextualization was used. Importantly, lecturers, therefore, need not feel compelled to use a deductive approach.

In addition, lecturers of English are regularly made to proceed with the assumption that good working practices, such as using one teaching approach over another, are equally effective worldwide, despite variations in local socio-cultural factors and the resulting forms of learning (Mallia, 2014). For instance, in Indonesia, a model of grammar teaching through knowledge-promoting activities including the learners to know and understand the grammatical point in context. It was used without exploring students' needs and choices, and no comparison of results to more traditional approaches was made.

Therefore, Libyan universities have to devise policies to improve their students' English language. This action takes place in a complicated context where learning English has brought a series of personal, cultural, social, linguistic, and educational implications for EFL students in higher education at all Libyan universities. For example, it is well known that the English proficiency level in the country has been classified as one of the lowest in Arabic countries, while English language learning has been associated with students' socio-cultural levels and access to education (Khalid, 2017).

2.9 Teaching EFL learners in the classroom

EFL students are expected to achieve communicative competence in English. Hymes (1972, p. 277) asserts that communicative competence, such as a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. In short, a child acquires the ability to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. Communicative competence consists of four components namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence encompasses the knowledge of the lexical items and the rules of morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology of the language (Canale and Swain, 1980). It also includes the understanding of the language code such as how to form words or sentences and how to pronounce and spell these words (Canale, 1983). In the words of Alptekin (2002, p. 57), “grammatical or formal competence...refers to the Chomskyan concept of linguistic competence...it provides the linguistic basis for the rules of usage which normally result in accuracy in performance”. Sociolinguistic competence includes “knowledge of rules governing the production and interpretation of language in different sociolinguistic contexts, including control of rules of meaning (how a particular utterance is to be interpreted in a particular context) ... (which forms are appropriate in a given context)” (Bachman & Palmer, 1984, p. 36). In this respect, Tarone (1983, p. 123) defines sociolinguistic competence as “knowledge of pragmatic and speech act conventions of a language, of stylistic appropriateness, and of the uses of the language in establishing and maintaining social relations”. “Discourse competence concerns the selecting, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, sentences, and utterances to achieve a unified spoken or written text” (Celece-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 13). According to Bachman and Palmer (1984), discourse competence entails the knowledge of how to produce a coherent and cohesive text. In line with this, Canale (1983) highlights that the main concern of discourse competence is how to combine grammatical forms and meanings in order to accomplish a unified written or oral text. In this respect, Brown (2000, p. 247) states that “It is the ability we have to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form a meaningful whole out of utterances”. Lastly, strategic competence relates to the knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies (Canale, 1983). Therefore, EFL speakers of the English language need communication competence which will assist them to know how and when to communicate in the target language.

However, Tarone’s Typology of Communication Strategies (1977/1983) asserts some of the problems EFL students face are as follows:

- *Avoidance*, such as topic avoidance: the learner simply tries not to talk about concepts for which the TL item or structure is not known. Message abandonment: the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance.
- *Paraphrase*, such as a- approximation: use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features

in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g., pipe for water pipe). b- Word coinage: the learner makes up a new word to communicate the desired concept (e.g., “airball” for “balloon”). c- Circumlocution: the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language item or structure (She is, uh, smoking something. I don’t know what’s its name. that’s, uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of).

- *Conscious transfer*: a- Literal translation: the learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g., He invites him to drink, for they toast one another). b- Language switch: the learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate (e.g., balon for the balloon, tirtil for caterpillar).
- *Appeal for assistance*: the learner asks for the correct term (e.g., what is this? What called?).
- *Mime*: the learner uses non-verbal strategies in place of lexical item or action (e.g., clapping one’s hands to illustrate applause).

Alhmadi (2014) divided EFL learner demands into two main types. Objective needs relate to those exercises given out by the teacher to diagnose the student’s ability and language proficiency and to work with the student’s knowledge by providing the proper level of language instruction. Another type is subjective demands; these include the student’s wishes, desires, and expectations. In order for teachers to facilitate their work successfully in teaching reading to EFL learners they should follow three stages, namely (Al Fathali, 2006):

- a. The presentation stage: this is the stage where the teacher presents a new text in the EFL learners’ classroom by explaining the new words, and new grammatical structures and then reading the text. In this stage, the teacher plays the role of the informant. The teacher presents the new reading text in such a way that its meaning becomes clear to learners before they read it. The teachers must make sure that the whole class understands the text before going to the next stage.
- b. Practice stage: in this stage, the teacher asks the learners to read the text by themselves so as to practice it. The teacher will only play the role of conductor.

- c. Production stage: this is the stage where the teacher gives the learners the opportunity to work as much as possible on their own. For instance, by asking learners to answer questions about the text, making them guess the main idea of the text, making sure that everyone works productively by encouraging students, promoting text, focusing discussion, and providing ‘scaffolding’ to enable them to interpret the text themselves, rather than having to rely on the teacher. Alenizi (2019) states that there are four characteristics of classroom activity. First is the period limit, which anticipates the learners completing other language-related activities and reading. Second, the materials employed do not necessarily suit learners’ interests as the text may differ in terms of their difficulty. The third is that the learners are expected to read or write the selected text, but they also have to demonstrate their understanding of the text, and the fourth is that they are forced to work on the specified text. Reading or writing is an activity wherein the learner needs to understand, conclude, interpret and assess the text. Learners assume the meanings beyond the expression level and evaluate the overall message in the text, which needs them to combine all the components into a great picture.

According to Al-Jamal (2014) teachers or lecturers can manage the ability to improve their students through lessons that should include students in:

- Free discussions where different perspectives are evaluated;
- Facts-finding and evidence proofing;
- Active and effective challenging tasks;
- Suggesting thoughtful questions;
- Independent opinions;
- Designed and systematic approaches to situations;
- Self-exploration and understanding of one’s own beliefs;
- Innovative ways and analysis; and
- Effective use of technology (Al-Jamal, 2014, p. 128)

According to Gardner (2006), language attitude is an essential element because it plays a crucial role in language learning; it is considered both as input and output. Motivation is a crucial factor

in language learning (Alhmadi, 2014). This can be related to students' lack of motivation towards the English course. Gardner (2006) defined motivation as the sum of effort plus the wish to reach a language learning goal plus attitudes or the degree of interactive orientation. Moreover, it is formed by many different factors such as interest, curiosity, or a desire to achieve. Motivation is the standard used concept for describing the success or failure of a student. Also, motivation has been regarded as one of the main factors that influence foreign language learners' speed and amount of success. The concluding chapter of this study further provides insights on pedagogies teachers may use in EFL classes.

2.10 Previous studies on Arabic speaker's EFL challenges

Recently, and with the global English spread as a basic tool for communication, commerce, and worldwide interaction, more interest has been focused on the concerns, issues, and Arab learners' needs for English studying (Kassem, 2014). Studies on the EFL and ESL challenges in the learning of English constitute a wide ranging and growing trend in current international research. Previous works on EFL English learning in Arabic countries include Al-Johani (2009), Jdetawy (2011), Alam-Khan (2011), Alrashidi and Phan (2015), Farooq and Soomro (2018), Habbash's (2020), and Almutairi's (2021). Arab learners encounter many challenges when they learn English in both speaking and writing. The known issues confronted primarily by Arab learners in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan such as mistakes engaged concerned with articulation, morphology, understanding of the usage of syntax, spelling, and even most Arab learners have difficulty representing themselves skilfully either when encountered with academic subjects or communicating daily issues (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Alam -Khan, 2011).

For instance, the learners in Jordan, English learning in their home country, where the Arabic language is their native language. The only chance to learn English is through formal education which is inside the lecture hall where the English lecturers are native Arabic speakers (Kassem, 2014). Rajab, Darus, & Aladdin (2016) concur with Kassem (2014) that Arab learners face many problems when they write and speak in English, and one of the main challenges is their L1 (Arabic) interfering with the target language (English). Many reasons lead Arab students to make mistakes, and they argue that one of these reasons is the difference between Arabic and English rhetoric.

Alhabahba, Pandian, and Mahfoodh, (2016) have pointed out that there is a deficiency of national policies and criteria in English language teaching in Jordan. Another study conducted in Jordan by Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014) showed a low speaking proficiency level among EFL undergraduates and the most pronounced difficulties were communication in L1, lack of the time, and large classes. It was also observed that their compositions were littered with grammatical errors. Similar problems were also reported in Sudan, as most students enrolled in English classes usually commit serious syntactic errors in the English composition passages. It was noted that most learners were weak in the following areas: tenses, verb structure, and subject-verb agreement (Alam-Khan, 2011). Ibnian's (2017) explored the challenges that university students encounter when they compose. The sample comprised 82 English subjects from the World Islamic Sciences and Education University, Jordan. The findings showed that the students lack ideas, followed by incorrect writing mechanics, inappropriate teaching methods, lack of vocabulary, lack of materials for consulting, grammar challenges, and lack of teachers to assist.

In a Saudi Arabian context, the education system is still in progress and has come across many challenges and obstacles in teaching English as a foreign language. These difficulties may occur from cultural differences, educational background, lack of experienced instructors or teaching materials, and, more particularly, inadequate or unsuitable teaching methods (Khalil & Semono-Eke, 2020). Alanazi & Widin (2018) assert that the language of instruction in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, and all subjects are taught in the Arabic language in the secondary school class. Researchers have studied the first language use in the Saudi EFL classroom and its effect on English language acquisition concerning learner-teacher interaction. The research reveals that Arabic in the English language teaching is regular in Saudi Arabia, and both teachers and learners have a positive perception of the use of the first language. However, the use of the native language is not always strategic or organized in the classroom. Ebrahim and Afzal (2015) indicated that there are issues and challenges that must be addressed in EFL lectures in Saudi Arabia. Saudi English classes comprise only Saudi students whose initial language is Arabic. Those students often speak Arabic inside the classroom and do not speak to their teacher, who is a native speaker of English. Since Saudis communicate in their native language at home and during their interaction with their peers, friends, and classmates, there is no opportunity to learn English through daily interaction (Ebrahim & Afzal, 2015; Alam Khan, 2011). Ishtiaq, Ali & Salem (2017) indicated

that in Saudi Arabia, EFL teachers mainly apply traditional teaching methods. Grammar translation is the most commonly utilised method in Saudi Arabia. Teachers translate some readings into students' native language, Arabic and write some words on the boards. They added that the students are required to follow them and memorise their meanings. They presume that their learners will acquire new words independently, without much direction or explicit instruction.

Ababneh (2017) examined specific EFL writing challenges faced by 51 female Saudi students at Tabuk University. They face many challenges and writing errors that were divided into four categories: grammatical, syntactic, substance, and lexical types. The most prevalent types of mistakes were in the categories of grammar (tenses, articles, singular, and plural), syntax (subject-verb agreement), and substance (spelling). Also, Habbash's (2020) study aimed to explore the challenges that English as Foreign Language teachers at the University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, are assumed to confront in employing Computer Assisted Language Learning as an integral constituent in their classroom teaching methodology and its effect on the learners' performance in English. He found that using Computer Assisted Language Learning in their classroom has a significant effect on the students' English learning to improve EFL learning. They find it more accessible and smoother to interact with the computer in practising English speaking and listening. Farooq and Soomro (2018) have a different view that Saudi Arabian teachers are aware of technology, but they do not blend it at the planning and preparation level of teaching. However, Nalliveettil (2014) believed that English is introduced from the first level in some Saudi undergraduate classrooms to enable. Learners should have minimum proficiency in reading, understanding, speaking, and writing high-frequency English words.

Comprehension reading is challenging for some students; Qrquez & Ab Rashid (2017) conducted a study on comprehension strategies and common challenges in reading faced by Arab EFL learners at Najran University in Saudi Arabia. The study intended to find the reasons behind the university students' low-level performance in reading comprehension. A study was carried out through the lecturers' questionnaire, and students were observed during some reading sessions. The findings show that students face spelling and pronunciation problems to a great extent. They added different challenges in English teaching, such as students' inadequate knowledge and lack of suitable

learning materials. They recommended active participation from policymakers, curriculum designers, textbooks writers, lecturers, and students to address the challenges.

Alhmadi (2014, p.46) pointed out the different factors that represent barriers to learning within the Saudi context: “The barriers are some of those that are very influential, social, cultural, parental, attitudinal, motivational, psychological, personal, and pedagogical factors. Pedagogical factors, in particular, include teachers, action research, teaching strategies, teaching resources, and administration”. Such essential factors can be noticeable and contribute to students’ worsening capacity for language learning skills. She asserts that such factors become combined with students’ perspectives on learning and that the language practitioner should cooperate with other consultative departments in the educational institution to solve such difficulties. Alanazi & Widin (2018) observed that English language teaching and learning face different challenges in Saudi Arabia. The EFL learners have low communicative ability or spoken skills due to many conditions, including low motivation, a focus on exams based on the curriculum, lack of integration of modern teaching tools or technology, use of traditional classroom teaching methods, and unqualified, untrained English language teachers. Also, they added that learners graduate from high school without carrying out even a short conversation in English. Besides this, the social and cultural obstacles to effective language learning and teaching, particularly concerning the interaction between teachers and students, hinder learners’ dialogic skills.

Moreover, Abu Rass’s (2015) study sought to explore the challenges encountered by Palestinian Arab learners from Israel who are the majority in English teaching as a Foreign Language (EFL) in constructing well-written essays in English. Learners usually change the stylistic elements of their native language (Arabic) to the target language (English). For instance, they would write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions and replicate themselves, arguing through a presentation and elaboration. Also, they frequently write about the topic and recite expressions before stating the primary issues (Abu Rass, 2015). The United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation, (UNESCO), advocates for the use of a Mother Tongue for as long a time as possible in classrooms across the world (UNESCO 2000, 2014).

In another recent study in Oman, Atashian and Al-Bahri (2018) investigated the grammatical errors in the academic writing that the Omani students of Nizwa University. They gathered data from 200 Bachelor of the Arts students studying, who studied English at the University of Nizwa commit in Oman. They asked them to compose argumentative essays. They form a frequency table to list the grammatical errors and the number of times the mistake was observed. Atashian and Al-Bahri (2018) found three grammatical errors made by participants: tenses, adverbs, and pronouns, students' most frequent errors, subject and verb agreement, misplaced apostrophes, passive voice, and punctuation. In Kuwait, Almutairi's (2021) investigated the possible causes and possible solutions of the massive underachievement in speaking skills among Kuwaiti EFL students at the College of Basic Education (CBE). His findings indicated that the majority of students perceived their speaking skills as weak. Their responses exposed many factors that hinder in development of their speaking skills. The most obvious ones were lack of motivation, speaking skills, EFL syllabus design, and the inadequacy of technology in ELT (English language teaching), including language laboratories and aural aids.

According to Almutairi's (2021) recommendations of this study, their challenges could be overcome by four primary solutions:

1. Applying spoken English in the EFL syllabus.
2. Including spoken English assessment in the coursework and providing a suitable environment to motivate EFL students to use their target language and support them to improve it.
3. The study suggests that EFL teachers join special training courses in the Professional Development Center to learn how to use technology in ELT, including language laboratories.
4. The researcher concludes his recommendations by allowing the administration of the College of Basic Education to provide advanced language labs for the Language Center.

As can be noted from the discussion above; the EFL challenges in the learning of English have been mostly studied with reference to Arab learners in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Palestine. Such a line of research has relatively been unexplored in Libya; hence the focus of this

study was directed at Arab speaking learners of English in Libya. As Khalid (2017) argues that the literature on EFL difficulties in learning of English language in developing countries such as Libya is very limited. Moreover, the study aims to explore the Libyan learners' challenges in the learning of English at first year university and their strategies to overcome these challenges.

Previous works on EFL English learning in Libya such as that of Youssef & Bose (2015) investigated Libyan students' motivation and attitude toward learning English as a foreign language in High School. They suggest that it would be helpful for Libyan teachers to develop their teaching methods to improve their students' English learning ability. This study should also help Libyan teachers to understand their students' motivation and attitude better and to find an appropriate way of teaching English. Another study conducted by Hamed (2018) investigates the most common types of linguistic errors in the compositions written by forty Libyan students at the pre-intermediate level in the Language Centre at Omar EL-Mukhtar University, EL-Beida, Libya. His findings revealed that substance errors were the highest number of errors, followed by grammatical errors, syntactic errors, and lexical errors. The results also showed that spelling, capitalisation, tenses, punctuation, articles, varied words, subject-verb agreement, and prepositions were the most common linguistic errors in the learners' writings. These mistakes could be due to over generalisation in the target language, emerging from ignorance of rule restriction and inadequate application of rules, and the effect of their first language (Arabic) negative transfer.

Rajab et al., (2016) concur with Hamed (2018) that the unawareness of the difference between Arabic and English in terms of linguistic system makes learning writing and speaking skills more difficult in Libya. This lack of awareness of Arabic and English characteristics and features are likely to confuse the EFL Libyan students, leading them to fall back on their L1 to imitate some of its features and structures and employ them in L2 writing. Khalid (2017) investigates learning and teaching in English and the impact of culture on teaching and learning within Libyan society. He stated that according to the learners' responses and the lecturers in his study, learners often have limited English knowledge or skills before they enter the university. Therefore, there is a need to consider this when educating students in English at this level.

2.11 Previous Studies on EFL challenges abroad

Studies on EFL challenges in English learning have been undertaken in other contexts in Africa and beyond (Makino, 1980; Sajavaara, 1981; Pavesi, 1986; Fathman, 1978; Ellis, 1989), and several modern studies such as those (Solak & Bayar, 2015; Hashmi, 2016; Akbari, 2016, Seefa, 2017; Vyomakesisri, 2017; Uddin, 2017; Hossain, 2019; Sheerah, 2020; Elverici, 2020; Muhamad & Rahmat, 2020; Aslıtürk & Ekşioğlu' 2020; and Durán & García, 2021) also mention that various researchers have studied the challenges faced by learners while learning English in different perspectives and among different age groups. Makino (1980) in his study used a picture stimulus to explore EFL challenges in a Japanese high school (grades 8-9). He found that students need to know the order of morpheme acquisition is the same as the naturalistic order and different from the teaching order in the text books. Also, Kim (2003) showed that Korean and Japanese EFL learners used their native language compliment forms while interacting in English; they did not use the Standard English compliment forms. As stated above there have been many relevant studies in the past on EFL challenges from different countries in which they encounter different challenges in English language learning.

Similarly, a study by Pavesi's (1986) among 84 EFL (at high school) and 38 Italian workers in Italy revealed that learners were challenged with the requirement to compose whole sentences and made syntax mistakes. In the same vein, Fathman's (1978) and Ellis's (1989) studies on EFL among German adults in a higher education institution in Britain, (who were tested using an oral production test) revealed that these learners were confused between German language word order rules and those required in the English language as these two languages are completely different., Sajavaara (1981) concurs with Makino (1980) that he used elicited speech on EFL adolescents in Finland's high school who were struggling with morpheme order that differed from the natural order.

Moreover, current researchers have studied the challenges confronted by learners while learning English in different cultural contexts such as in Sri Lanka. Seefa (2017) argues that learners encounter many challenges when learning four English language skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) in the rural areas such as the zone of Madhu education in the Mannar province,

which was destroyed by a prolonged three decades of ethnical conflict. Hashmi's (2016) study on the other hand focused on a comparative analysis of the difficulties faced in English language learning by Urdu and Hindi speaking learners in India. Moreover, Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn (2017) investigated the language errors in writing 26 English subjects at a Thai university and explored their causes. One hundred and four papers of writing were collected and analysed. Their findings revealed that the most generally committed errors were punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragments. The primary causes of the errors were interlingual interference, limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and students' negligence. Akbari (2016) used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to explore Iranian EFL learners' insights into their challenges, needs, and concerns over learning English at the university. Akbari (2016) found out that a major hurdle in learning English was the use of English in the community as a foreign language and mainly due to a lack of free time to spend on learning English.

In Spain, Barrios, López-Gutiérrez, & Lechuga (2016) found that students at the University of Málaga also had similar challenges as the mother tongue was the dominate language of social interaction. They considered that some teachers' level of English proficiency was not good enough to teach English and, consequently, the Spanish language was used more often than English in their lessons. Additionally, they were not forced to do all their written tasks in English. Some of them even complain about not being compelled to use English more regularly. Therefore, studies on this theme do exist in other contexts.

In Bangladesh, Uddin (2017) and Hossain (2019) conducted studies investigating the challenges of English language learning and teaching. Uddin (2017) investigated the challenges of language learning and teaching in Bangladesh. He found that most Bangladeshi students are exposed to their mother-tongue language. They do not get good chances either to listen to or speak in English. As students do not see any critical need for English, their curiosity naturally decreases. Similarly, as there is no immediate reward for their performance, the interest diminishes. In addition, he states that lecturers lacked employment training and refresher courses, essentially on English language teaching. Besides, teachers do not get training in syllabi to change. Though most schools have their

libraries, none have English journals, any computers, and audio-visual aids. The classes of Bangladesh schools were congested, and English is being taught as a subject, not as a language.

In the same vein, Hossain (2019) attempted to examine the practical teaching and learning challenges the primary-level English learners face regarding four language skills. His study consists of 12 teachers who teach English from twelve different primary schools of the Dhaka division. The findings show that while teaching English at the primary level, teachers mostly face challenges because of the large and noisy classrooms, impractical textbooks for teaching listening and speaking, and the exclusion of basic language skills in the tests. Other challenges are the students' use of Bangla in the classroom, and their very poor background knowledge. Also, Hossain (2016) explores the challenges of teaching the English language in rural areas in the context of Bangladesh. He also investigated the factors affecting students' performance in the English language in rural areas. The findings reveal that students were very motivated to learn English for future expectations such as international communication, academic progression, and employment chances. It also provides an outline of the English teaching system in rural areas of Bangladesh, as well as the problems of the English language from the perspective of Bangladesh.

Research studies attempt to find ways to combine the internet and social media with EFL language classes to benefit from social media instances, such as enhancing students' engagement with English learning and increasing their motivation toward English learning. A study by Elverici (2020) investigated the impacts of integrating social media on students' English learning and their attitudes when social media is integrated into foreign language Turkish classes. She found no significant difference in students' attitudes to social media, but there was a significant difference in their English learning in their social presence. Again, in Turkey, Aslıtürk & Ekşioğlu' (2020) study aimed to investigate the lifelong learning inclinations of Turkish university students and their attitudes toward English as a foreign language and whether there are variances in terms of their level and school type between the two structures. They found a moderately significant correlation between students' lifelong learning tendencies and attitudes towards English courses as a foreign language. Solak & Bayar (2015) conducted a study on English language learning and teaching challenges at a Turkish university. They concluded that teaching and improving four language skills should focus on all language skills teaching rather than language grammar teaching only; also, English studies should be planned based on practice rather than on theoretical aspects.

Foreign language teachers should take training and update their profession from time to time. Finally, the materials such as course books, videos, and internet websites should be chosen carefully according to the students' concerns, levels, and needs.

In Ukraine, Solodka, Zaskaleta, Moroz, & Demianenko (2021) assert that Technology usage plays an essential role in keeping EFL teaching and learning processes to make the content comprehensible. The usage of digital content in the learning process is a beneficial and alternative way to substitute the conventional learning process. Similarly, with Sheerah (2020) explored the strengths and weaknesses of blended learning as a technology-improved pedagogical instrument that combines online and face-to-face instructional activities to develop English skills, especially its use in English teaching as a foreign language (EFL). She concluded that blended learning has the potential to promote EFL learning and maximize EFL learners' chances to practice the English language easily. Also, Mohammed (2018) concurs with them that e-learning in general and blended learning enables learners to practice their foreign language without pressure, contributing to their knowledge and proficiency.

A case study by Durán & García (2021) explored the impact of English teachers' methodological practices on undergraduate students' learning processes in English learning as foreign language compulsory courses for several fields at Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia. They found that teacher-centred, grammar-translation, and audio-lingual methods ruled the lessons; textbook-oriented classes emphasised listening and writing designated the courses; teacher and peer correction were encouraged, and classroom tasks and evaluation mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary. Although lecturers had methodological practices, these affected students' learning processes differently.

The current study is expected to address a gap in the literature on the Libyan teaching and learning of English at the University entrance level. I support the idea that quality classroom teaching has the most influence on successful outcomes for learners. As noted from the literature above, the EFL challenges in the learning of English have been studied mainly by Arab learners in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Palestinian. However, it has been relatively unexplored in Libya; hence this study seeks to address that gap. Therefore, this gap serves as a warrant for this study.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter advances the discussion from the preliminary chapter. It provides discussions in line with the study's aim and objective. At the inception of this chapter, the importance of English as a language is discussed and the relevance and influence of this language are highlighted. The chapter further touched on discourses such as EFL learners' perception of learning English alongside their English teachers. An overview of the Libyan higher education sector was also discussed with the aim of providing readers with some background information. The line of discussion was further narrowed to focus on how the English language was being taught at a Libyan University. Due to the identified deficiencies and shortage of English teachers, the study further mentioned training and other capacitation programmes used in tackling these challenges. Further, the chapter discussed the devastating effect of the Arab Spring of 2011 on the Libyan educational sector. Also looked at were previous studies on EFL, in which the researcher was able to draw some correlation to the contextual factors manifest at the research site.

The next chapter discusses the theory that underpins this study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter One, this study aims to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya and the imperative reasons these challenges impact effective academic performance. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that was adopted in this study.

Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition theory is chosen as the theoretical framework for this study as it attempts to respond to the vital theoretical question of how we acquire language. It is considered the most effective and extensively known theory that accounts for second and foreign language acquisition. Schulz (1991) affirms this theory is foremost from the immediate pedagogic extrapolations created in the supposed natural method. Krashen has always been interested in classroom language learning and teaching. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety, and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. The use of Krashen's framework will enable the researcher to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning and acquiring a English language at the Libyan university.

Language acquisition means learning a language. It includes implicit, informal, and natural learning (Krashen, 2009, 1981; Ellis, 1990). Hence, to develop competence in a second or foreign language, it has to be through language learning. Learning entails is comprehending a language, such as grammar or language limitations and its conventions. Some second language theorists have supposed that children acquire, while grown-ups can only learn (Krashen, 2009, Ellis, 1990). Krashen outlined similarities between first language learning by children and second language acquisition by older learners, including adults. He argued that the mental abilities used by children in learning their native language are appropriate for second language learning. The focus of this

study thus relates to challenges that EFL learners face when they learn and use the English language.

Krashen's theory has competed with centuries of received second language teaching. Krashen urged teachers to leave traditional classroom teaching activities such as translation from the target language to learners' native language and memorising grammar rules, vocabulary lists, and instructional conversations (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). Instead, Krashen's Monitor theory proposed that primary learning activities centre around learners' attention to oral or written language. The teacher's primary position is to help learners' understanding of these second language texts.

Learning theory can present an extensive and conceptual perspective on language development, it is left to teachers to choose what it means for their respective learners in typical classroom environments (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). Therefore, the best methods provide comprehensible input in low anxiety conditions, including messages that learners really like to listen to. These methods do not cause early production in the second language but help learners to produce when they are ready, realising that progress comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input and not from forcing and correcting production (Krashen, 2009, 1981).

Krashen's theory has supplied the fields of second language acquisition and second language teaching with new understandings of language learning as well as the teachers' role in this process. Krashen's concepts of second language development would be useful from a focus on learner identity and motivation. His affective filter concept could be considered an attempt to describe how motivation factors into language development. Low motivation would limit the quantity of input learned by a learner and limit chances for engagement with the massive amount of input needed for language development (Bailey & Fahad, 2021).

3.2. Krashen's five Hypotheses About Second Language Acquisition

Like any scientific theory, Krashen's theory includes a group of hypotheses. This theory details the important five hypotheses about Second Language Acquisition which were put forward by Krashen in 1985.

3.2.1. The Acquisition and Learning hypothesis

This hypothesis states that adults have two different and separate ways of acquiring competence in a second and foreign language (Krashen, 2009, 1981). The first way is language acquisition, a process similar to how children can develop in their first language. People who acquire a language are not usually aware that they are learning a language but are only aware that they are utilizing it for communication. Also, it affects the natural evolution of language proficiency by learning and manipulating language for effective communication (Ellis, 1990). The effect of language acquisition via acquired competence is also unconscious. We are naturally not intentionally aware of the language's rules that we have acquired. Instead, we feel for perfection; grammatical sentences look good, or we feel they are all right, and mistakes feel incorrect (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990).

Language learning is the second way to develop competence in a second or foreign language. We use the word learning to mention conscious learning of a second and foreign language, understanding the rules, being aware of them, and speaking about them (Krashen, 2009). Learning is knowing about a language, learned as grammar or rules to most people. Some second language investigators have thought that children acquire, whereas grown-ups can only learn. The acquisition and learning hypothesis argue that adults can also acquire and pick up languages that exist even in adolescence. This does not mean that adults will consistently achieve native-like abilities in a second language. However, it does mean that adults can access the same natural language acquisition instrument that children use (Krashen, 2009; Krashen, 1981; Ellis, 1990). Krashen here follows the universal grammar concepts of Chomsky and language acquisition devices. In short, Chomsky represents linguistic capability as a language acquisition device, including facts of linguistic universals. These are innate and provide children with a beginning for acquiring the language's grammar that they are exposed to. It can be claimed that the same device also functions in second and foreign language acquisition, as is the case with the Universal hypothesis.

In addition, Neuro-linguistics posits, that 'acquired' knowledge is usually found in the left brain hemisphere in the language places and is known for automated processing. 'Learnt' knowledge, in

contrast, is metalinguistic. It is also located in the left hemisphere but not in language areas; it is available only for controlled processing (Ellis 1990). Hence ‘acquiring’ and ‘learning’ knowledge are held separately in the brain, and therefore, Krashen concludes that, learning cannot lead to acquisition (Krashen 1981).

Moreover, Krashen (2009) asserts that error correction has no impact on unconscious acquiring but is assumed to be helpful for conscious knowledge.

As advocated by this theory, language learners improve language fluency via two procedures: language acquisition and language learning. The acquisition is a subconscious process that occurs or happens through natural language interactions. This is mainly like native language acquisition. On the other hand, learning needs conscious thinking and happens in typically informal settings. Therefore, ‘Acquiring’ and ‘Learning’ knowledge is stored individually and learnt knowledge cannot be converted into acquired knowledge.

3.2.2. The Natural Order Hypothesis

One of the significant findings in language acquisition research is acquiring grammatical structures that proceed in a predictable order (Ellis, 1990). Learners of a given language tend to acquire specific grammatical structures earlier and others later. Morphology in the English language is the most researched, and it is concerned with all the English language structures. Brown (1973) states that children acquiring English as a first language obtain particular grammatical morphemes, or functional words, earlier than others. For instance, the continuous tense marker ‘ing’ (as in ‘they are playing football’) and the plural marker ‘s’ (as in ‘three bags’) are among the first morphemes acquired, while the third person singular marker ‘s’ (as in ‘She lives in London’) and the possessive ‘s’ (‘Sally’s bag’) are normally acquired much later, coming into use anywhere from seven months to one year later.

Moreover, Dulay & Burt (1974) state that children learning the English language as a second or foreign language also show a ‘natural order’ for grammatical morphemes, nevertheless of their

first language. The child's second language acquisition differs from the first language order, but various groups of second language acquirers showed remarkable similarities.

As mentioned above, the order of acquisition for a second language is not similar to that for a first language, but there are some similarities. As illustrated in figure (3.1), Krashen (1977) presents a moderate order for second language learners and illustrates how the first language has a different order. This average order effects from a comparison of many empirical studies of grammatical morpheme acquisition. This order results from an analysis of empirical studies of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1976). Studies such as Andersen (1976) and Dulay & Burt (1974) support the natural order hypothesis; and show significant correlations with this average order.

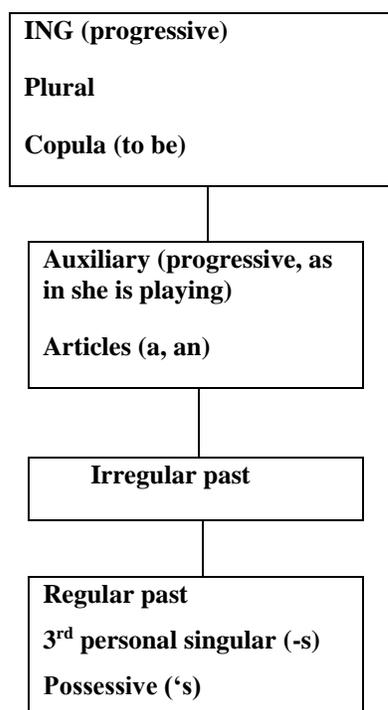


Fig. 3.1. 'Average' order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes for English as a second language

A research study by Bruce (1979), conducted with Russian as a foreign language, and van Naerssen (1981 cited in Krashen, 2009) for Spanish as a foreign language, affirm the validity of the natural order assumption for other languages (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990). They confirm that this

hypothesis is one of the most significant discoveries in language acquisition study, that is, about acquiring grammatical structures in a predictable order. Therefore, the hypothesis proposed that individuals acquire second language rules in the predictable natural order not defined by the order in which they are taught.

The natural order cannot be transformed. It is resistant to planned teaching. It cannot change the natural order by illustrations, exercises, and activities. A teacher can prepare the third person singular for weeks, but it will not be acquired until the learner is ready for it. This presents a great deal of the frustration language learners have. One might assume that the solution to our issues is to teach the natural order in which we determine which things are acquired early and teach those foremost. The third fact is that this is not the solution as the natural order is not the teaching order.

3.2.3 The Monitor Hypothesis

This hypothesis suggests that acquisition and learning are operated in particular ways, and it endeavours to explain how acquisition and learning are used. Generally, the acquisition is responsible for our utterance and our fluency; when we produce an utterance in a second or a foreign language, the acquired system initiates the utterance, learning changes in the form of our utterance after the acquired system has generated the utterance. This may occur before we speak and write. Language is usually produced by using acquired linguistics competence. Here learning has only one function; that of a monitor or editor. The Monitor hypothesis implies that standard rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance. These limitations have become even more evident as research has progressed in the last few years. This research suggests that second language performers can use conscious rules intensely only when three conditions are met (Krashen, 2009):

- Time: in order to think about and employ conscious rules efficiently, a second language performer requires sufficient time. The typical conversation does not allow adequate time to think about and use rules for most people. The regular dialogue does not provide adequate time for the use of the Monitor. Some language specialists can Monitor while

talking, but these are very advanced acquirers who are only required to Monitor an occasional rule here and there and have a particular concern about the language structure.

- Concentrate on the form: time is inadequate to use the Monitor effectively. The performer must also focus on the form or think about accuracy (Dulay & Burt, 1978; Krashen, 2009). Even when we have time, we might be so engaged in what we are saying that we do not adhere to how we are saying it. It is not easy to think about both form and meaning at the same time.
- Learn the rule: this is a very challenging condition. Linguistics has shown us that language structure is very complicated. Also, language teachers do not teach all the rules in the textbooks, learners are exposed only to a small part of the whole language grammar; and we are aware that actually, the best learners cannot learn or remember every rule they are exposed to (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990).

Therefore, monitor use is only apparent when all three conditions are wholly together (Krashen, 2009). For example, the natural order for grammatical morphemes when learners are tested in 'Monitor-free' conditions, is concentrated on communication, and not form. We see "unnatural orders", a problematic order different from the child's second language acquisition order. Thus, when learners are focused on communication, they cannot usually make extensive use of their conscious knowledge of grammar, the Monitor, and their error patterns largely reflect the process of the acquired system (Krashen, 2009). Although the Monitor is low, it is not useless. Some conscious knowledge of the language is helpful as acquisition does not usually provide the acquirers with 100% of a language; there is usually a small remnant of grammar, punctuation, and spelling that even native speakers do not acquire (Krashen, 2009).

The Monitor works well with some parts of grammar better than with others. Mainly, it appears to work with rules that can be described as simple in two different ways (Krashen, 2009). First, rules that do not require elaborate motions or changes, are syntactically uncomplicated rules. Easy rules include bound morphology, such as the third person singular in English. Second, rules can also be easy and challenging due to their semantic properties. The English article system is easy to describe formally; one inserts (the, a, or an) or sometimes nothing before the noun (Ellis, 1990).

In summary, monitor use increases the level of items that are acquired late in the natural order, items that the performer has learned but has not acquired. Only specific items can increase in level, but, When Monitor use is heavy, this rise in rank is sufficient to disturb the natural order. It is possible to see minor changes, in particular late learned morphemes, that are not enough to disturb the natural order.

Individual variation in Monitor use: Some of the individual differences in adult second language acquisition and performance can be accounted for in terms of differences in the use of the conscious Monitor. Studies of case histories propose that there may be three main types of the performer (Krashen, 1978; Kounin & Krashen, 1978; Ellis, 1990):

- *Monitor Over-users:* these are learners who attempt to Monitor all the time, performers who are continually checking their output with their conscious knowledge of the second language. Consequently, such performers may be so hesitant that they cannot speak with any actual fluency. First, overuse of grammar may emanate from the performer's history of exposure to the second language. Also, these over users have had an opportunity to acquire, and may actually have acquired, a great deal of the second language. The learner at a level should be able to manage linguistically in a range of daily situations that require an expected usage of language, both with native and non-native speakers of English.
- *Monitor under-users:* these are performers who have not learned, or if they have learned, prefer not to use their conscious knowledge, even when conditions allow it. Under-users are typically uninfluenced by error correction, can self-correct only by using a 'feel' for the correctness, and depend entirely on the acquired system.
- *The optimal Monitor user:* the educational goal is to produce optimal users, performers who use the Monitor when it is applicable and when it does not interfere with communication. Many optimal users will not use grammar in regular dialogue, which may interfere. In writing and planned speech, though, when there is time, optimal users will typically make whatever corrections they can to increase the accuracy of their output (Krashen, 1976; Ellis, 1990). Some optimal users who have not acquired their second language, which makes minor and random errors in speech, can use their conscious grammar so successfully that they can often produce the delusion of being native in their

writing (Krashen, 2009). This does not mean that conscious learning can make up for incomplete acquisition. Some rules that cannot be acquired will be learnable, and others not. The optimal user can fill part of the gap with conscious learning, but not all of it. As both acquired competence of the target language and his confidence in utilising it would be developing, the learner reached the optimal Monitor user more. He used conscious self-correction when he had adequate time to use the learnt knowledge.

In brief, this hypothesis proposes that formal learning does not impact acquisition in any way except that it has the function of monitoring and amending the utterances created through the acquisition process. In other words, monitoring can only occur when there is sufficient time, the focus is on the form, and the rule is understood (Ellis, 1990). Monitoring is restricted to relatively simple rules such as a regular past tense or third person.

3.2.4 The Input Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis was the first attempt to make a coherent theoretical account of second language learning. This theory suggests that learners develop second language competence mainly through the process of comprehending the target language. Krashen thought that primarily language learning is subconscious and occurs automatically when the learner is focused on meaning (Krashen, 1981).

Does this hypothesis try to respond to this theory's critical question: how do we acquire language? This hypothesis contradicts our usual pedagogical approach in second and foreign language teaching (Ellis, 1990). As Krashen (2009) has pointed out, we assume that we first learn structures and then practice using them in communication, which is how fluency evolves. The input hypothesis states the opposite. It says we acquire by 'reaching for meaning' first, and consequently, we acquire structure. Thus, the input hypothesis is associated with acquisition, not with learning. Language can be acquired simply in one way; when we comprehend messages, that is when we get comprehensible input (Krashen, 2009). This strong claim is replicated in other areas where Krashen declares that "understanding messages is the only way language is obtained" and that there are no individual differences in the fundamental process of language acquisition. For this

explanation, Krashen usually uses the term ‘comprehension hypotheses to refer to the Input Hypothesis, claiming that ‘comprehension’ is a more suitable description as the very input is not adequate; it has to be understood (Krashen, 2009).

Moreover, it says we acquire by understanding the language that contains structure, which is beyond our current level of competency (Krashen, 2009, 1976). This is done with the support of context or extra-linguistic knowledge. The final aspect of the input hypothesis demonstrates that speaking fluency cannot be conducted directly; instead, it emerges over time, on its own. The only way to teach talking is to provide only comprehensible input. The early speech will come when the acquirer feels ready. Early speech is not grammatically accurate. Accuracy improves over a period as the learners listen and understand more input. Thus, production ability emerges; it is not taught directly.

Krashen illustrates two forms in which comprehension of input, including new linguistic material, is achieved: the usage of context by the learner and the provision of simplified input by the teacher (Ellis, 1990). The learner uses context to infer the meaning of an utterance when existing linguistic resources are inadequate for direct decoding. Three types of contextual knowledge are available: extra-linguistic knowledge, the learner’s knowledge of the world, and this learner previously attained linguistic competence. Moreover, Krashen also places great stress on the provision of simplified input, although he acknowledges that input can be comprehensible without any simplification (Krashen, 2009).

Simplified input can be made known to the learner through one way or two-way interaction. An example of the former includes listening to a lesson, watching TV, and reading a story; two-way interaction occurs in conversations. Krashen believes that two-way interaction is a perfect way of providing comprehensible input because it helps the learner to acquire more contextual knowledge and optimally adapted input when meaning has to be negotiated because of some communication issue. However, he denies claims that two-way interaction is essential for comprehensible input (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990). According to Krashen, the input can be comprehensible without any active participation on the part of the learner. Advanced learners can benefit from watching TV. There is also evidence supporting the facilitative effects of extensive reading on acquisition.

Evidence to support this hypothesis:

This section illustrates evidence Krashen presents in support of his theory and is based mainly on Krashen (1976, 1981, 2009):

Evidence from first language acquisition in children: The input hypothesis is very constant with what is known about ‘caretaker speech’, that parents and others use when speaking to young children (Krashen, 2009, 1976; Ellis, 1990). The most crucial distinguishing feature of caretaker speech is that it is not a deliberate attempt to teach language. While there is no straight evidence indicating that caretaker speech is definitely more effective than unmodified input, the input hypothesis assumes that caretaker speech will help the child. First, it aims to be comprehensible (Krashen, 2009). It provides extra-linguistic support (context) that assists the child to understand the utterances. As Mac Namara (1972) asserts, first, the child does not acquire grammar and then utilize it in understanding. The child understands first, and this enables him to acquire language.

Evidence from second language acquisition: simple codes. The input hypothesis also holds for second language acquisition. The child or adult acquires the second language, just like the child acquires a first language. Also, according to the hypothesis, there is a natural order of acquisition for second language and first language. The Natural Order Hypothesis with comprehensible input-based language teaching syllabus is not based on the natural order or any grammatical order. Learners will acquire the language in the natural order due to obtaining comprehensible input. Second language acquirers can also receive the modified input that children get. This modified input is foreigner-talk, resulting from the modifications native speakers make with less than fully competent speakers of their language. As Hatch, Shapira, & Gough (1978) point out, teacher-talk is foreigner-talk in the classroom; the language of classroom management and explanation, when it is in the second language. Accuracy develops over time as the learner hears and understands more input. However, foreigner-talk and teacher-talk may not always be helpful. It may imply native speakers and teachers find other ways to make input comprehensible (Krashen, 2009). In addition to linguistic alterations, they take advantage of the acquirer’s knowledge of the world, which is, greater than that of the child acquiring a first language. This is done with the use of pedagogical aids, such as pictures (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990). Foreigner’ talk and teacher talk

are usually slower, with shorter sentences and more straightforward syntax, repeating, and rephrasing, which are adjusted and approximately tuned to the learner's level. They are also motivated by communication. All this enhances the comprehensibility of the input.

The input hypothesis is also constant with other findings and hypotheses in second language acquisition. One of these can be named the 'silent period', a most apparent phenomenon in a child's second language acquisition (Ellis, 1990). It has regularly been reported that children acquiring a second language in a natural, informal linguistic environment may say very little for several months following their first contact with the second language. Particularly with children acquiring a second language, they usually stay silent at first when they arrive in a new country and start to speak later. During the quiet period, the child is building up competence in the second language through listening by comprehending the language around him. What output usually occurs as memorised language, full sentences learned as if they were one word. Hatch (1972), for example, reported that Paul, a five-year-old Chinese speaker acquiring English as a second language, did not really use 'creative' language for his first few months in the United States. His only output was memorised sentences. He had learned these as entire utterances without a fundamental understanding of their components. He only memorised sentences; when actual language emerged, it looked like first language development.

As mentioned earlier, the meaning of the silent period concerning the input hypothesis is when the child builds up competence in the second language by hearing and learning the language around him. To concur with the input hypothesis, talking ability occurs independently after enough competence has been developed by listening and understanding (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990). Adults, and children's informal language lessons, are often not allowed a silent period. They are usually expected to make progress very early in a second language before learning enough syntactic competence to express their ideas.

Research by applied linguistics studies: the input hypothesis is also compatible with the findings of what can be named 'process comparison' experimentations. Some researchers and groups of scholars have tried to find out instantly which pedagogical methods are better by simple comparison. Groups of scholars using two different methods to study second, and foreign

languages are compared in long-term and short-term investigations. Krashen believes that adults are better at short-term L2 learning and children at long-term L2 learning. Because older learners have more significant experience of the world, they can use their native language to overcome communication issues in L2 more efficiently and are better at managing any conversation. The child's improvement in second language acquisition is assumed to be due to affective factors; Krashen believes that the Affective Filter increases the strength around adulthood. They compared the more generally employed methods (audio-lingual as compared to grammar-translation or cognitive-code) as follows (Krashen, 2009):

- Deductive methods (grammar-translation and cognitive-code) are barely more effective than audio-lingual teaching for grown-ups. The distinctions are usually statistically meaningful but are not massive. Learners obviously make some improvement employing any of these approaches.
- There is no measurable difference for adolescents.

This failure to find considerable differences in this way, as Krashen (2009) asserts, indicates that none of the methods compared in these investigations provides much in the form of comprehensible input. The input hypothesis indicates that an approach providing extensive quantities of comprehensible input will accomplish much more, than any of the older approaches. Many new methods do this, such as Asher's (1966- 1969) Total Physical Response Method and Terrell's (1977) Natural Approach. In these approaches, the class period is devoted to providing comprehensible input, where the focus is on the message and not the form, and learners are not expected to be able to produce in the second language till they themselves determine they are ready. Reports demonstrating the authority of the input methods have been presented in literature over the last few decades (Asher, 1972; Gary, 1975).

The input hypothesis significantly predicts that the classroom may be a suitable place for second language acquisition up to the intermediate level (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990). The classroom can be more suitable for beginners than the external world since the outside often provides the novice with concise comprehensible input, particularly for elder acquirers (Krashen, 2009, Ellis, 1990). An hour or a day of comprehensible input can be given in the classroom, which is likely more

helpful than the outside can do for the beginner learners. Therefore, the input hypothesis suggests that there is simply just one method to acquire a second or foreign language, and that is by comprehensible input and not production. Input is made comprehensible because of the assistance provided by the context. Krashen also emphasises that the input only needs to be rough and not finely tuned (i.e., there is no need to try deliberately to expose the learners to a sample of a specific grammatical feature). In addition, Immersion language teaching is a form of teaching that employs a second language as the medium of instruction in a school; furthermore, the factor that ensures the success of these programmes is considered the comprehensible input that the learners get.

The following summary of the Input Hypothesis is provided based on Krashen (1981, 2009):

- The Input Hypothesis relates to the acquisition, not learning.
- We acquire by understanding a language that includes structures a bit beyond our current competence level. This is done with the assistance of context or extra-linguistic information.
- When communication is successful, the input is comprehended and adequate, and it will be provided automatically.
- Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly.
- It states that speaking fluency cannot be taught directly. Speaking does not directly result in language acquisition; talking is not practising; the ability to communicate results from language acquisition, not its cause. However, speaking can be useful and help acquisition indirectly as it leads to conversation, which is an excellent source of comprehensible input.
- A more considerable amount of exposure to the second language leads to proficiency. Like age, the length of disclosure is not a causative variable; ultimately, it relies on the amount of comprehensible input the learner had access to; sheer exposure without comprehension is often useless to acquisition.

3.2.5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This hypothesis states how influential factors are related to the second language acquisition process. The concept of an Affective Filter was proposed by Dulay & Burt (1977) and is constant

with the theoretical work done in the affective variables area and second language acquisition. Investigations over the last decade have demonstrated that various affective variables relate to success in second language acquisition (Krashen, 2009; Mehmood, 2018). Affective factors are assumed to be directly associated with second language acquisition and achievement. This is because they seem, general. When communicative tests are employed, the tests concentrate on the acquired rather than the learnt system. Most of these studies can be placed into one or other of these three classifications (Krashen, 2009; Mehmood, 2018):

- Motivation: High-performance performers normally do better in second language acquisition; Mehmood (2018) finds that motivation plays an essential role in understanding a foreign language and reports a positive relationship between motivation and foreign language learning.
- Self-confidence: Learners with self-confidence and a good self-image perform well in second language acquisition. Learners' self-confidence can be improved through some dimensions, such as generating a feeling of responsibility and independence among EFL learners.
- Anxiety: low anxiety seems to be helpful to second language acquisition, whether estimated as individual or classroom tension. EFL learners may be affected by anxiety in any language skills.

The Affective Filter hypothesis reflects the relationship between affective variables and the second language acquisition process by suggesting that acquirers differ concerning the level of their Affective Filters (Mehmood, 2018). Those whose perspectives are not ideal for second language acquisition will not only tend to pursue shorter input, but they will also have a high or effective solid Filter even if they understand the message. The input will not get to the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition or the language acquisition device (Krashen, 2009). Those with attitudes more helpful to second language acquisition will not get more input; they will also have a less or weaker filter. See figure (3.2); The Affective Filter hypothesis claims that the effect is outside the language acquisition device. It still holds that input is the primary causal variable in second language acquisition, and affective variables act to obstruct or facilitate input delivery to the language acquisition device (Mehmood, 2018). The filter hypothesis explains why an acquirer

can obtain a great deal of comprehensible input and stop the native speaker level; when this happens, it is due to the affective filter (Krashen, 2009). Therefore, the Affective Filter Hypothesis can illustrate why a particular learner of a second language who obtains a great deal of comprehensible input, still does not get a native-like competence. It is due to the high Affective Filter that prevents the information from reaching the language acquisition device.

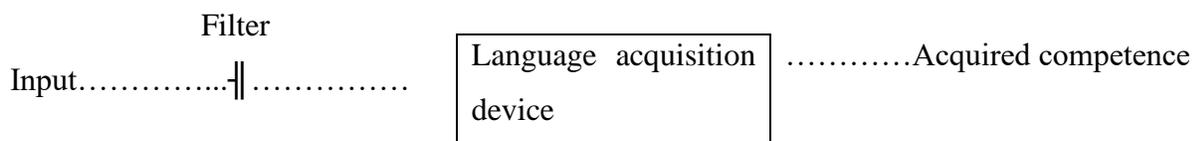


Fig. 3.2: Operation of the affective filter

In addition, the Affective Filter hypothesis indicates that our pedagogical goals should not only include providing comprehensible input but also making a case that promotes a low filter (Krashen, 2009; & Mehmood, 2018). The input hypothesis and the idea of the Affective Filter determine the language teacher differently. An effective language teacher can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation (Krashen, 2009). The second language acquisition hypothesis can be summarised as more important than learning. In order to acquire, two conditions are necessary. The first is the more comprehensible input one receives in low-stress situations, the more language competence one will have (Krashen, 2009; Ellis, 1990), and the second is a low or weak affective filter to allow the input in. Therefore, this hypothesis states that if there is a mental block, the affective filter that acts as a barrier to the acquisition process, comprehensible input will not be used entirely. The affective filter controls the acquisition rate and ultimate level of success.

For the current study, Krashen’s (1982) Second Language Acquisition theory is suitable for showing a prominent picture of language acquisition and language learning. Including, the challenges of EFL as a learning context; because it illustrates the way or the ability of adults to acquire languages. Thus, the challenges of learners participating in this study can be identified, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, techniques, perspectives, and so on in English learning. Different people use their monitors differently, particularly for grammatical structures of their

acquisition and their progress in a probable order (Krashen,1982; Ellis, 1990). Moreover, these five hypotheses will relate to the analysis of the lecturers' and students' opinions. These will be examined in order to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning and acquiring the English language at the Libyan university.

3.3. Krashen's view of language learning and teaching

Significant knowledge of second language acquisition theory is beneficial for regular classroom teachers and immediately affects their ability to provide relevant content-area instruction to students. It is essential in those schools or communities where restricted resources result in little or no instructional support in a student's learning of a native language. Krashen has always been interested in classroom language learning and teaching. Second Language Acquisition theory was created with the classroom in mind, even though it was designed to account for the effects of studies of naturalistic second language acquisition in the main (Ellis, 1990). Krashen has outlined the model applications to language teaching and learning in detail (Krashen, 1982, and Krashen & Terrell, 1984). His main proposals are:

- i. The principal purpose of language teaching is to provide comprehensible input in order to facilitate 'acquisition' (Ellis, 1990).

Krashen (1981: p. 58) writes that:

“The defining features of a good teacher is a person who can construct input comprehensible to a non-native speaker, regardless of his/ her competence in the target language”.

Optimal input is provided when the teacher engages the learner in actual communication which the learner finds interesting. Krashen draws on research into the role of motherese in facilitating L1 acquisition to describe the characteristics of simplified input that aids comprehension through this acquisition.

ii. Teaching should be seen as a preparation for the acquisition of the broader world.

Krashen argues that it is uncertain if the classroom can provide adequate comprehensible input to assure successful second language acquisition. The classroom is more important to the beginner and the FL learner, who often are unable to secure adequate comprehensible input in the outside world. One of the teaching objectives must be to prepare the learner to manage a real-life conversation. This can be done by teaching conversational competence in the form of a few well-chosen routines, discourse devices for getting the native speakers to explain their meaning and topic-changing devices (Ellis, 1990).

iii. The teacher must ensure that learners do not feel anxious or are put on the defensive.

The basis of this proposition is the effective filter hypothesis. The learner has to feel comfortable and confident to ensure that the filter is down so that comprehensible input gets in. Krashen argues that if teachers insist on learner production too soon or if they correct mistakes in communicative activities, the learner will be discouraged from learning.

iv. Grammar teaching should be specified to simple forms, and its purpose is to help the learner to monitor.

Grammar teaching of any type (inductive or deductive) is of restricted value because it can only contribute to learning and never to acquisition. Krashen argues that only a limited subset of the entire rules of a language is learnable. Complex rules such as WH questions or negatives cannot be learnt by most students. Krashen also considers that monitoring has a limited role in language production; not all people monitor. Those who do, only monitor sometimes and use the monitor for only a sub-part of grammar. Grammar can also be taught as subject matter, but this is not to be confused with the primary goal of language teaching.

v. Errors should not be corrected when the purpose is acquisition but should be corrected when the purpose is learning.

Error correction has no part in an acquisition that only happens due to the learner processing comprehensible input. However, error correction can allow a learner to learn a simple rule. Given that the primary goal of teaching is acquisition, error correction usually is to be avoided. Therefore,

Krashen's proposals represent a radical movement away from audio-lingualism (Ellis, 1990). In many regards, this includes a logical development of the pedagogic concepts first stated in the theory of second language learning that sustained the cognitive anti-method and then by applied linguistics that draws on inter-language theory. So, its main principles can be summarised as (Ellis, 1990):

- The goal is communicative skills;
- Comprehension precedes production;
- Production emerges when the learner is ready;
- Acquisition activities are central; and
- The affective filter needs to be kept low.

3.4. Strategies of teaching in second language acquisition theory

According to Krashen (1982) and Hong (2008), teachers should follow the development stages and Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition and use some teaching strategies in the language classrooms. They can know the strategies that best satisfy their language learners' critical needs and examine students' reactions to their learning approaches in the second language. Furthermore, they can do classroom research to confirm whether the teaching strategies in second language acquisition work or not. The following are some strategies that Krashen (1982) and Hong (2008) suggest to apply in the language classroom:

1- *Combining second language acquisition theories with practice*: The theory is essential for educators because it illustrates why language learners react to instruction in specific ways. Understanding Stephen Krashen's theory can assist teachers to develop relevant instructional strategies and estimates that lead learners along a continuum of language improvement, from cognitively undemanding, context-embedded curriculum to cognitively demanding, context-reduced curriculum. However, it is more and more relevant to combine theory with practice as follows:

- *The acquisition-learning hypothesis strategy:* According to Stephen Krashen, two independent methods to tend the second language are acquiring language and learning a language. The acquiring language or “acquisition” is the output of an unconscious process related to children’s process when they acquire their first language. It needs meaningful communication in the target language and natural interaction in which speakers focus not on their utterances but on communicative acts. The learning method or “teaching” is the output of formal instruction, and it involves a conscious process that occurs in conscious knowledge about the language, for instance, learning grammar rules. According to Krashen, learning or teaching is less critical than acquisition language.
- *The monitor hypothesis strategy:* The acquisition system is the speech initiator, while the teaching system plays the monitor or the editor role. The monitor operates in a planning, editing, and correcting function when three particular requirements are met: the second language learners have enough time under their control, focus on a form or think about correctness, and they know the rules. It seems that the role of conscious learning is moderately limited in second language performance. Krashen proposes that there is an individual difference between language learners regarding “monitor” performance. He distinguishes learners who utilise the “monitor” all the time ‘over users; those who have not learned or prefer not to use their conscious knowledge; and those who use the “monitor” properly. An evaluation of the student’s psychological form can serve to decide to which group they belong. Lack of self-confidence is often related to the over-use of the “monitor”.
- *The natural order hypothesis strategy:* Concerning a given language, some grammatical constructions perform to be obtained early, while others are late. This order seems to be independent of the learners’ age, experience, and exposure conditions. Although the agreement between individual acquirers was not 100% in the studies, statistically significant relationships strengthened the natural order of language acquisition. Nevertheless, Krashen indicated that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on the order seen in the studies. He is against grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.
- *The input hypothesis strategy:* The input hypothesis is mainly involved with the acquisition, not learning. According to this hypothesis, the learner develops and improves along with the natural order when the learner gets second language ‘input’ that is one action

beyond his or her current stage of linguistic proficiency. All the learners cannot be at the same level of linguistic competence simultaneously; Stephen Krashen proposes that natural communicative input is the key to designing a syllabus, ensuring that each learner will receive some appropriate input for his or her current stage of linguistic competence.

- *The affective filter hypothesis strategy:* Stephen Krashen requires that students with high motivation, confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are entirely provided for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-confidence, and debilitating tension can combine to “raise” the affective filter and form a “mental block” that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is “up”, it prevents language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is essential but not sufficient for acquisition to occur.

2- Developing second language learner motivation, including value, self-efficacy, and attributions: Learners’ motivation, though complicated and critical for all kinds of learning. Motivation influences how difficult students are ready to work on a task, how much they will persist when challenged, and how much satisfaction they feel when performing a learning task. Excellent teaching strategies may enhance students’ motivation for second language learning tasks. Value, self-efficacy, and attribution are crucial components that play a vital role in second language learner motivation.

- **Value:** Second language learners remain more motivated on tasks that they value. They may value a task because they find it substantially exciting or see it as relevant to their times. Teachers attempt various ways to increase students’ interest in academic tasks, including using existing literature, engaging activities that might be enjoyable for students, and focusing on culturally significant content.
- **Self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy is the particular confidence that an individual has, who is able to perform a critical task. Learners with self-efficacy trust that they can solve a problem. They think that the more they study and practice, the more their skills will improve, and they realize that mistakes are just a part of learning. In contrast, learners with low self-efficacy believe that they have the low internal ability. They consider that effort will show their inability, and they prefer easy tasks to avoid making errors. In the second language

learning research, developing learners' self-efficacy can assist them to understand that they can solve problems using the correct tools.

- **Attribution:** Learners' approach to class tasks can depend on the factors they attribute to their success or failure. Language learners usually attribute performance to inherent ability, opportunity, and external influences such as a good teacher or not. These are factors that are essentially seen as out of the learner's control. Also, learners may attribute school achievement to effort or, even further appropriately, to effective strategies. In the approach to second language learning, teachers should be assured that learners experience significant successes with teaching strategies by producing authentic, appropriately challenging tasks and teaching strategies explicitly so that learners understand how to use them. Teaching strategies can be powerful in developing students' motivation for second language acquisition.

3- Analysing characteristics of the second language learners: There are more effective and less effective learners in classrooms for learning the second language (Hong, 2008; Krashen, 1982). Teachers should teach different language learners by their special characteristics and give individualized quality education or adjust the different ways of teaching to suit the particular needs of the second language learners. Researchers found many learner characteristics to know different strategic techniques related to different second language learners (Hong, 2008). They used verbal reports or think-aloud protocols to study learners' mental processes while working on language tasks. Second language learning ability remains essential in the teaching strategies used by many teachers. Some aspects of the more effective and less effective learners are identified as follows:

- Is an active or inactive student;
- Can or cannot control language production;
- Can or cannot follow interacting in the language;
- Can or cannot use previous linguistic experience;
- Can or cannot use different memorization methods;
- Can or cannot ask for an explanation;
- Whether or not there is language tension happening when a learner is required to perform in second language learning;

- Can or cannot be affected by self-confidence, shyness, stage fear, confusion, test stress, social evaluative concern, and communication anxiety;
- Whether or not anxious about making errors in second language learning;
- Whether or not nervous about the results of failing the second language class;

4- A classroom contract for building the language learners' expectations toward independence:

Learning in the classroom is the responsibility of the teachers as well as learners. However, in the language class, they share responsibility. A classroom contract contains an agreement between language teachers and language learners concerning how all will contribute to and perform in the classroom. Contracts are most effective if learners provide input on the agreement with direction from the teacher. Language learners in various classes may communicate with different characteristics, which are great because the point is that a sense of confidence and shared responsibility has been developed between language teacher and learners. Attach the notices in the classroom as reminders of the contract and for addressing reference. For instance, if a characteristic of a qualified learner is to perform homework on time, then the teacher can mention to the contract if there is a difficulty with a student's attitude toward homework. The responsibility for the student's progress has changed entirely to the language learners because they have agreed to behave in a particular manner.

5- Creating the learner-centred classroom to establish students' learning responsibilities: In the learning process, the teacher can lead, guide, help, give materials, and clarify questions, but the teacher cannot learn the language for learners or even make them learn it. Learners must decide themselves what they want to learn, and they need to seek chances for learning. Teachers can also demonstrate how the classroom should operate. The teacher provides students with learning tools that they will always practice to learn a language. A learner-centred classroom is an atmosphere that creates and promotes independent learners who know of their learning processes and who can take control of their learning. A learner-centred classroom must initially be created by the teacher and then taken by learners. It does not happen automatically but instead needs to be worked at to support the environment and be supported by the environment. Learners whose learning skills and strategies are encouraged will include instruction to further their confidence as active academics. Nevertheless, the stage requires to be set in order for strategies instruction to occur successfully.

The following are examples of activities given by teachers who have successfully built learner-centred classrooms.

6- *Setting targets for the language learners lead to improving their motivation:* A critical step toward a learner-centred classroom is getting learners included in learning by setting language goals to increase their engagement in the learning process. Giving learners the chance to set their own goals and the collaboration with those established by the instructional program allows learners to reflect on their reasons for learning a second language, which may lead to enhanced motivation. Goals can be any long-term or short-term; long-term goals are generally an effect of learners' motivations for selecting the language of study. Short-term goals are used as enabling steps toward long-term goals. For instance, if a learners' long-term goal is to read detective novels in the second language, they may emphasise short-term goals such as reading short detective fiction and concentrating on law implementation and crime vocabulary. Short-term goals are generally more directly to reach than long-term goals.

3.5. Fundamentals of learning and teaching English as a foreign language

The fundamentals of learning (in terms of acquiring) the English language and teaching English as a foreign language (Krashen, 1989). These fundamentals are established upon and correspond with the belief that the most helpful learning mechanisms are generally the basics of Stephen D. Krashen's Natural Approach (NA). The language develops naturally and subconsciously by thinking without being aware of grammatical rules (Bishop 2019). Among them, some did learn both spoken and written texts properly. Some acquired the proper usage of spoken English and remained at a basic level with written texts. Moreover, some could not learn the proper form of either spoken or written English; the reason for these difficulties is the L1 interference (Bishop, 2019). Also, from the native language knowledge, the component that forms the interference is the pre-set concept about how the structural construction of and expressions in a language must be while, in this respect, seeing the L1 as the standard. Thus, the pre-set knowledge makes them structure the target language according to the structure of L1.

Therefore, the adjustment to the natural acquiring system is to add to that system something that will get themselves to learn the basic structural construction of the L2, and hence they cannot apply L1's structural style to the structure of L2. The tool is Prescriptive Grammar (Bishop 2019), in particular, these areas concern them with the most fundamental elements essential to constitute the structure of the L2. The L2 learners do require some understanding learning of the PG's most fundamental elements necessary to constitute the most basic structure of the L2.

The L1 data for a child being presented to his brain as the first language is very different from the condition of a child with a simple brain. Here is a different aspect that L1 instruction interferes with the ability to learn the natural structure of the L2; hence it makes it hard to learn a new language. However, learning L2 by acquiring it like the children acquiring L1 is the most natural and most efficient method. It is required to recompense for the limitation to promote the learning process and enable the learners to understand the correct and natural form of the target language. Children do not learn their native language, but they acquire it. They do not know any grammar lessons, or they receive any grammatical instructions. They watch other people using the language and use their ability and natural thinking to understand by inference. However, L2 learning is not as easy as that of L1 learning because each L2 learner's brain is planned by a particular idea about how the language' structure, construction, or patterns should be, and the language is the L1, while no L1 learner's brain holds any such data or idea whatever. The knowledge of L1 subconsciously makes the L2 learners use the L1's structure or pattern to L2. Hence, different in the cases of L1 learners, in the context of seeing other people using the language and using their ability and natural thinking tool to learn by inference. The mentioned programming influences the process as the problem can be more critical if the learner is older.

3.6. Some criticism of the Second Language Acquisition theory

As is the case with the other theories, Krashen's (1982) Second Language Acquisition theory has not passed without criticism. The first point of criticism towards the acquisition and learning distinction. To begin with, Krashen does not determine what he means by conscious and subconscious; these terms are not defined (McLaughlin 1987). Although considerable researchers hold the acquisition and learning distinction in some forms, the evidence supporting it is hard to

find (Ellis, 1990). Hence it stays as an assumption and somewhat of a hypothesis. The exact position, namely that the Acquisition and Learning Hypothesis is not adequate because it cannot pass on empirical investigation.

One of the chief criticisms is that many hypotheses are not falsifiable. Specifically, it is not evident how Krashen's claim that 'learned' knowledge does not relate to the development of 'acquired' knowledge. This can be empirically experimented on (Gregg, 1984; Ellis, 1990). Schulz (1991) notes that Krashen's acquisition and learning contrast and his perspective of comprehensible input as the only explanatory factor for second language acquisition has been queried.

Related to the above is the criticism of Krashen's no-interface position, which holds that learning does not become acquired. For Krashen, the idea that conscious learning does not become unconscious acquisition is established on three claims (Krashen, 1982):

- Occasionally, there is acquisition without learning; some people have significant competence in a second language but do not consciously understand many rules.
- There are cases where learning never evolves acquisition that is, an individual can know the rule and still break it.
- No one learns anywhere nearly all the rules.

McLaughlin (1987) argues that although all these arguments may be valid, they do not include evidence supporting the claim that learning does not evolve acquisition. Again, the ultimate issue is that Krashen does not explain what is meant by acquisition and learning. According to Cook (1993), the claims for no interface between acquired and learnt knowledge seem to have inadequate proof of their own to outweigh the clear counter-evidence.

Another issue is Krashen's request for the Chomskian Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Krashen (1985) says that acquisition is a subconscious process similar in all critical ways to children's acquisition in acquiring their first language and proposes that adults have access to the identical LAD those children use. Gregg (1984) stated that Krashen provides LAD with a much broader scope of a process than is usually the case in Chomsky's theory. Krashen appears to equate

LAD with the acquisition of any kind but, as Gregg observed, this is not like the founder of the term: Chomsky (1980) argues that the LAD is one of the various mental organs that interact with each other and with input information to produce linguistic competence. Conceptual knowledge, actual-world knowledge, common sense, and pragmatic competence are essential for learning and operating language, but they are not parts of LAD.

According to Chomsky, LAD is a construct that represents the child's initial condition before the child acquires linguistic input from the environment; innate linguistic universals constrain LAD to develop grammars that account for the input (McLaughlin 1987). It is not apparent how this concept of LAD can be used for adults. Adults are not in the initial stage concerning language, but they are also endowed with more thoroughly developed cognitive structures. In McLaughlin's view (1987), the claim that adults acquire languages the same way as children rests on a wrong understanding of LAD.

However, Thurlow (2004) argues that Krashen's theory of second language acquisition has affected the processes that second language learning is perceived to require and has started an investigation into the research or the discovery of the order of acquisition despite the different critiques registered against it. This theory would imply that the teacher has to take into consideration all the aspects that are concerned with second language acquisition. These aspects comprise age, personality features, classroom instruction, environmental impacts, and input (Moloi, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to consider these aspects when teaching a second or foreign language as learners come to the classroom with different backgrounds and learning methods. Moreover, this theory considered as a proposal was to provide comprehensible input for acquisition, the spontaneous process of picking up linguistic knowledge from attempts at communicating in the L2. There was only a limited function for the productive practice of specific linguistic forms; there was no role for explicit grammatical rules where the acquisition was concerned and only a minimal part in the case of learning.

Moreover, Both McLaughlin (1987) and Gregg (1984) refuse the view that learning, and consequently monitor, is only known for use in production and not misunderstanding. Krashen provides no evidence for his claim, and Gregg again uses illustrations from his experience with the Japanese to indicate that this is a somewhat counter-intuitive concept. Adding to this, Moloi

(2009) argues that the monitor model cannot be applied under normal conditions. Since it is the only way language can be used, there is no need to discuss various methods of obtaining competence in a second or foreign language.

The natural order hypothesis is not free of criticism either. Krashen's views for this hypothesis are mainly based on morpheme studies that have been criticised on different bases (e.g., whether they compared identical structures) and which, by concentrating on the final form, inform us about little acquisition series (McLaughlin, 1987). Gregg (1984) indicates that there is individual variation and that there may be different developmental flows leading to target-like competence. He states that the probability of more than one flow in effect frustrates the natural order hypothesis. McLaughlin (1987) concluded that if the Natural Order Hypothesis is to be taken, it should be in a weak form, which proposes that some things are learnt before others, but not invariably. Lacking a theory of why this is the case, such a hypothesis does not tell us considerably.

In the matter of the Input Hypothesis, McLaughlin challenges the proof that Krashen provides in support of it: he states that although Krashen acknowledges that alternative answers could not be denied at every point, he still argues that the Input Hypothesis has truth because it provides an answer for all of these phenomena. Both McLaughlin (1987) and Cook (1993) criticised that Krashen does not define the essential idea of comprehensible input and that his explanation as anything that refers to acquisition must be comprehensible input. The theory needs an explicit separate specification of the linguistic forms utilised. Incomprehensible input and the kinds of situational use that make them comprehensible, its most central aspects. Furthermore, the claim that output does not assist acquisition is considered problematic. Gregg (1984) indicates the lack of evidence for the claim that speaking does not help acquisition; besides, practice is certainly helpful to second language acquisition.

Furthermore, Gregg (1984) and McLaughlin (1987) argue that no one has demonstrated that caretaker speech causes any significant contribution toward a child's acquisition of grammar, and no one has indicated that the existence of caretaker speech has any relevance to second language acquisition. Cook (1993) states that there is no critical cause-and-effect connection between particular speech and effective learning. They question the whole concept of simplified speech by

arguing that multiple complex properties of language do not show up in simple sentences. By speaking to learners only in simple sentences, one denies them critical input.

Regarding the Affective Filter Hypothesis. McLaughlin (1987) declares that although there is a general agreement that affective factors play a crucial role in second language learning, it is debatable whether it is essential to propose an affective filter to illustrate the research findings in this area. Krashen would require determining which affective variables, individually or in what combinations, and at what levels, help to 'raise the filter'. One issue is that if the Affective Filter is responsible for insufficient knowledge of a second language, it is required to illustrate why the Filter does not perform for children (Gregg, 1984). It is rather odd when we remember that Krashen does not give any distinctions in Language Acquisition Device (LAD) between children and adults.

Why would the Affective Filter allow only certain features, such as the third person singular 's'? How does it define what aspects of language to allow in? How does it acknowledge different parts of language? That means that the Filter has access to some grammatical theory, but Krashen's model prevents that because the Affective Filter is separate from Language Acquisition Device (LAD) (Gregg, 1984). Also, Cook (1993) notices that Krashen is involved with the effects of the input, rather than with the operations of the mind, this process of acquisition is unclear and ambiguous as ever.

Regarding the three conditions for the Monitor use, Krashen occasionally does not contain "time" (Krashen, 1981), which indicates that this is probably not a crucial standard. The "emphasis on form" condition is questioned by Gregg (1984) when he asks, is it not possible to concentrate on the form because you like to make your meaning obvious, because you want to be more communicatively effective? Why should focusing on form not be compatible with focusing on the message or on content, which is supposed to prevent the use of the monitor? Also, the "know the rule" condition is criticised by Gregg; that "know the rule" is valid in a sense, but again only in a relatively insignificant way; it is less restricted a condition than Krashen proposes since the language learner's view of a rule need not concur with the linguists. Therefore, the acquisition and learning hypothesis and the monitor hypothesis brought together are self-contradictory; since

Krashen presents no evidence for either of these hypotheses, it is hard to deal with the contradiction.

Finally, the monitor hypothesis has been criticised on the grounds that it is far too restricting; learners are capable of learning and using metalingual knowledge to a far greater extent than Krashen allows for (Ellis, 1990). From the point of view of Krashen's pedagogic proposals, these hypotheses are central. If learnt knowledge is convertible into acquired knowledge if production is important for development and if monitoring is widespread, the theoretical foundations of the proposals are destroyed (Ellis, 1990). The monitor hypotheses are inadequate in a number of ways and the pedagogic proposals based on them cannot be fully supported. Nevertheless, Krashen has done the teaching profession a service. He has provided a coherent set of ideas firmly grounded in L2 acquisition research (Ellis, 1990; Moloi, 2009). His work has stimulated not only a discussion of key issues in language pedagogy but, most importantly, it has contributed to the growth of the empirical study of classroom L2 learning itself.

The reasons Krashen provides for distinctions between child and adult language acquisition are questioned too. Gregg (1984) declares that the distinctions are often attributed to dissimilarities in cognitive, social, or physical development; it is not apparent that comprehensible input is an essential factor.

To summarise this section, Ellis (1990), Cook (1993), Gregg (1984), McLaughlin (1987), and Thurlow (2004) conclude that there are severe defects in Krashen's second language acquisition theory such as undefined or badly defined terms, little direct evidence for any of the hypotheses (research Krashen employs in support of his theory mainly was conducted with various purposes), the hypotheses are connected through a chain of assumptions. They are not falsifiable, and lastly, any second language acquisition theory must include some linguistic theory. However, they also indicate that this is not to state that Krashen is wrong in his prescriptions about language teaching.

Although I concur with a number of issues presented by Krashen's critics I believe, that Krashen's theory of second language acquisition is correct. As it is likely up to cognitive psychologists to confirm whether there are definitely two forms of language knowledge (acquisition and learning)

or whether learning can become acquisition, while the usage of the Monitor, mainly as follows its work in comprehension, as well as the conditions, demanded its activation, may be contentious. While the natural order of acquisition in terms of a given series may be asked based on individual variation. The general assertion is that for the accurate acquisition of a second language, one needs to receive enough comprehensible input (influence of affective variables still of whether they be named Affective Filter or not) is, in my opinion, valid.

3.7. Conclusion

This theoretical framework considers Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition theory and its application to language learning and teaching. Krashen's proposals represented the primary goal of teaching. This proposal provided comprehensible input for acquisition, the spontaneous process of picking up linguistic knowledge from attempts at communicating in the L2. It is considered the most influential and extensively known theory that accounts for second and foreign language acquisition. It is also essential because it may answer many of our everyday problems in second language instruction at all levels. Thus, the use of this framework enabled the researcher to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning and acquiring the English language at a Libyan university. This thesis uses this theory with the hope that it will also offer productive and innovative ways of thinking about the role of educators in promoting effective language practices and learning.

The next chapter provides the research methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes ‘valid’ research and which research method(s) is/are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. In order to conduct and evaluate any research, it is therefore important to know what these assumptions are. This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and also the design strategies underpinning this research study.

In this chapter, I will examine the research design employed to conduct this study. The case study design is appropriate for this study, for the aim is to gain detailed descriptions of both the lecturers’ and the students’ perceptions of EFL challenges in the learning of the English language. In addition, the paradigm, research methods and techniques, sampling methods, access to data sources, data collection, analysis techniques and procedures, and the ethical issues relevant to the study, including issues regarding the validity and reliability of the study, will be examined.

This study applies mixed-method to analyse the data, the data collection methods are commensurate with a mixed-method design. Its purpose is to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya and the reasons these challenges impact on effective academic performance. Moreover, the study aims to answer the main three research questions underlying the current investigation, which are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers’ perceptions of students’ challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

This research is framed by the following over-arching features: qualitative and quantitative methodology, interpretive paradigm, research style (case study) and context. The research context encompasses the location, participants, data generation methods, data analysis and interpretation. In addition, I discuss issues of validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations. This section starts by discussing the paradigm employed by the research.

4.2. Interpretive paradigm

A paradigm is a way of seeing the world (Neuman, 2006). Neuman (2006, p.87) asserts that “it is how we observe (using a sense of sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell), measure and understand social reality”. A paradigm gives direction to what is to be researched in a field of study. Shuttleworth (2009) claims that a paradigm is a framework or a dominant way of thinking and doing things that involve shared expectations and rules. In this approach of the research study, the interpretive paradigm is looked at in terms of human behaviour based on the participants that construct and understand it. The researcher considers the interpretative paradigm more applicable and effective in this study because it seeks an actual reality in a specific situation. This approach allows the researcher’s focus to be on understanding what is happening in a given context.

The interpretative model and descriptive research have roots in philosophy and the human sciences, particularly history, philosophy, and anthropology. The methodology centres on how human beings understand their subjective reality and add meaning to it. Social experts approach people, not as individual beings who are in a vacuum but search their world within the whole of their life context. Researchers with this worldview think that personal understanding and experience are essential, just as analysis, prediction, and control (Creswell, 2009).

The paradigm that informs this study is an interpretive approach to investigate the EFL’s challenges in the learning of English at a Libyan university, in which the students’ experiences of the phenomenon are privileged. This is in line with Cohen et al., (2011), who assert that, individuals are studied with their many opinions, characteristics, behaviours, attitudes, and experiences in the interpretive research paradigm. In addition, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) state that people create and associate subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Therefore, interpretive researchers attempt to understand the phenomena by

accessing the meanings participants assign to them. Thus, by using this paradigm, the researcher allows the interviewees the liberty to express their opinions in response to the question without the researcher's intervention. These researchers believe that the interpretative paradigm involves determining what is meaningful or related to the people being investigated and how they experience daily life.

Interpretive researchers believe that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world; thus, they may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed. According to Willis (1995), interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, who believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge. Consequently, an interpretive paradigm, the framework for most qualitative research, views the world as socially constructed by people in their interactions with one another and broader social systems (Creswell, 2009). According to the interpretive paradigm, the target of inquiry in a population is not to generalise but to understand a distinct phenomenon associated with it. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), the interpretive paradigm aims to understand individuals' interpretations of the world around them and their experiences. The interpretive paradigm's objectives are to describe, understand and examine human behaviours, interactions and experiences within and around the social and cultural context in which they occur (Kim, 2003). In addition, as stated by Cohen et al., (2011), interpretive researchers begin with individuals, and come to understand their interpretation of the environment around them. In this respect, researchers do not enter the site with theories about the phenomenon, but theories arise as data is generated. Hence, researchers work with experience and understanding to formulate a theory. Therefore, interpretivism encourages participants to express their views freely in order for them to generate a detailed description of data from the participants' viewpoint. According to TATIRA (2018, p. 53-54), characteristics of interpretivists research are:

Features	Description
Purpose of research	Understand and interpret students' and teachers' perspectives on the factors that could impact the successful use of learning and face-to-face instructional approaches in a manner that they complement each other.
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple realities. • Reality can be explored and constructed through human interaction, and meaningful actions. • Discover how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. These writings could be text and visual pictures. • Many social realities exist due to varying human experience, including people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences.
Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts. • Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings. • Inquirer and the inquired into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening reading and writing. • More personal, interactive mode of data collection.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes of data collected by text messages, interviews, and reflective sessions. • Research is a product of the values of the researcher.

Table 4.1. Characteristics of interpretivists research (TATIRA, 2018, p. 53-54)

4.2.1. Justification for an interpretive paradigm for this study

The interpretive paradigm was appropriate for this research as I investigated the lecturers' and the students' perceptions of EFL challenges in English language learning. Using interviews and focus group discussion, I gave the participants a chance to express their views freely. As a result of my stay at the research site, (a university), I generated thick data. Therefore, I used the case study design in this study, which operates well with the interpretive paradigm.

4.3. Research methodology

According to Silverman (2018, p. 34), methodology refers to a general approach to examining the study topic. It proves how one will go about studying any phenomenon. The methodology defines a method for researchers to generate data for analysis (Carter & Little, 2008). Research methodology is seen as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained and also assists in developing the work plan of research (Christiansen et al., 2010). It is also defined as the procedures by which researchers describe, explain, and predict phenomena (Rajeseeka, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013). Thus, I use a mixed-method approach in this study. The research purpose is to gain a complete understanding of a case, therefore collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data is needed.

4.3.1. Convergent mixed methods

A mixed methods research design collects, analyses, and processes quantitative and qualitative methods in one study or a group of studies for understanding a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The basic premise is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, provides a better insight into the research problem and questions than each method by itself. Thus, it is not simply collecting and analysing two different research approaches (qualitative and quantitative). It consists of merging (combining), connecting (having one database describe the other), building (having one database build something new to be used in the other), and embedding (placing one database within another more extensive database). In short, the data are mixed or integrated into a convergent mixed-methods study.

A convergent mixed methods collect qualitative and quantitative data, merge the data, compare the results, and explain any differences (Creswell, 2020). A primary purpose for this design is that one data collection form provides strengths to balance the weaknesses of the other method and that a complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. It gives different results in the study and can be used as a check for one another (Creswell, 2020). The researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses both data sets separately, compares the results from the analysis of both data sets, and creates an explanation as to whether the results support or differ. As shown in fig (4.1) in this design, the mixed methods researcher should do the following:

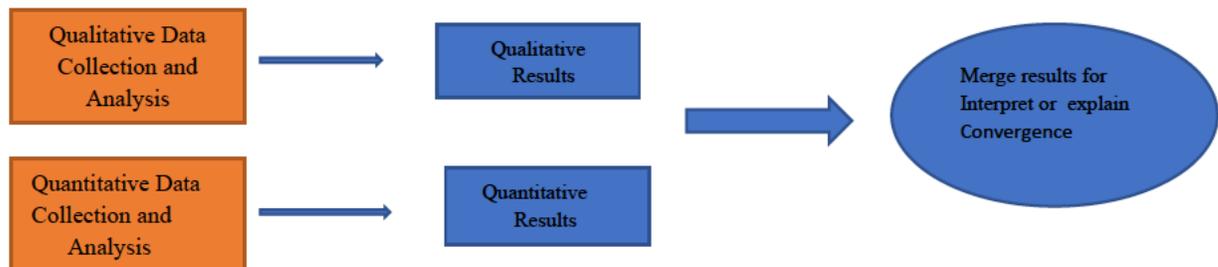


Fig. 4.1. A convergent mixed research (Creswell, 2020)

- A researcher should compare the quantitative and qualitative findings from a study to identify if they converge and provide similar results.
- The researcher provides the same advantage to both quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher considers quantitative and qualitative data and sees them as approximately equal sources of information in the study. In other words, what priority or weight does the researcher give to the quantitative and qualitative data collection? One form of data is given more attention or emphasis in the study; however, quantitative and qualitative data are sometimes employed equally.
- Collects both the quantitative and the qualitative data together or simultaneously during the study.

- Compares the quantitative and qualitative analyses findings to know if the two databases give similar or different results. This comparison may happen in the discussion section of a study.

A convergent mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative) was used to understand and explore students' beliefs, experience behaviours and interactions, and students' attitudes towards their English language challenges, which is the aim of this research. A literature review such as (Abuklaish, 2014; Sarantakos, 2005) assumed that convergent mixed-method research would allow for the strengths and weaknesses of each method. The purpose of using such methods is that both methods are suitable for answering the research questions related to the study. As one method alone will not give a complete response to research questions.

Abuklaish, (2014) argues that multi-methods and multi-sources should be used to enhance the reliability and validity of the study. Cohen et al., (2011) also supports this method and emphasizes that researchers use more than one data method and source, and to balance quantitative methods with qualitative ones because single data is generally not enough to make an adequate basis for understanding needs and study decision-making. The findings of both methods will be brought together when data from the current study is interpreted. The analysis will either use areas where the findings merge to enhance the study or to demonstrate any lack of merging that may occur (Sarantakos, 2005).

Moreover, it is assumed that this combination of findings; quantitative findings added to the qualitative foundation. Including, that it provides detailed and meaningful descriptions and confirmative data so that the research questions of this study can be fully answered (Sarantakos, 2005; Rule & John, 2011). The complexity and scope of this study request for triangulation of data. Triangulation introduces one purpose for mixing methods and integrates multiple databases to understand a research problem. You could obtain quantitative and qualitative data separately in two stages so that data from one source could enhance, elaborate, or complement data from the other source.

According to Mouton and Marais (1990), triangulation applies different or multiple methods of data collection that can increase the researchs' reliability. Also, it will be accurate and that the

study will try to look at evidence from different views (Abuklaish, 2014). Rule & John (2011) reveal two kinds of triangulation, methodological triangulation, which examines significant similarities between methods, and data triangulation, used in this study, how different data sources are used to understand issues. This form of triangulation is expected in case study research. According to Simons (2009), triangulation is a means of investigating the relevance and importance of issues or testing out arguments and aspects from different angles to generate and strengthen the evidence supporting critical claims.

The researcher believes that it is better to look at something from different angles than to look at it in only one way and a study using both quantitative and qualitative research is more comprehensive. The main focus in this study is on qualitative information, but quantitative data supports it. To give supporting evidence from multiple sources, this study will compare previous literature published about EFL challenges in English learning and implement the qualitative and quantitative methodology. Therefore, this research will be a qualitative-driven study with a qualitative base and a consecutive quantitative element. It is used to guide the researcher to answer research questions. It is hoped that these methods will not only provide a multidimensional perspective but will also provide reliable information. This can be interpreted with a degree of reliability.

4.3.2. Qualitative research methods

The qualitative research approach is appropriate for this study; because it will explore and describe the phenomena of innovation in language needs as perceived by the respondents. It is suggested by Abuklaish (2014) that this type of research reduces the distance between researcher and participants in the study to ensure that the phenomenon of innovation is thoroughly explored.

The qualitative approach is related to the quality of whatever is researched. In other words, the qualitative approach involves examining and reflecting on the less tangible aspects of a research subject, e.g., values, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions (Rajeseeka et al., 2013). According to Maree (2007, p.51), qualitative research is used to understand the process, the social and cultural contexts that underlie various behavioural patterns and is mainly concerns with the “what” questions of research. This is supported by Cohen et al., (2011) that qualitative research is not

about numbers but about generating in-depth, rich verbal data sets. Abuklaish (2014) provides many reasons for choosing a qualitative research method. He states that it is required because:

- The nature of the research question often starts with a how or a what;
- The topic needs to be explored (variables cannot be easily recognized);
- If there a need to present a detailed view of the topic;
- It is a need to study individuals in their natural setting;
- Adequate time and resources are needed for comprehensive data collection in the field and detailed data analysis of text information;
- Interviews are accessible to qualitative research;
- There is a need to emphasize the researcher's role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participants' opinion, rather than an expert who passes decisions on participants;
- The researcher attempts to obtain data on the perceptions of local participants from the inside through a process of deep study, empathetic attitude and suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the issues under discussion; and
- The researcher's way of gathering data was interviewing, which needed a setting where participants could freely express their methods and views about the topic.

In contrast to quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers do not send out instruments to participants to complete. Instead, qualitative researchers go to the same site, talk straight to the people involved, and observe them as they operate within their natural setting (context) (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers engage in face-to-face interactions with participants over time, usually an extended period (Creswell, 2009). In such studies, researchers are the key instruments for data generation. This is done through observing actions and interviewing participants. The researchers collect their data, and they do not rely on instruments developed by other researchers; they instead develop their instruments. As this study focuses on providing in-depth, rich and descriptive data, four types of data collection are employed: individual interviews and focus group discussion.

Briefly, in this study, the researcher uses a qualitative research method to investigate the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at the Libyan university. This is done using evidence

from their interpretations and experiences of their challenges in English learning in a specific university. It relies on collecting qualitative data through an interview, focus group discussion, observation and documentation. Furthermore, it allows researchers to test an existing theoretical framework and to study the issues in depth.

Additionally, qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds (Ritchie et al., 2013), as evident in the data that is collected. As such, qualitative research contrasts with quantitative research, which depends on positivism in that it does not aim to change or transform the data collected into numbers. Instead, language remains at the centre of the endeavour. Another important aspect of qualitative research that distinguishes it from the quantitative research model is that the researcher is very important given that he acts like an actor. The researcher analyses both quantitative and qualitative data separately, compares the results from the analysis of both data sets and explains if the results support or differ from each other. The researcher's perception of the social phenomena in question will notify all research steps, from the beginning to the final conclusions drawn.

As a qualitative researcher, to avoid biases, my role as the researcher is to record the subjectivity of the participant's experiences in real-life context. Maree (2007) posits that qualitative studies accept the researcher's subjectivity as something that cannot be eliminated and sees the researcher as the research instrument in the data gathering process. In addition, qualitative research is not about the number of participants; however, it is about the in-depth information gained from the participants I have chosen. This particular number of EFL Libyan university students with the assumption that they will provide me with rich and in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation, which are their challenges in learning English, and why do they have these challenges, and what are EFL lecturers' perceptions regarding the challenges of students in learning English in a Libyan university.

Justification for a qualitative approach for this study:

As is the case with qualitative research, this research intended to get an in-depth, holistic perspective of investigating the challenges EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan

university by interacting closely with students and lecturers in three faculties. In this regard, the research sought to understand human behaviour and experiences in realistic situations, which helped develop grounded theories from the participant's experiences. I interacted with the students and lecturers at these three faculties daily to understand their behaviour regarding their experiences on English learning challenges; what challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university, what EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university, and why do students have these challenges

Through qualitative research, I continued my stay at the site for about three months talking directly to the students and the lecturers, interviewing them as they carried on with their regular duties. I did not disrupt the day-to-day activities at the university; hence a holistic overview of their English learning challenges emerged. I understood the logistical arrangements, explicit and implicit rules at the site as I am teaching there. I generated data from the insiders' perspective through face-to-face interactions without bringing in any pre-conceived ideas about the situation. Moreover, I was not restricted to particular questions. The interview guide only assisted me to get started, and the discussions helped me yield related information regarding students' experiences on English learning in these faculties. Through qualitative research, I collected data in a more informed and relaxed manner, which encouraged participants to give detailed information about their challenges in English learning.

4.3.3. Quantitative research methods

The quantitative approach is based on “numerical data; quantitative data are generated when breadth is required or when one wants to answer the what questions” (Christiansen et al., 2010, p. 36). Quantitative research is concerned with describing and accounting for the regularity of social conduct rather than finding and interpreting the meanings that people have brought to their behaviour (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Behavioural patterns can often be divided into variables and described by numbers. Social phenomena are tested by presenting stimuli such as survey questions, and data is collected through systematic, repeated, and controlled measurements. It is based on the assumption that social processes take place outside the understanding of the

individual, which restricts what the individual does, accessible to researchers by their previous empirical and theoretical knowledge (Rule & John, 2011).

Quantitative research uses experimental methods and test measures hypothetical generalizations. It needs to generate numerical data or data that can be converted into numbers that can be easily separated to be statistically counted and modelled, and the factors that could be distracted from the research intention can be removed (Christiansen et al., 2010; Sarantakos, 2005). The result of the data collection of the numbers can then be subjected to statistical analysis; a questionnaire (see appendix 6) was used only in this study. Consequently, the number of participants involved were thirty students and the participants' findings can be counted statistically.

4.3.4. Limitations of mixed methods

The concept of mixing or combining research methods has raised paradigmatic issues which are still unsolved. Barbour (1998) asserts that a mixed paradigm could be possible, whilst combining methods in the same paradigm, such as qualitative, is problematic because every method within the qualitative method has its assumption. This has been considered in this study. Abuklaish (2014) also argues that the question, then, is not whether two sorts of data and associated methods can be linked during study design, but whether it should be done, how it will be done, and for what purposes.

Generally, all research approaches have their limitations, and so do mixed methods research. One of the apparent problems with this approach is that it is time-consuming, both initially and in the end, especially when the researcher tries to match the results together. Abuklaish (2014) showed some limitations as follows:

- It can be challenging for an individual researcher to carry out qualitative and quantitative research, mainly if two or more approaches are used simultaneously; it may need a research team.
- A researcher has to learn about varied methods and approaches and understand how to combine them properly.

- Methodological researchers contend that one should always use either a qualitative or a quantitative method.
- It is more costly and time-consuming.
- Some of the details of mixed research still need to be worked out entirely by research methodologists (e.g., problems of paradigm mixing, how to qualitatively analyse quantitative data, how to interpret contrasting results).

One can conclude that there are various ways to carry out research, where each method has its advantages and disadvantages, and each makes it simpler to understand some aspects and hide others, as does a mixed method. Despite these limitations, the use of the mixed method is not meant to replace qualitative or quantitative methods (Barbour, 1998) instead of to:

- Create ways to strengthen both the quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study, reduce weaknesses, and ensure that the weaknesses of one method do not overlap with the weaknesses of another.
- Provide rich data, expand the interpretation of findings, and give a good understanding of research problems.
- Advance the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings, including several data collection methods and data analysis (Barbour, 1998).

Barbour (1998) argues that combining both methods is possible. Punch (2005) also asserts that there is no reason for avoiding mixed methods. According to him, the combination allows researchers to gain the strengths of the two approaches and compensate for each approach's weaknesses. Besides, the limitations have been taken into consideration by the researcher. The researcher made sure that the processes of data collection and analysis were consistent.

The previous discussion shows that decisions about which methods would suit a particular type of research relies on the research questions that must be answered. Hence, there is no wrong or good research design or method; both qualitative and quantitative approaches do not eliminate each other in a research study, and both are usually used to complement each other. Both types of research also use similar elements, stating their purpose, identifying the research community,

presenting results, and collecting data for a specific purpose. Furthermore, all paradigms have strengths and other weaknesses. One method alone will not provide a complete answer to the research questions. This research will be a qualitatively driven project with a qualitative foundation and a quantitative sequential element.

4.4. The researcher's role in this study

The researcher is perceived as one of the social world's parts (Cohen et al., 2011), and according to the qualitative viewpoint, researchers associate with those they study, whether this interaction considers the living form with or observing sources over a long-standing period, or real collaboration. The researcher seeks to reduce the distance between him\ her and those being researched (Creswell, 2009). In this study, as a researcher, I have been teaching at this university under investigation for the past three years (after undertaking my Masters), which means that I have extensive background knowledge of the university setting and the participants in the study as I am familiar with many members of the university.

Abuklaish (2014) pointed out three features of being an insider-researcher: 1-getting a better understanding of the culture being studied; 2- not changing the flow of social interaction unusually; and 3- having an established familiarity which increases both the communication and the evaluation of accuracy. Furthermore, researchers know the politics of the institution, which will assist them in how it works. These advantages enabled me to obtain information easily and propose that I understand the material that will be presented in this study.

Also, being an insider-researcher may face some problems. Hewitt-Taylor (2002) demonstrates that good familiarity with the culture being studied can lead to a loss of objectivity; researchers may also be bothered by role duality. They usually face the challenges of adapting their insider role as lecturers and researchers (Abuklaish, 2014). Another obstacle for the insider- researcher is that research methods, mainly interviews, are often not part of the daily practice in Libya, and for lecturers and learners to state something negative about others and people holding a high position or office is rare and saying something positive is seen as boasting. This might be one reason why some teachers declined to participate because I am an insider-researcher.

Concerning the composite method frame chosen for this study, the researcher is the primary means of data collection, interpretation, and analysis. I was involved in collecting information from various sources to understand the situation, analyse data, engage in problem-solving, and work as an organiser. I initiated the process by obtaining official letters from my academic leader at UKZN, asking for cooperation from the university in Libya. Several sources of data collection were used, and several disadvantages have been pointed out; it is essential to address and overcome the disadvantages to ensure reliable insider research. In the framework of this study, the issues regarding the use of a mixed-method, and as an insider-researcher, along with how these could be overcome, were reviewed with the supervisor and taken into consideration. In this respect, I have to share responsibility for ensuring ethical research practice to protect the participants' rights and ensure that this study does not have any unacceptable negative influences. In order to form a shared ethics context, an explicit discussion was run with all participants, lecturers and students, and then Information Sheets and Consent Forms (see appendices 3 -2) were given out, read and then filled by all. As the primary researcher, it is my ethical duty to ensure that any data analysis will be confidential and not attributed to anyone.

The next task was the data collection which included completing the questionnaires, conducting interviews, and focus group discussions of Arts, Law, and Education students. My primary roles throughout these sessions were to distribute the questionnaires and help the students with any queries that were noticed in completing them (see 4.7.3). During conducting of interviews, I attempted to provide the appropriate atmosphere for the participants by offering them the right to withdraw and use English or Arabic language where appropriate (see 4.7.1). An effort was made to avoid any personal questions.

4.5. Research design

According to Cohen et al., (2011), a research design is a plan for the research. In a sense, according to them, a research design refers to a plan for choosing participants, site, and data generation methods to answer research questions. The purpose of a research style or design varies according to “[...] the study’s nature and purpose, the type of population, the research’s structure, the number of researchers and research assistants, and the ideological association of the researcher, among

other factors” (Sarantakos, 2005, pp.105-6). Research design offers a guide that leads the research action, order and clarity in the process of study, and it also makes it easier and more effective (Sarantakos, 2005). There are different ways of doing research, such as ethnographic research, case study, surveys, and experimental research (Christiansen et al., 2010).

This research study adopted a case study approach to conduct this study, the main aim of the research is to develop an in-depth understanding of lecturers’ and students’ views on the EFL challenges in English learning and why they have these challenges. Christiansen et al., (2010) defines a case study as an in-depth study of one individual, a group of individuals or an institution. It is in-depth in the sense that the researcher concentrates on a specific entity that has been selected for purposes of that study, gathering as much data as possible and further analysing it without generalising the findings because the social reality that exists in one context will never be the same in another context. In the same vein, a case study is defined by Rule and John (2011, p.4) “as a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge”. Shuttleworth (2009), on the other hand, asserts that a case study is used to study a particular situation in depth. A case study generates an understanding of and insights into a particular situation by providing a deep, rich description of the case and explaining its relation to its broader contexts (Rule & John, 2011).

A case study indicates one case or an insignificant number of cases to be studied in detail utilizing different methods and data while there might be different purposes and research questions. It chooses a small geographical area or a limited number of people to become participants in the study. Therefore, in a case study, the researcher focuses on the entity and studies it in so much detail, hence offering a wealth of knowledge (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Yin (2003, p.1) suggests principal guidelines of the simple steps that must be followed in case study research. This is shown in the diagram below (Fig. 4.2). The researcher intended to follow this process to conduct this case study to investigate a research issue.

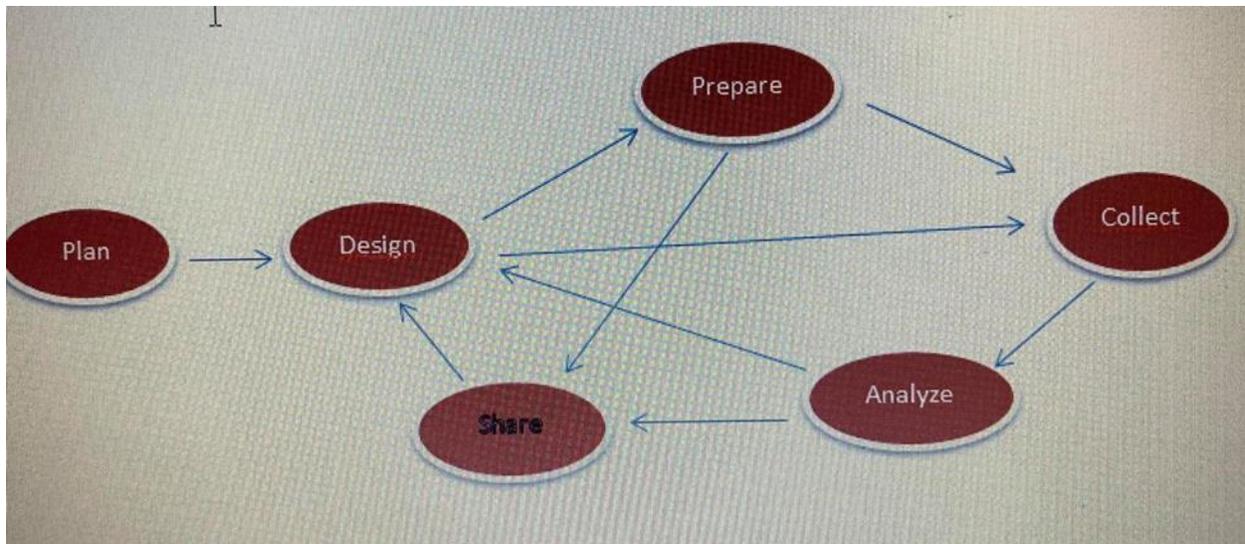


Fig. 4.2. Doing case study research: A linear but refined process (Yin, 2009, p.1)

There were several reasons for choosing case study research for this study. My choice was based on some of the features and the subsequent strengths of case study research design (Creswell, 2009):

- It allowed me to explore multiple perspectives, explore contrasting perspectives of the participants and explain how and why things have occurred at the case study of the first year university student.
- Over this research design, I was able to explore and realize the process and dynamics of change through describing, documenting and interpreting events as they had occurred in the real-life setting.
- I selected this design because the case study is flexible, neither particular time nor constrained by a method. It was conducted over a year and was written in different forms and distances suitable to the timescale.
- It allowed me to involve all participants in the research process. The researcher did not dominate the research process, and all information was obtained through an understanding relationship between the participants and me.
- As a qualitative study, the investigator searches a specific case in its real-life environment, limited by time and action.

- It collects detailed data by use of multiple data collection methods during a particular time frame.
- The researcher develops a complex full view, analyses documents, comprehensively views participants and conducts the research in its natural environment.
- It demands the researcher to be physically present and tries to give recent phenomena.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), one advantage of the case study is that an individual researcher can conduct it without requiring a research team. This then implied that I could develop the data generation instruments independently and generate and interpret data without other researchers' assistance. The other advantage of a case study is its ability to search deeply, analyse intensely and get an in-depth and detailed comprehension of the apparent fact under review (Creswell 2009). In this regard, I deeply investigated the challenges that EFL students face in English learning and hence got an in-depth and detailed understanding of what occurred at a Libyan university. In regarding lecturers' experiences and perceptions of students' challenges in English learning. Since a case study has an inherent weakness of sample limitation, I did not seek to generalise the findings since a case is studied in its own right, not for generalisation, and hence the results will not be generalised.

Therefore, the use of a case study in this research is to describe in-depth the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English at a university in Libya. Three particular faculties' lecturers and students were studied at this university. The aim of studying one educational institution was to ensure the use of a small sample of participants. A small sample permitted an in-depth description of the EFL challenges in English learning in a real context, the lecturers' college in their day to day activities. Only six lecturers, twelve students, and another thirty students for the study' questionnaires were selected. Thus, by studying only three colleges, the study understood the case in detail and in its natural setting. I, therefore, collected data from lecturers in their natural setting in this university in order to respond to the three research questions:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at the Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?

3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

4.5.1. Limitation of case study design

It is essential as a researcher to mention some potential limitations that case study research has:

- The subjectivity of the researcher is perhaps a concern for much personal involvement in the study process and can be a big issue. There could be concerns about possible bias and me being in a position of some influence as a researcher and a lecturer at the sample faculties.
- While the documents we record cannot express the reality and facts as lived, there is much we can do to focus on the timing of the study and the limited nature of interpretations so the readers can arrive at their own decisions.
- It is important to note that in case study research, formal generalization for policy-making is not the aim. However, the aim is to present a good form of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and to add to the knowledge of a specific topic.

In addition to the limitations mentioned above, I made use of a small sampled approach. This study was limited to one university only, which comprised a small sample of first-year students and their lecturers. This study focused on one phenomenon, and that was to understand in-depth, despite the number of persons or sites in the study. For this reason, the data collected is not generalizable in any way and is of limited predictive value. However, McMillan and Schumacher (2002) clarify that in qualitative research, the purpose is to extend the results rather than generalize the findings. Also, they argue that the demand for the generalizability of findings deriving from case study research is the subject of on-going debate. It must be noted that some authors have claimed that the case study of a single case is limited because its findings cannot be generalized to other cases. In my opinion, case study research is proper for generating in-depth and situated understandings of a phenomenon, and in my conception, it serves this sole purpose in this research project.

4.6. Research sampling

In this study, I made use of purposeful sampling. A small group of individuals were selected, who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest. This research is trusted to explore and describe the phenomenon through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, including multiple sources of information-rich in context. These included students interview and focus group interviews. Moreover, in this sampling, the researcher chose cases that would afford contrasting experiences.

Sampling involves making decisions about the people, setting, events or behaviour to observe (Cohen et al., 2011). As sampling ensures accuracy, this is so because it allows the researcher to generate detailed data from fewer cases than from a population (TATIRA, 2018). Cohen et al. (2011) assert that sampling is a crucial element of research, a small group of people or objects chosen for participation in a study. The sampling theory suggests drawing “scientific” samples that are random and representative of a population and whose data can tell us more about the population in general (Maree & Pietersen, 2007b, p.172). Whilst “[...] the size of the sample is different depending on your research style” (Christiansen et al., 2010, p.41). There are two significant types of sampling methods:

- Probability sampling: this is also referred to as random sampling. In this sampling process, the chances of members of the wider population being chosen for the sample are identified; each member of the larger population gets an equal opportunity to be used in the sample, and their inclusion and exclusion is a matter of chance. (Cohen et al., 2011; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b). Various probability sampling methods are available, such as random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling, multi-phase sampling and stage sampling.
- Non-probability sampling: this type of sampling method is also known as a purposive sampling method. In this type of sampling method, not every member of the broader population has an equal chance of being included in the research sample, and the researcher has deliberately chosen a specific section of the population to include and exclude from the sample. (Cohen et al., 2011; Maree & Pietersen, 2007b). Many types of sampling methods

have been known in the context of non-probabilistic sampling methods, such as convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, dimensional sampling, snowball sampling, voluntary sampling and theoretical sampling.

Consequently, the location in which this research study took place is at a university in Libya. Hence, a purposive sampling method and a convenience sampling method was chosen by me in order to get rich and accurate data and to choose the location of the current study. More so, I had specifically chosen the location and participants that were easily accessible for me and were also experienced in the knowledge of the study I am researching (Christiansen et al., 2010). According to Nieuwehuis (2007), purposive sampling involves selecting the research locations, incidents, events, and activities to be included for data collection. In purposive sampling, “[...] the limitation in terms of representing the population and generalising the results to the population should always be kept in mind” (Maree & Pietersen, 2007a, p.177). In this regard, I chose these specific institutions using purposive sampling to conduct my research study as I live close to the campuses where this study was conducted and because I am also teaching at this particular campus, which gave me easy access.

Moreover, after gatekeeper permission was sought and obtained from the university to recruit my participants, students and staff were approached and invited to participate in my study. I went to a cluster of languages in the school of Arts, and I asked for some first-year students (some of them are my students in the English language department). I gave the participants a short introduction and a very clear picture of my study and their contribution to my research. For the other two schools (Law and Education faculties), I used my colleagues and friends who are lecturers in these two faculties as participants. They helped me a lot as they promised to recruit students and gain their consent by advertising my research ahead of time to their students. Then I went to the relevant lectures for a few minutes at the beginning of their lectures to introduce myself to the students. Then I did the following, I gave them brief information about my study to inform them about the aims and the objects of the current study and how they will contribute to my research. Immediately after lectures, I registered the students interested in participating in this study, and then I gave them an appointment and date to meet in a specific venue.

Cohen et al., (2011, p.157) argue that in many cases, purposive sampling is used with the convenience sampling method in order to access “knowledgeable people” who have in-depth knowledge about a particular issue through their experiences. In other words, the researcher has chosen this specific institution and sample of six lecturers and twelve students to get their experiences and perceptions of the challenges they face in English learning in a Libyan university. Two lecturers are selected from each of the three faculties resulting in a total of six lecturers in all (see table 4.2). As Libyan students are EFL learners, lecturers who will participate in this study will be English modules’ teachers who have experience with EFL teaching.

In addition, these lecturers should teach the students who will participate in this study to gain more insights into their challenges in the learning of English. The researcher tries to balance the gender as she selects the six lecturers. Four students shall be selected per faculty, and this will result in twelve learner-participants in all. The four students will be selected based on gender per faculty in order to give a balanced student- perception of their challenges in English learning. It is worth mentioning that the lecturers and students that the researcher met in one to one interviews will not participate in the focus group discussion as the researcher will meet new students (I mean six students for one to one interviews and the other six students will be for the focus group discussion) so I could gain more insights and information from students.

Faculties	Lectures	Gender	Students	Gender	Language
Arts	2	Female	4	Female	Arabic
Education	2	Male	4	Female	
Law	2	Female	4	Female	

Table 4.2: The distribution of the Interview’ participants

The questionnaire was distributed randomly to 30 students around the university to gain more information. Within this line of research, there are different ways of collecting data, most notably

observations and interviews. The selection of which method depends mainly on the nature of the data to be collected and the research objectives.

4.6.1. Selection of the participants

For inclusion criteria, my participants have to be EFL students who speak English as a foreign language. They should also be first-year university students between 18 and 19 years old enough to provide legal consent (typically 18 years old). It is essential in qualitative research because it helps ensure that the participants can provide you with the information needed to address your research questions.

For lecturers, I included lecturers who specialise in English language modules and have sufficient experience (more than four years). These three faculties have very effective educators with longstanding teaching reputations acquired after many years of teaching service, and they would be likely to be able to assist in providing the information about the phenomenon under investigation. This is considered an adequate sample for reliable data analysis in qualitative research. To deal with language issues (Arabic Language), I am an Arabic speaker, so I do not need a translator or an interpreter for the duration of the students' interviews.

Exclusion selection criteria need to be carefully considered to conduct my study ethically and I only interviewed participants who had the potential to give me relevant information. Also, I excluded some students who were born and grew up overseas (in the USA, UK), and returned to Libya with their parents, as they have done their foundation and intermediate phase there, these students speak English fluently. They will not give me relevant information as they do not struggle with the English language. For lectures, I excluded the lecturers who are not specialists in English language teaching and have less than four years of experience in EFL teaching.

4.7. Methods of data generation

The study by Christiansen et al., (2010) shows that research generally relies on empirical information. This means that research is based on collecting data or the collection of evidence to answer particular questions. A research method consists of specific procedures, tools, and techniques to gather and analyse data (Wahyuni, 2012). In qualitative research, there are different methods of data generation employed; namely, the observation method, interview method, focus group discussion, focus group interview, life history, document analysis, visual media (Cohen et al., 2011).

The study at hand employs three data generation methods used in a qualitative research approach known as the interview schedule, questionnaires and a focus group discussion method are employed to collect data from the participants (Patton & Cochran 2002; Cohen et al., 2012). The interview schedule and focus group discussion are the primary data collection methods, whilst I used the questionnaires method to prompt and complement the other two methods' information. In other words, researchers are required to choose the method that will be most effective in obtaining the information needed to answer their research questions (Christiansen et al., 2010). The methods are discussed in detail below, starting with the individual interview method.

4.7.1. Individual interview schedule method

The interview is the most suitable data collection instrument used in the qualitative study. It is the most critical way of understanding people (TATIRA, 2018). The reason behind choosing such a method is based on the researcher's purpose to gather in-depth information about English lecturers perceptions, experiences and thoughts (Cohen et al., 2000). Interviews have been extensively conducted to investigate the attitudes of individuals towards certain phenomena. According to Punch (2005), a face-to-face interview is a perfect way of accessing people's perceptions and descriptions of situations and structures of reality. It enables the researcher to obtain a deeper insight into the phenomenon studied and gained information that cannot be obtained by observing the participants' feelings about and attitudes towards the world. The interview is considered one of the most important data collection methods in the qualitative research design, provided that vast volumes of data can be obtained and interpreted. Interviews are verbal interactions between two or more individuals with the intention of gathering meaningful knowledge for research purposes

(Baxter and Jack, 2008). Interviews have three forms: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The significant difference between these types lies in whether the questions are pre-determined or not and in how the questions are developed (Khalid, 2017).

Fontana and Frey (2000) define the three types of the interview as the structured interviews, and there is a list of pre-prepared questions which are asked to every respondent similarly; in the same way. In semi-structured interviews, there are specific questions prepared before but openly so the interviewer can ask other new questions, depend on the respondent's answers. The third type of interview is unstructured, and this is defined as being informal with open questions with no prepared list of themes for discussion. The main purpose of all interviews within this paradigm is to begin to develop an understanding of respondents' worlds.

In this study, the individual interview was one to one semi-structured interviews. The researcher can get close to the world of the target population and understand how they interpret this world at different points and levels. This method was used to obtain qualitative data to complement the quantitative data produced from the questionnaires. In other words, it tried to provide the opportunity to investigate further and to collect data that could not have been achieved by other methods (questionnaires, focus group discussion). Also, the interviews will validate the information that may already have been obtained. In other words, semi-structured interview questions are flexible and open-ended, which allows the participants to add new concepts or issues that might arise from the conversation aside from the particular questions introduced by the researcher. Various studies maintain that a semi-structured interview is a very suitable method when the qualitative research method is deployed (Khalid, 2017). Hence, this type of interviewing is both flexible and systematic, as information can be gathered from everyone in a unique way. TATIRA (2018, p. 64) mentioned the advantages of the semi-structured interview as a data generation tool:

- The researcher obtains data systematically and is assured that no data are omitted.
- The face to face interaction promotes word for word recording of responses that provides immediate feedback and gives room for searching and clarification of issues; hence, the researcher can straight away cross-check data for authenticity.

- The researcher can pick up non-verbal interviews such as facial expressions, tones of voice and signs from the surroundings and the general context. Thus, it can instantly confirm that the participant provides false data by observing facial expression and voice tone.
- It can generate data among the youthful, old, and untaught that is hard to obtain through other methods.
- When the participants are remained comfortable and secure, they could reveal additional information through some spontaneous actions that could not be exposed and other states of affairs practical when analysing data.
- Using semi-structured interviews have advantages in that the participants respond to similar questions, thus mounting comparability of responses. Data were complete for every individual on the topics being dealt with in the interview. This interview type enabled me to extract participants' meanings and create a sense of the main events in their world.
- They allow for discovering new concepts of the problem by investigating in detail some information given by respondents. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to enable respondents to tell their stories as much as possible.

There were twelve interviews because each of the six learners and six lecturers were interviewed separately in order to gain their views and experiences on their challenges in learning English. Each session ranged between thirty to forty minutes. These were conducted in an isolated venue in the English department where the possibility of being interrupted was minimal. Rapport was created with the learners by first asking them general questions about themselves and explaining to them what the whole session was all about.

Thus, it should be stated that before I started the process of interviewing lecturers and students (in individual interviews or in a focus group discussion), I gave the participants brief information about my study in order to inform them about the aims of the current study and to make my areas of interest clear. In addition, I repeated this process of introduction with every one of my participants. Such a process is vital as the participants need to understand the main objective of interviews before providing information about their experiences to the researcher (Khalid, 2017). Some notes were taken during the interview process, either in one-to-one or in the focus group, as I was swamped in interaction with the participants and engaging with them by body language and

eye contact. In order to establish a good working relationship between the participants, I did the following; before the end of each interview, I asked the interviewees if they had any more questions. I inquired if the participants would like to add any additional comments that are relevant to the study that might not have been mentioned during the interview. Lastly, at the end of each interview, I expressed my great appreciation and cooperation to the participants in my research. The regular time for every interview was about thirty to forty minutes.

The conversation was recorded using an audio-recording instrument, and sometimes I used my notebook. On one occasion, when I interviewed a female student who was not comfortable with the audio recorder, she asked me to delete her voice and no longer participated at the end of the interview. Accordingly, I fully respected her decision and was happy to adhere to her request and deleted it. Also, three of the lecturers refused to be recorded during the interview; instead, they asked me to write down their interviews in my notebook. After the sessions, the researcher listened to the recording to ensure that the learner's views have indeed been captured and rephrased correctly in my notebook. The data was then translated and transcribed.

As I mentioned before, all the lecturers and the students whose first language is Arabic; I tried to start interviews with some of them in English, but unfortunately, their answers were concise, and they were mixed up between Arabic and English. They have struggled to communicate their thoughts fluently or simply in English. Therefore, according to their demand, I have conducted all the interviews with students whose mother tongue is Arabic, in Arabic. I was trying to fulfil their request. If the participants were not very relaxed, I would have risked losing data that might benefit my research (Khalid, 2017). I believe that people spoke much more spontaneously and gave me much more detail when they spoke in Arabic and their knowledge of local issues about their challenges in English learning. Even the lecturers' English language was limited, and their ability to speak about their attitudes would be limited and shallow. It was easier for them to express themselves in Arabic, and then all the interviews were translated.

4.7.2. Focus group discussion method

A focus group discussion refers to a group of people who are brought together and asked about their perceptions, opinions or beliefs about a particular topic supplied by the researcher about a

collective rather than a personal view (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This method of generating data is different from the focus group interview. The focus group discussion method is another alternative method of producing data that is used to explore people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours during discussion (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). It is expected that a focus group discussion enables the participants concerned to pay attention to the thoughts issued by other participants and express their perceptions simultaneously. In this case, focus groups are expected to provide valuable data, particularly when participants are allowed extended periods to reflect on their own experiences while other participants speak. On the other hand, a focus group interview is a group interview of contrived settings that brings together participants to speak on a given theme or topic where the researcher asks a question and the interaction with the groups leads to data and outcomes (Cohen, et al., 2012).

A focus group discussion typically produces both qualitative and observational data where analyses can be demanding. It is a method of obtaining valuable data, and all participants, including the researcher, have an opportunity to ask questions, which will produce more information (Holloway & Wheelers, 2002), than in focus group interviews. Although at times, while using this method, the researcher might be faced with the problem of managing debates and controlling the process from the participants (Holloway & Wheelers, 2002).

In addition, the study employs the focus group discussion method as the primary data collection method. A focus group discussion needs a team consisting of a skilled facilitator and an assistant (Cohen, et al., 2012). The facilitator leads to the discussion by maintaining current relationships and creating a relaxed and comfortable environment for the participants in a separated venue (Holloway & Wheelers, 2002). Similarly, the assistant's role includes documenting the general content of the discussion; thereby, it is two focus groups, one with the six lecturers and the other with the other six students. The main data collection methods during a focus group discussion include an audio recording, note-taking, and, of course, my prepared interview questions. Both the interview and focus group allow the researcher to ask and further probe the participant to get as much information as possible. The researcher engages the participants in focus group discussions because these offer a more relaxed environment, allowing them to be freer to express their views regarding the challenges they face in learning English.

This focus group discussion was conducted in a convenient venue for the participants in the Art school at a university, and it was a one-hour session. It helps to explore the participant's thoughts and how their experiences influence their challenges in English learning by providing more debate and generating rich data for the study. This is because it would help the participants engage in discussion through open-ended questions, reflect, argue, and produce rich and in-depth information about their English challenges. I took notes as the moderator and facilitator while the process was audio recorded with the participants' permission. Most importantly, the role of the researcher during the interview was more like that of an active listener in a naturalistic environment than that of an interlocutor with a list of pre-determined questions (Khalid, 2017).

For instance, if someone keeps quiet or declined to participate, instead of just watching what happened, I tried to encourage him/ her about their view. For instance, what do you think I am asking him/her? What is your view? Right, is that? So, I can let them all interact with one another in one way or another. My role was also to direct the group, should I have to get the speaker back to the main question if he strayed from the topic. So, this gave me a great deal of help and gave me the ability to direct the conversation and concentrate on the topic under discussion. Because you can easily get someone to remain silent in this kind of situation, maybe he or she has an idea, and maybe this idea is better than the people who talked a lot in the discussion, but unfortunately, you found them shy, or they did not get the chance to speak. Some of the participants began to talk about their knowledge of the situation in other universities.

In addition, some students pointed out some solutions to emerging problems, so the students were gaining more knowledge of the topic under discussion. The findings indicate how the interaction between participants are significant and how one gets acquainted with issues that he or she was previously unaware of. In addition, running focus groups provided me with the ability to conduct discussions and ensure turn-around. It had its challenge in that getting the participants together on time for the session was somewhat challenging. However, I encouraged the already present participants to be patient enough to wait for all the members to attend the session, which worked. Consequently, using these two methods (semi-structured interview and focus group discussion methods) offered credibility and add more value to the data collected. More so, the data collected from these two methods will enhance the study's purposes (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011).

The main discussions and the key questions that I asked the focus group participants were the following (see appendix 5):

- 1- What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university?
- 2- Which language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) do you have challenges in English learning?
- 3- Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your first language background?
- 4- Did you take any English language courses before you started your degree?
- 5- Why do students have these challenges?

4.7.3. Questionnaire method

The third research tool applied in this study was the questionnaire. Questionnaire is a group of printed questions that participants answer independently or in the researcher's presence. It provides an efficient and quick way of collecting data from a large number of participants in a short time, and they are based on the careful structure of a set of clear field questions (Cohen et al., 2011). It is also regularly applied in most research studies, and written questionnaires. It can be used to carry out a needs analysis in foreign and second language educational settings (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The questionnaire was selected in this study for the following reasons: the questionnaire is not time-consuming. It can provide a considerable amount of data about different issues in a short time and provides a flexible and convenient way for participants to express their opinions.

As in this case study, such questions were tested before the final questionnaire was forwarded to the participants. This study will elicit students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire on their challenges in the learning of English. A questionnaire is a research tool containing a set of questions and other prompts to gather information from participants (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It is a suitable research instrument for this study because they allow for quick gathering of the data from the university students. Therefore, the questionnaire requires personal responses to twenty-six questions on their challenges in the learning of English (see appendix 6). It was distributed randomly to 30 students around the university to gain more information (see table 4.3).

Faculties	Students No	Gender	Language
Arts	10	2 males 8 females	Arabic
Education	10	2 males 8 females	
Law	10	1 male 9 females	

Table 4.3: The distribution of the questionnaire' participants

The questionnaires were distributed to the students through their lecturers and brought back to me by their lecturers. Purposive or non-probability sampling was used because it required the intentional selection of a particular section of the population to include in this study to fulfil a set criterion to answer the research questions. They were picked based on their ability to purposefully understand the research problem and the primary phenomenon of this research study.

With questionnaires, a process of numerical coding usually comes before data analysis. Each answer on the questionnaire will be allocated a prearranged code number. Thus, it is simple to do with closed questions where the possible responses are recognized and restricted. Nevertheless, open-ended and closed questions were used; thus, one looks forward to getting a wide range of responses. Therefore, it became complicated for the researcher to code the responses numerically. In this research, the researcher interpreted the data more qualitatively by developing a set of named themes or categories to which the responses seem to belong. The data was then entered into different graphs, depending on the themes that emanated or raised.

Table (4.4) provides an overall summary of the research framework, which presents the research questions to be answered and other information relevant to the study:

Measurement	Data	Analysis
EFL university students' questionnaire		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university? - Why do students have these challenges? - Do you think that using English is a barrier facing the students in Libya? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An open-ended questionnaire questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statistical - Interpretative
Contextual analysis of EFL university students' interview		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university? - Why do students have these challenges? - Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your first language background? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A semi structured interviews questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretative
Contextual analysis of EFL Lecturers' interview		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are EFL lecturers' perceptions regarding the challenges of students in learning English at a Libyan university? - Why do students have these challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A semi structured interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretative

- Do you think that using English is a barrier facing the students in Libya?		
Contextual analysis of EFL university students' focus group discussion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university? - Why do students have these challenges? - Do you think that using English is a barrier facing the students in Libya? 	- Focus group questions	- Interpretative
Contextual analysis of EFL Lecturers' focus group discussion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university? - What are EFL lecturers' perceptions regarding the challenges of students in learning English at a Libyan university? - Why do students have these challenges? 	- Focus group questions	- Interpretative

Table. 4.4. Research framework

4.8. Qualitative data analysis

The constant comparison method of qualitative data analysis is employed to analyse data in this research (Cohen et al., 2011). The constant comparative approach is the analytical technique of

qualitatively comparing and contrasting data from different data sources to develop categories and look for patterns between categories (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Data are collected and interpreted in qualitative research by searching for themes based on the participant's response. The first step in the analysis process was to initiate the coding of all research data. Charmaz (2006) asserts that coding can be seen as the basis for an analysis that paves the way for a much more intensive study. Coding involves breaking data into concepts and categories and categorising data sections with a short name summarising each section.

The researcher will first read and re-read data collected through interviews and questionnaires to code the data and find common responses, which will ultimately generate themes that emerge from the responses given, which will help comprehend the phenomenon. Thematic analysis is the way of analysing facts and figures according to similarities and differences across a data set. TATIRA (2018) concurs that, when analysing qualitative data, one must visit and re-visit the data to connect it with emerging themes. This will, in turn, lead to refined focus and understandings. Cohen et al., (2011) encourage researchers to respect the data generated and always keep in mind the participants' voices. They warn that it is essential to distinguish between participants' voices and that of the researcher.

Cohen et al., (2012) posits that qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for, and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situations, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities. The data obtained from the field notes and audio recorder will then be transcribed verbatim and analysed with the photo narration/interpretation by the participant, thematically (Tesch, 1990). The themes that emerge from the data will be concerning information from participants who speak about their English learning challenges in the university. Participants will have the opportunity to check the transcripts, and the thesis and published work will be made available to them.

After the initial coding was completed, more selective, conceptual and directed coding was undertaken. This focused coding involved using the most important or frequent codes to select large amounts of data. Decisions were made as to which initial codes made the most analytical sense to allow for a more intense data classification. Then a summary of each of the themes that emerged were described.

The researcher considers Charmaz's (2006) proposal of asking questions to evaluate the quality of the data; and this included my thinking on whether I had obtained enough detail and descriptions of the participant's perceptions or not; whether the data gathered was under the surface or not; whether I had collected data that would enable me to develop analytic categories or not and what kinds of comparisons I could produce between data. I also attempted to attain consistency in coding the data in easy ways thus that another person might understand the themes and reach similar conclusions.

When the coding had been finished and units of the text in interview transcripts, the questionnaire had been allocated codes; the next step was to include content and thematic analysis of the data. Thus, working with the codes to classify patterns such as similarities and differences. As the analysis continued, codes were gathered logically into categories which they were named. Additional analysis of the categories would lead to the generation of themes. Discussion of the themes would thus be part of the descriptive and illustrative depiction of the case (Rule & John, 2011, p.78).

The written transcriptions contained the information received from the interviews and the questionnaires, and the researcher interpreted the verbal and written answers to find out the recommendations, beliefs, opinions, and feelings of all the research participants. An audiotape was used to record the responses and the language challenges in English learning conducted in the faculties. This allowed the researcher to review the transcriptions to ensure accuracy.

Figure (4.3) below illustrates these processes in a very suitable way for it shows that quality in a case study is not involved with only the procedural sides of the research, such as the stage of data collection and analysis or the outcome of the study, but also with the individuals involved in the research and with the relationships that make the research possible. The researcher would like to use the criteria below to ensure quality by considering all these aspects referred to in figure (4.3).

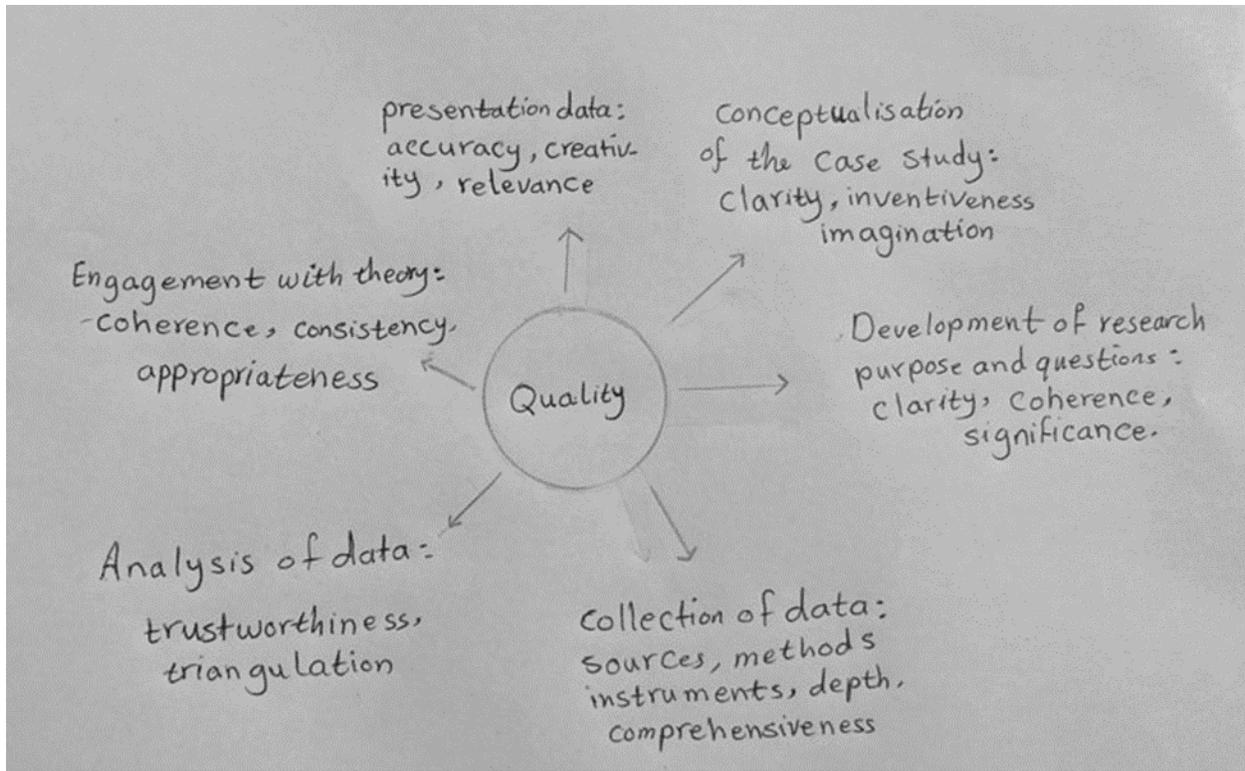


Fig.4.3. Criteria to be used to ensure quality in case study research (Rule & John, 2011, p. 103)

4.9. Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative tool for this study was based only on distributed questionnaires to the target participants during their studies in November 2020. First, the responses to the questionnaire surveys were manually decreased, coded, and categorised in the Microsoft Excel manuscript according to the predetermined classifications (Sarantakos, 2005). In this method, a descriptive and inferential statistical technique was applied to analyse the data and even compare groups or measure the relationship between variables, where percentages were also obtained for all questionnaire items (Sarantakos, 2005). With questionnaires, a process of numerical coding usually leads to data analysis. Each response on the questionnaire will be specified as a predetermined code symbol. However, Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS 27.0 statistical package for Windows (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Further, the use of a manual approach is suggested for new researchers to gain insight into the natural aspects that are the essential basis of any analysis method.

Figures and tables were used, which show how the data was reduced, coded, and presented in a bar chart and the percentage calculation of each item. Such distribution helped me understand the students' response patterns, which helped me address the main research questions and determine the most significant language learning challenges the participants faced.

4.10. The challenges I faced while working on this study

First, I will explain some of the practical challenges I have encountered before considering philosophical/methodological issues. Following my selection of semi-structured interviews and focus groups as tools for data collection, it was hard for me to conduct interviews at the research point because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The situation in Libya at the time of the spread of the Coronavirus was extremely dangerous. Students and lecturers were remaining at home and not participate in any activity, even if the activity was within the university.

Regarding the law faculty lecturers' interviews, the most significant limitation of this method was the small number of interviewees and the time available. The interviews had to be kept short due to the fact that, although few experienced lecturers agreed to be interviewed, they live some distance from the faculty and have part-time jobs. This fact also forced the researcher to cancel some tasks as priority had to be given to the academic's primary responsibilities. This, to some extent, affected the process and the quality of the interviews. Another incident that must be noted is that part of the focus group discussion was not captured on the tape recorder because the battery discharged during the interview. This issue was noticed after a few minutes and was rectified later.

One of the general issues was related to the sample size of the study. It was not easy for me to get more than this sample, which only focused on three faculties who agreed to participate in the study rather than the entire faculties of the university, as one of these faculties I am teaching in. Therefore, findings might only reflect those who took part in the study and may not show a general picture of the faculties community. Thus, the findings of this study are specific to three faculties at the university and might not apply to another faculty or university. One of my invited interviewees refused to participate in this study at the last minute when he noticed that another

specific student was participating. I do not understand why this person decided to withdraw, but it suggests that there is some doubt \ conflict within the university.

Concerning the participants' questionnaires, it was hard to know whether or not students had understood questions adequately, even though I interpreted and translated every item of the questionnaire. They may also have responded superficially, mainly if they felt that the questionnaire had taken a long time to complete. Participants may have been unwilling to respond to the questions; for instance, two female students withdrew after about fifteen minutes. Moreover, students might not want to reveal information or believe that they will not benefit from such work. In addition, from Libyan culture, learners are more likely to complement their teachers than criticise them, even if they know why the data was being collected, that the results will be helpful, and that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained.

4.11. Validity and reliabilities issues

Validity and reliability are essential in qualitative research as in quantitative research (Cohen et al., 2011). Validity refers to the scale to which a tool measures what it is supposed to measure. For instance, qualitative data validity might be addressed within the honesty, depth, richness, and scope of the data obtained, the participants' approach, the extent of triangulation, and the researcher's objectivity (TATIRA, 2018). These factors were considered when carrying out this research.

To ensure validity in this study, I selected an appropriate methodology for answering the research questions. Cohen et al., (2011) suggest that validity and reliability in qualitative research can be improved in three different ways. The first approach is triangulation, where different methods can be used to address a particular topic. According to Cohen et al., (2011), using various instruments to collect data (triangulation) enhances validity. Triangulation of research instruments was done. In line with Cohen et al., (2011), I used three data creation methods, namely: semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, and questionnaire, to get views of lectures and the learners on their challenges in learning English. It enabled me to understand the observable fact under investigation by approaching it from different angles. I ensured the authenticity of research results through triangulation. The second shall be by employing the member validation techniques to

check on findings. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.48) assert that each interview should be summarized and confirmed with the interviewee to ensure that the summary is a true reflection of what transpired. Participants in this study were given a chance to confirm the transcribed findings to increase the study's validity. The third way is through common inference descriptors, which involve recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what transpired during the question and answer session.

Reliability is concerned with accuracy, for example, with what accuracy does the instrument measure. Cohen et al., (2011) argue that consistency is the degree to which an appraisal instrument produces stable and consistent results. It is concerned with exactitude and accuracy. For research to be dependable, it must reveal that similar results would be obtained if it were to be done in a similar group of participants. I detailed the research design, implementation, and how data was generated in the research field to ensure reliability. A pilot study with two lecturers was carried out to roll out any errors that were likely to be found in the interview schedules.

Trustworthy research should utilise suitable research tools to meet the given objectives of the investigation (Sarantakos, 2005; TATIRA, 2018). They suggest several essential elements to a case study design that can be integrated to improve overall study reliability. The reason for utilising this technique was to guarantee that enough detail was provided so that readers can measure the trustworthiness of the work. To achieve this, I ensured that research questions were written, objectives were clearly stated, and meaningful analysis of data. The case study design was suitable for all the research questions. Purposeful sampling strategies were suitable for the study. Additionally, data were generated and managed systematically.

In any qualitative research project, four trustworthiness issues demand attention: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Christiansen et al., 2010). In essence, this research aims to explore and understand the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya. Christiansen et al., (2010) concurs with Gray (2009) that trustworthiness is only addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. So, in enhancing and ensuring trustworthiness in this research study, the four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research will be applied by me, namely:

- **Credibility:** is described in this study by Christiansen et al. (2010) as when the research study's findings show the participants' realities and lived experiences. In other words, credibility is ensured by confirming with the participants if it is transcribed correctly. To address credibility in this study, I employed three techniques. Firstly, I used an audio recorder and a field note in recording what my participants were discussing during the session. Secondly, I enlisted the help of a competent field worker who assisted me in transcribing the data from the audio recorders after the session. Lastly, I took the data transcripts back to the participants to check for accuracy and see if I had added anything to their responses or omitted any word.
- **Dependability:** to address the issues of dependability in this study, I provided an adequate audit trail in order to explain how I have collected my data, how I have analysed my data and the research procedures I followed in conducting the research study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that dependability in qualitative research evaluates the quality of the integrated processes of collecting data, data analysis, and theory generation.
- **Confirmability:** these measures how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher ensured confirmability by double-checking the data with the participants to ensure that it is true. I addressed confirmability in this study by ensuring that I had sufficient evidence to back my data interpretations and that I did not make unsubstantiated claims in my findings due to triangulation purposes.
- **Transferability:** simply refers to a situation whereby upon studying the similarity of two contexts or more, the study's findings can be compared to the events in the second context (Moore, 2007). The researcher added that transferability does not generalise the findings but merely compares the findings with another similar context. Christiansen et al., (2010) pose that transferability is the degree to which the findings of this research study can be applied or transfer beyond the bounds of this project. To enhance transferability in this study, I used the literature reviewed in this study and the theoretical framework to recontextualise (Moore, 2007) the data analysis and interpretations of the findings.

4.12. Ethical issues considered in this study

Ethics in research is mandatory, particularly with research involving humans and animals (Christiansen et al., 2010). Qualitative research probes to some extent into people's lives; sensitive and private matters in people's lives are dealt with in qualitative research (Punch, 2013). This means that ethical issues arise and should be considered seriously during the research process and, most importantly, collecting information. The main ethical issues considered in social research are consent, privacy, and confidentiality (Punch, 2013). These are discussed at length in the following paragraph.

This study took ethical considerations into account. This involves getting the participants' permission and gatekeepers, maintaining the dignity and welfare of participants by maintaining anonymity or confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2011). First and foremost, permission was sought and obtained from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, and the ethical clearance reference number for the current study is HSSREC/00001455/2020. Also, a permission letter to carry out this research at the university was obtained. This study did not raise any issues regarding the target population as all the participants (lecturers and students) were over 18. No sensitive and personal nature was kept on an individual, and the study did not induce any psychological stress or anxiety. The participants were provided with complete information about the research objective, and all those included in this research were asked to read and understand the enclosed research information sheets (see appendix 3) before the consent forms (see appendix 2) were completed. Christiansen et al., (2010) assert that prospective participants should be issued with a consent letter to sign containing details of the study with the option of participating or withdrawing at any stage of the study. The participants took part voluntarily and were allowed to withdraw at any time.

During the focus group discussion, I tried to ensure that the rights of the participants were not violated throughout the research process (Cohen et al., 2011). I tried to make sure that the research study is beneficial to the participants and not harmful to them (Christiansen et al., 2010). Lastly, the participant's anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). Also, I assured the participants that the information would be protected and that I will protect their identity should I attempt to publish the results of my study. Finally, I will make my PhD thesis available to the study participants so that they can raise

concerns should they decide to do so. The thesis will be available online in the UKZN library, and I will notify the students about this.

4.13. Conclusion

This chapter described in detail, the research methodology that was employed. The paradigm, approach, and research design of the study were discussed with reasons for my choices. This chapter also discussed the data collection methods which aligned with the quantitative methodological approach. By using various sources of data and data collection methods, an attempt will be made to build up a detailed and in-depth description of the English language challenges by university students. Despite the small number of participants, it is hoped that the findings will serve to discover the English students' language needs. Furthermore, the measures undertaken to ensure the validity and reliability of the data generated were highlighted, and lastly, ethical issues related to the study were discussed.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data that emerged.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative data findings from the open-ended questionnaire to answer the three main research questions of this study. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to the 30 students who responded to the 26 questions about their English learning challenges (see 4.7.3 and table 4.3). The findings are later triangulated and discussed with other research findings. Moreover, the study aims to answer the three main research questions underlying the current investigation, which are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

The chapter begins with a presentation of the data analysis processes in which the quantitative findings were coded and analysed. The findings are then presented, and finally, a conclusion is drawn.

5.2 Questionnaire data analysis

Data analysis is described as a process of reducing vast amounts of written data to manageable and understandable dimensions (Cohen et al., 2007). The descriptive statistics method was used to present the survey questionnaires' findings to interpret all items and find the frequency and percentage of agreement and disagreement among the participants concerning the many issues raised. This analysis is beneficial for viewing and organizing data because it can present vast

amounts of information sensibly and understandably, such as in tables and charts that can illustrate the presence of essential sample characteristics without missing or changing the data.

In this study, after the survey questionnaires were completed, they were first checked to obtain an overview of the findings; for example, the number of the questionnaires received and any missed responses. Then, the data was decreased to a form that could be analysed, mentioned as data reduction which consists of coding data in preparation for analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). The quantifiable data were coded and recorded into a computer file using Microsoft Excel. This was then double-checked to identify any missing data and ensure the accuracy of the data record. Some manual data analysis used Microsoft Excel. Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS 27.0 statistical package for Windows (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). All values are expressed as mean \pm SD or mean \pm SEM and considered significantly different at $p < 0.05$ s the quantity of data was not significant, and straight forward to understand. Further, the use of a manual approach is suggested for new researchers to gain insight into the natural aspects that are the essential basis of any analysis method.

Figures and tables were used, which show how the data was reduced, coded, and presented in a bar chart and the percentage calculation of each item. Such distribution helped me understand the students' response patterns, which helped me address the main research questions and determine the most significant language learning challenges the participants faced. I calculated the participants' implementation activity scores from their responses on a two-point Likert scale, representing statements placed in random order on a two-point scale of degree of agreement or frequency: agree or disagree.

There is no specific, or straightforward formula to ensure validity in data analysis, but careful attention and comprehensive analysis were applied to achieve this goal in this study. For example, it was necessary to merge some of the themes because based on the feedback received, this was recommended to be useful; it was also found to be helpful because it gave the chance to re-read the script data and refine the analysis more than once, based on my understanding and discussion with colleagues, especially regarding the suitability of specific ideas or research under certain themes. Furthermore, the data analysis method was useful; the familiarity allowed for more effective engagement with the data (Abuklaish, 2014).

5.3 Questionnaire findings

The presentation of findings/data is based on seven themes generated from the data and related to the target research questions. The themes are as follows:

- 1- Gender of the participants.
- 2- English practicing and environment.
- 3- Learning four English language skills.
- 4- Practicing English language at school before entering university.
- 5- Using Arabic language as a first language.
- 6- University responsibility and its support in learning English.
- 7- Other reasons.

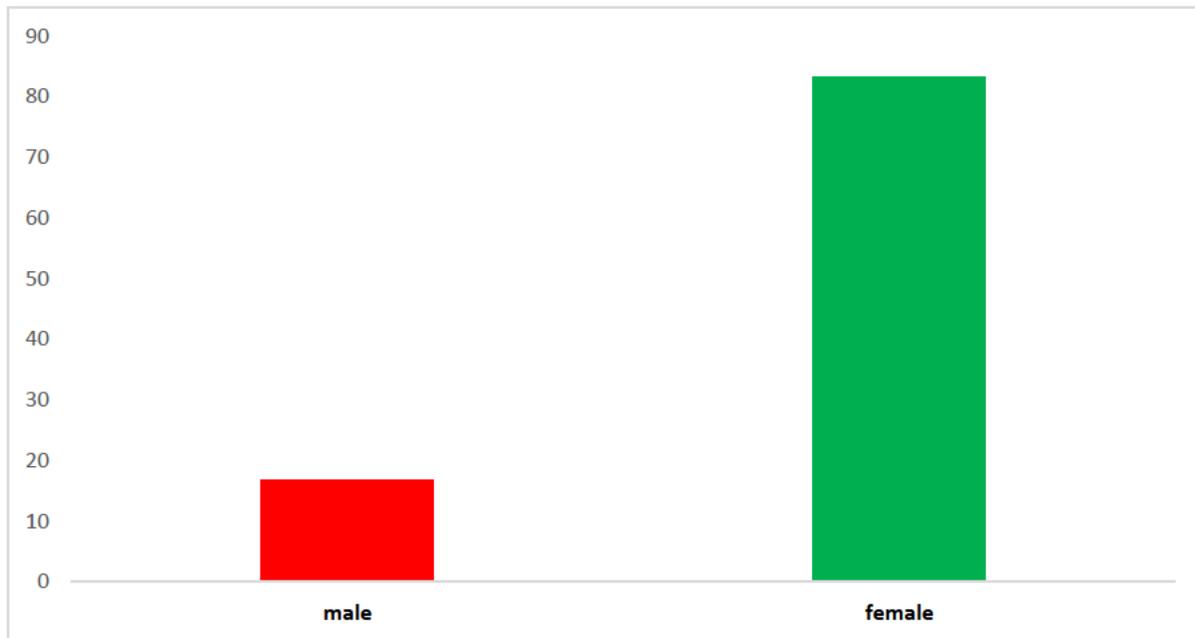
During the data analysis, each theme will be supported with relevant data (e.g., tables, graphs, and figures) taken from the questionnaires. The results in this section are presented in tables according to the order of the survey questions. The first theme offers general information about the students' background such as gender and educational level.

5.3.1 Gender of the participants

The results from the questionnaires show that a large number of students who are first-year university were female. Table (5.1) shows that the number of females is more significant than the number of males. It translates to 83.3% and 16.7%, respectively. Another point mentioned by many lecturers is that there is a difference in performance and achievement between female and male students. They assert that female students do better than male students. However, this study does not investigate these differences between them.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Female	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.1. Gender of the participants



Graph.5.1. Show Gender of the participants

5.3.1.1 Education level

Table (5.2) showing the education level table results show the same participants number of the various faculties chosen for the researcher's study.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	faculty of Art	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Faculty of Education	10	31.3	33.3	66.7
	faculty of Law	10	31.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.2. Students' education focus

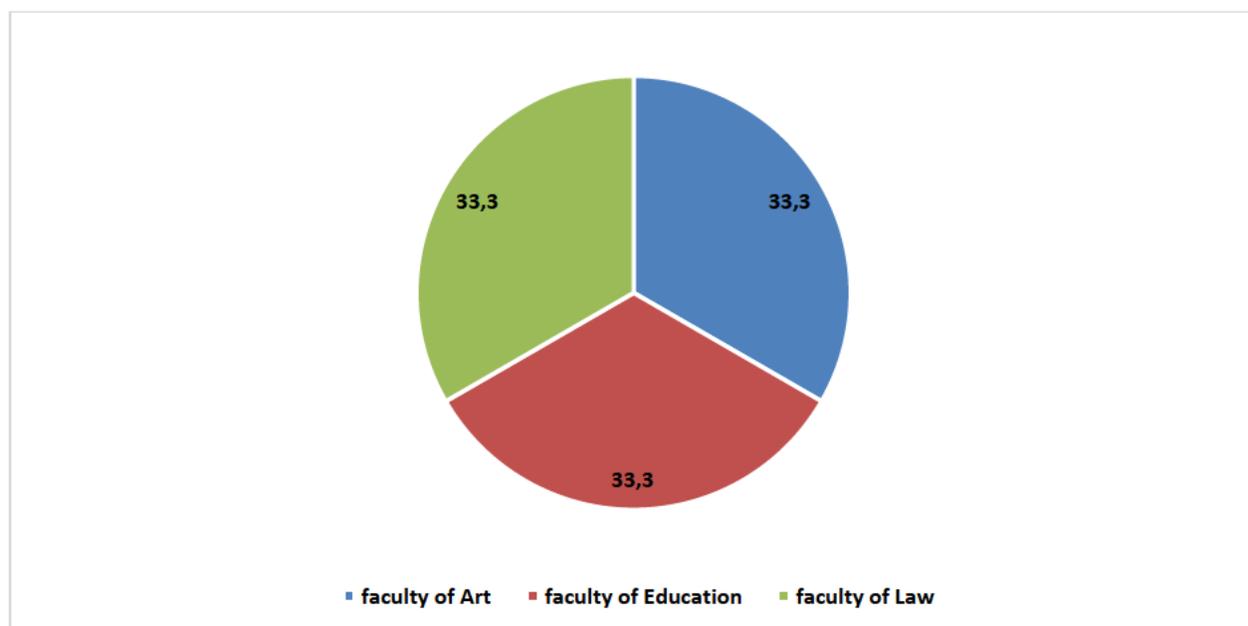


Figure .5.1. The education focus in the three faculties

5.3.2 English practicing and environment:

Items 1, 5, 8, and 9 of the questionnaires gave the respondents a chance to express their views concerning their English practice's environmental impacts. They indicated that there were not many chances for students to practice English. There is hardly any appropriate environment outside the classroom to practice English usage in Libya. The participants' level of English is affected by many other factors: influence of culture and social factors, lack of free time to spend on learning English, or not using English in daily life.

5.3.2.1. Influence of culture and social factors

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	8	25.0	26.7	26.7
Agree	22	68.8	73.3	100.0
Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.3. Influence of culture and social factors

Language and culture research is the primary field of quality education, which is a global phenomenon. Table (5.3) as we see on the table of culture and social shows that 73.3% of participants agreed with the effect of cultural social barriers on English language learning. For example, social and cultural factors force them to use the Arabic language in their daily lives, and it is prohibited to use foreign languages. There is a compulsion not to use any foreign languages except Arabic, as it is known that language and culture are closely associated with communication.

5.3.2.2. Lack of free time to learn English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.4. Lack of free time to learning English

Table (5.4) shows that 66.7% of participants said they have no time to engage with English lessons. They indicated that all their subjects or modules are in Arabic except for one, English language lesson. Thus, they spend their time studying other subjects more than English subjects; there is no incentive for them to study and practice English in their free time.

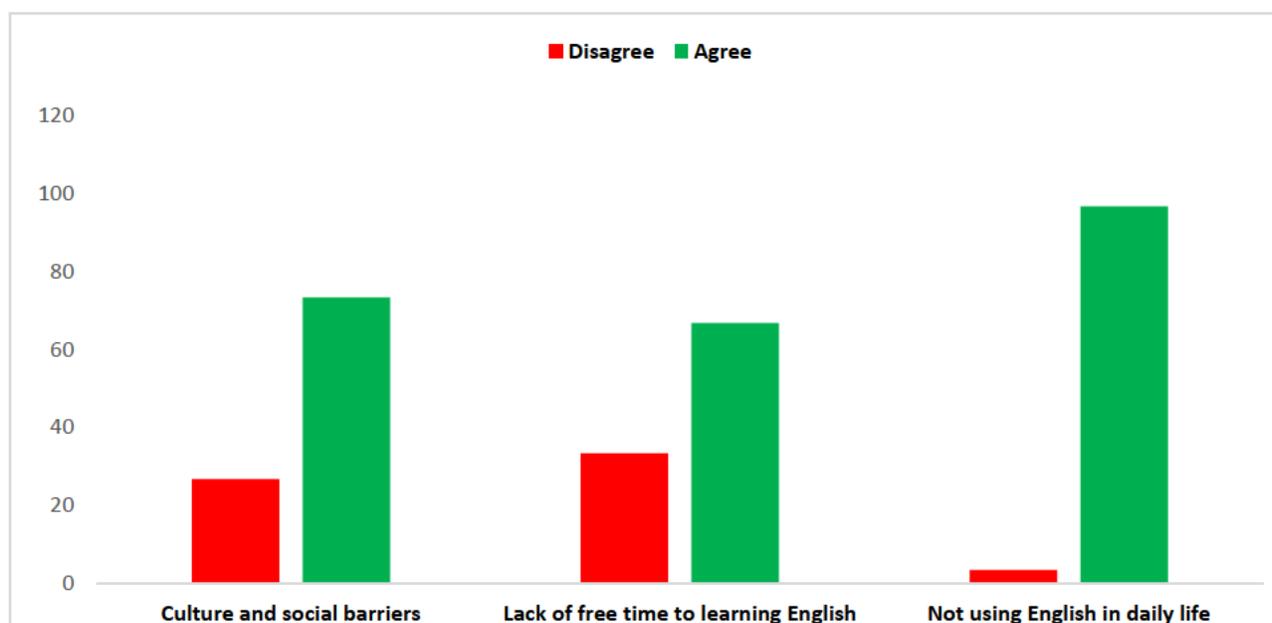
5.3.2.3. Not using English in daily life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	3.1	3.3	3.3
	Agree	29	90.6	96.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.5. Not using English in daily life

Table (5.5) shows a significant result; 96.7% of participants agreed that the English language is not used daily. The student's environment that he or she is involved in, among many other factors, affects the student's English level. For instance, students whose environment requires them to practise English have a high level of English. In contrast, the students whose environment does not help them in practicing English have an insufficient level of English. The participants were

aware that they do not have many chances to practice English. The same results were revealed in the qualitative data, when participants indicated that they do not use the English language in their daily life, in public or even at campus. The campus does not provide them with a suitable environment where they can practice the English language; even their social and cultural demands force them to use the Arabic language. It is rare to get a chance to talk in English as they rely on themselves to improve their English. Students' culture and environments do not support them in their learning of English.



Graph. 5.2. English practicing and environment

As shown on the above bar graph, most students do not have time to practice English in the classroom, and English is not used daily. Furthermore, there are no efficient ways to practice English during the day to improve their language skills. Also, there are various social barriers and environmental factors that affect their practice of English in the classroom.

5.3.3 Learning four English language skills

In terms of the participants' English language skills, Items 1 and 6 of the questionnaires required the participants to list their challenges. They were also given a chance to determine and rank some other challenges pertaining to their English skills, such as weakness in recognizing the grammatical function of sentences, limited knowledge of pronunciation and spelling, limited vocabulary knowledge, limited grammar knowledge, weakness in the four language skills in general, or other aspects that impact their language in academic performance. However, the students indicated their limited language skills was due to their inadequate preparation at school before entering higher education. The tables below reveal the challenges they mainly encountered:

5.3.3.1. Weakness in recognizing the grammatical function

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	12.5	13.3	13.3
	Agree	26	81.3	86.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.6. Students' weakness in recognizing the grammatical function

Table (5.6) reveals that 86.7% of participants agreed that grammar is not well recognized, and that students are weak in grammar lessons, as it is difficult for them to construct a proper sentence with correct grammar. Additionally, in the interview responses, the lecturers highlighted the grammatical mistakes made by the students. Such errors are predominant in their writing, confusing students' answers. The students cannot build sentences and use the correct word order; consequently, when they attempt to write, they have no clear structure. In addition, they cannot write their work without grammatical mistakes due to various reasons such as a limited knowledge of English vocabulary, spelling, and the rules of grammar. Resulting in their inability to express their thoughts in context, and they do not know how to construct even simple sentences in English.

5.3.3.2. Limited knowledge of pronunciation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	25.0	26.7	26.7
	Agree	22	68.8	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.7. The students' limited knowledge of pronunciation

Table (5.7) reveals that 73.3% of participants confirmed that English language learners have limited knowledge of the correct pronunciation of many English words. Their low proficiency of English is reflected in their articulation. It is hard for them to articulate and pronounce correctly, mostly when they read. Some students have never been exposed to the language in actual situations, making learning it and its pronunciation a challenging task. This reduces and affects the extent of communication between them and their lecturers. Their performance in oral exams shows the simple fact that the students' level in English in general is poor. Similar results in the qualitative data show that the inability of some students to practice oral language properly and adequately in learning activity, such as collaborative oral activities sessions within the classroom and social interactions within the campus. Therefore, the lecturers should be aware of these factors while teaching English as a second language to the EFL students.

Knowledge of phonological rules by English foreign language learners (EFL) is meaningful. For instance, learning how and where to place stress in terms for efficient communication will be very helpful. Meanwhile, listeners process speech more efficiently if stress is perfectly applied. Despite the significance of stress on words or sentences, it is sometimes ignored in most teachers' classes. Therefore, for efficient communication, EFL learners have to learn the phonological rules pertaining to word stress in the target language, which indicates this to be the most challenging issue in language learning. It appears that language learners cannot speak fluently and correctly because they do not have sufficient knowledge in this area. EFL learners can talk fluently if they learn the rules of the phonological task as required.

5.3.3.3. Limited vocabulary knowledge

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	21.9	23.3	23.3
	Agree	23	71.9	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.8. The students' limited vocabulary knowledge

Vocabulary has continued to be considered one of the significant contributors to learners' performance in English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Vocabulary learning is at the heart of foreign language proficiency. EFL learners with inadequate vocabulary are unable to understand a passage given for comprehension. Table (5.8) shows that 76.7% of participants indicated that the students struggling with English because they do not have adequate English language vocabulary. This is compounded by that fact that they do not have time to learn new vocabulary. They also assert that their limited vocabulary comes from their limited reading of English sources. Similar findings in the qualitative data show that most EFL students struggle with comprehending new vocabulary items during the lecture, and further they tend to forget newly learned terms after a short time. Perhaps this is due to the absence of the use of these vocabularies in their daily conversation.

Therefore, EFL teachers should know that vocabulary has a central role in foreign language (EFL) learning and attempt to enhance their learners' vocabulary. Therefore, the students' lack of vocabulary to a certain level is especially evident when they enter university, where they are expected to have a broad repertoire of vocabulary. Many Libyan EFL learners do not have sufficient vocabulary at the university level which hinders their academic progression.

Vocabulary learning in Libya relies on teachers as the initial source. But teaching the English language in Libya has gone beyond traditional teaching as the core is learning grammar rules rather than vocabulary. Teachers and lecturers can encourage their learners to use some strategies to learn new vocabulary by practicing it during their lessons.

5.3.3.4. Limited grammar knowledge

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.9. The students' limited grammar knowledge

Table (5.9) shows that 83.3% of participants agreed that they have limited knowledge of grammar and its uses. Thus, if they practice reading or writing, they will learn about grammar because grammar learning needs practicing. Also, the students are too concerned about their work as it suffers from grammatical errors. They cannot compose without making grammatical errors and cannot express their thoughts in the required context. Many do not know how to construct simple grammatically correct sentences.

5.3.3.5. Weakness in the four language skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	9.4	10.0	10.0
	Agree	27	84.4	90.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.10. The students' weakness in the four language skills

Table (5.10) reveals significant results in that 90% of the participants agreed that the English language students are weak in the four sections of English, reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Generally, they do not believe that their performance is very good or even at minimum competence. Many students agree that they encounter various learning problems. Learning a new

language, in whatever context, is very difficult. These issues are intensely tied in with pronunciation challenges that they experience, new vocabulary they must master, and writing skills. These challenges make it difficult for them to work properly. For instance, listening activities are so essential. It can develop the student's ability in acquiring a new language. If the modern tools and educational audio recordings are not available, you can instead make them listen to a simple English melody, then the lesson will be fun.

The writing skill can be developed by constant practising through various strategies. In addition to the importance of dictionaries, they should also understand how to use a term and put it in the proper context. Students should work with simple daily activities and then move to a further challenging level. One strategy that participants suggest using is drawing. A learner can describe a story by drawing the story's events in simple designs and then express each image in a simple sentence. If they experience difficulty learning a specific word, they should write it in Arabic and use a dictionary to assist in expressing an idea in the target language. The qualitative data findings indicated that there are four significant areas of writing challenges for Libyan students. Firstly, students cannot write within a restricted time. Secondly, they cannot compose academic writing in English. Thirdly, they are incapable of employing the rules of grammar in writing an essay. Lastly, they are unable to develop a proper structure regarding content. Another critical issue may occur from students' late exposure to English language skills because Libyan students are exposed to writing at a later phase in their education, and some are even taught formal writing when they study at the higher level.

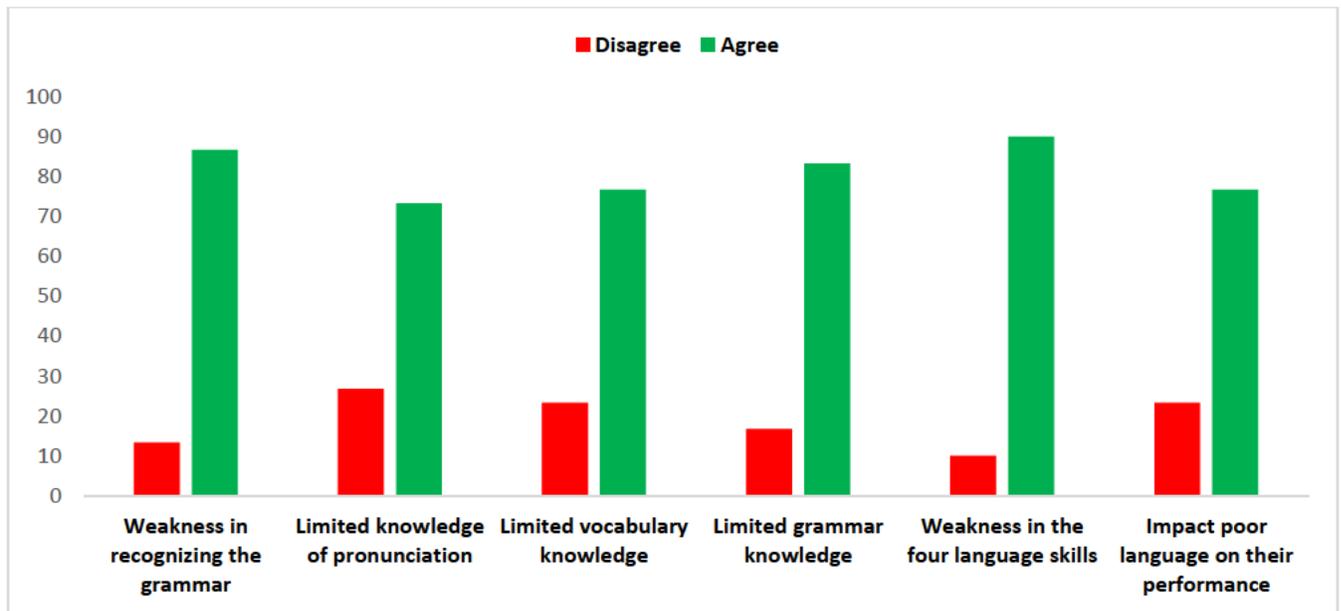
5.3.3.6. Impact poor language on their performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	7	21.9	23.3	23.3
	Agree	23	71.9	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.11. Impact of poor language on their performance

There is a need for fluency and accuracy in English learning so that language deficiency does not negatively impact students' performance. Table (5.11) shows that 76.7% of participants indicated that the educational problem to be examined is linked to the impact of low English language proficiency on students' academic success in schools. Poor English has adversely influenced the academic success and professional development of students. Therefore, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of the teacher to make the language skills explicit, through the knowledge of language structure, and to learn the expected behaviours and habits of good readers and good writers.

In addition, English learning is a process that requires interaction between teachers or lecturers and students about a given exercise or activity. The purpose is to enhance students' confidence and encourage them to express their thoughts in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. As mentioned in the qualitative data analysis that oral participation increases their English learning, and the students' ability to develop communication skills that individuals may enhance through new teaching techniques in an interactive mode. It is necessary to consider the students' learning styles to achieve the English teaching objectives. In doing so, teachers have to overcome a range of obstacles that may harm oral participation. Therefore, encouraging participation in the class will impact their language performance positively.



Graph. 5.3. Learning four English language skills

As can be seen from the above findings, the students' English skills are limited. They lack grammar comprehension, little pronunciation knowledge, limited vocabulary knowledge, a lack of basic English skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking), and a lack of influence on English performance. As a result of the students' English skills level being weak, the problems are mainly related to students' poor writing skills, including spelling and grammar mistakes. Additionally, students are vulnerable in speaking, limiting the communication between the lecturers and students. However, the students indicated that their limited language skills were ascribable to their weak preparation before entering higher education.

Most EFL students have significant challenges in rhetorical and linguistics aspects throughout the writing tasks. Within the Libyan context, the students avoid writing due to their difficulties performing writing tasks, namely cognitive problems, linguistics problems concerning paragraph organization and text structure. Applying different techniques and activities in the preschool stage promotes students' performances in all language skills. Combining reading and writing skills in the classroom promotes students' language skills. By encouraging extensive reading, student writing is improved.

Owing to the lack of knowledgeable teachers, economic restrictions, a lack of digital project teaching and learning programs, and a lack of English Language Clubs, many students do not obtain regular English education.

5.3.4 Practicing English language at school before entering university

Items 1 and 9 of the questionnaires asked the participants for their views about their English learning challenges before entering higher education. The data indicated that they face many challenges towards their English learning at school, such as not having an effective teaching system throughout academic education. Including, lack of motivating teachers, unsatisfactory teachers' feedback, exams method and design to tolerating learners' mistakes, lack of cooperation from school to assist learners to practice English. Also, a lack of resources about learning the English language, a large number of learners within a class, lack of modern educational tools such as modern computers and excessive use of the rote method of learning at school. They indicated that their preparation for the requirements of higher education is weak. The students maintained that they were not well qualified for university study. The fact is that students face severe issues in their first years in adjusting appropriately to the course needs testifies to this. The tables below reveal the challenges they encountered:

5.3.4.1. Not having an effective teaching system throughout academic education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.12. Not having an effective teaching system throughout academic education

Table (5.12) reveals that 83.3% of participants said the teaching strategies used in teaching the

English lessons is not practical. These findings suggest that the students' language weaknesses are due to their insufficient preparation at school and their lack of practice inside and outside the school. The students maintained that they were not well qualified for university study. This is because that students face severe issues in their first years in adjusting appropriately to the course needs. The participants note that teachers have a central role in the class to assist learners to overcome their challenges in English learning by using some techniques to enhance their learning. The teachers should take into consideration the learner's limited knowledge of the English language and try to build on what the learner already knows into the classroom. The variety in the teacher preparation course can bring the students' attention to the lesson, mainly by making the lessons practical through incorporating, plays, acting, and data shows.

Moreover, the researcher believes that students and lecturers should be aware that the purpose of English classes is not only for exams and grading. It should not be stringent and concerned with the rules. Students should be conscious of the diversity in cultures between Arabic and English. Lecturers should inform the students that the primary purpose of the English course is to improve their skills in using a foreign language, its importance, and it is the tool to get through a much more comprehensive, more developed language. Considering the students' standards and background, the curriculum must be designed and use methods to examine their English language proficiency. Therefore, it is essential to go for a detailed discussion as to whether the current curriculum fulfils the need of the time and is suitable for the students in attaining their goals and having an effective teaching system throughout their academic education.

5.3.4.2. Lack of motivating teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	25.0	26.7	26.7
	Agree	22	68.8	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.13. Lack of motivating teachers

Table (5.13) reveals that 73.7% of participants replied that the English language teachers do not encourage them to have English lessons. These factors render some students less motivated to study or improve their English from the students' perspectives. However, some of them voiced their opinion that studying with motivation depends on the students themselves in the first place. It is clear that English learning is strongly related to motivation. When students are keen and trying hard since their English is not good, they can convey what they want to; they succeed in communicating the main idea. They can work hard to try to get around these obstacles.

Teachers should distinguish between students' levels and abilities, motivations to learn English, way of thinking, characters, and attitudes. Working in pairs, in groups or even independently is undoubtedly suitable for the students because seldom do they seem comfortable when dealing with each other more than interacting with a teacher. However, students have to speak in front of the whole class to improve their inter-language system. They need to practice the language while focusing on accuracy and fluency. Giving time to prepare the description encourages them to think about what they say. This motivates the students to ask about the language they need and are more likely to acquire it.

In addition, enhancing learners' prospects for success could also affect learners' motivation while telling them of their failures and challenges in language learning might negatively impact their passion and performance. Teachers should make efforts to improve students' expectations for success and assist them in forming positive images of themselves as language educators in the future. The efforts required by them for success in language acquisition are directly affected by motivation. The crucial role of motivation to acquire language can also be an indicator of students' future success in language learning.

5.3.4.3. Rote method learning at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.14. Rote method learning at school

Table (5.14) reveals that the participants indicated that with English in the classroom and with the current teaching methodology followed in schools, students are forced to memorise the material they need to understand. The following data link the students' challenges using English and the rote learning technique followed in Libyan universities.

The students find it challenging to understand the material written or presented in English, and students keep rehearsing the material in question until they memorize it as a tool to pass the exams. Teachers do not force the students to change this method, as it is the only technique that they might use to be able to cope with the difficulties of learning English as a medium of communication and teaching.

5.3.4.4. Not satisfied with teachers' feedback

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	18.8	20.0	20.0
	Agree	24	75.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.15. Not satisfied with teachers' feedback

Table (5.15) shows that 80% of participants indicated that they were not being satisfied with

teachers' feedback. The assessment is not presently an authentic experience. The participants indicated no opportunity for them to get any feedback or evaluation of the courses provided, because some teachers do not give proper feedback on their work and assignments.

The participants asserted that feedback also is beneficial for the teachers, not only for the learners. For teachers, it provides information about their students and whole class progress and, indirectly, evaluates their teaching. For learners, feedback is a continuous form of assessment that is more focused than degrees. In brief, feedback is used by a teacher to assist learners to enhance their learning. It is considered that by having feedback, the students become extra motivated in English learning.

The teachers' beliefs towards errors should develop. They need to comprehend when and how to correct the students' mistakes and not frustrate learners by correcting each and every error. Teachers should correct high-frequency mistakes. Teachers are recommended to apply such correction approaches as: student's self-correction, peer correction and definitely, teacher's correction. Teachers should correct errors that are immediately related to the objective of the lesson.

5.3.4.5. Exams method and design

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.16. Exams method and design

Table (5.16) reveals that 66.7% of participants agreed with the teaching methods mentioned above, the design, and verified that the English exam tools are effective. It could offer them customized content and provide students opportunities to learn according to their needs and capabilities.

However, the teachers deal with the learners' responses to the exams crudely, in that the learner must write the answer as it is in the textbook. So, sometimes they do not let the learners try to write in their own words.

Therefore, such educational reforms are in sync with the quick changes taking place globally. Learning backgrounds challenge learners by taking higher education institutions to further pedagogical practices in many countries. The worldwide ask for an extreme transformation in teaching in higher education seeks to qualify undergraduate students for their professional future by developing their language skills, cognitive skills and proficiency to work globally.

5.3.4.6. Lack of cooperation from the school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.17. Lack of cooperation from school

Table (5.17) shows that 83.3% of participants answered that the schools lack cooperative learning. Also, the school is not responsive to their complaints and requests. The students maintained that English teachers and the school administration did not pay much attention to English, demonstrating a lack of motivation and commitment. This appeared in the students finding it challenging to benefit from the English subject available at their primary school. In addition, there are insufficient English teachers, and some schools do not have any English teachers.

5.3.4.7. Lack of resources about learning English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	6.3	6.7	6.7
	Agree	28	87.5	93.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.18. Lack of resources about learning English

Table (5.18) shows that 93.3% of participants agreed with the school's environment's lack of English language learning resources. Also, students lack the required books, and the library is not helpful regarding this issue and there is a lack of the required equipment and laboratories. A shortage of essential resources affects the teachers' ability to carry out their work professionally. Unfortunately, the current library has not had many recent references, journals, magazines, or active networks. A well-equipped educational environment is of great importance in enhancing students' level of language skills.

These findings concur with the qualitative findings in which many learning supplies are essential for influential teaching, such as good textbooks, workbooks, guidebooks for teachers, TV sets, broadcasting, diagrams and graphs or other useful visual material. Unfortunately, various teachers and students are not provided with these materials. Therefore, sometimes the teaching and learning become more creative than practical. Teachers maintain that there are no good internet facilities, projector, or other technological aids.

Some participants mentioned that EFL textbooks are an essential element in most language curricula. They are beneficial for both lecturers and students. For lecturers, they provide a variety of frameworks in achieving the purposes and goals of the course and lead them in conducting lessons. For students, the textbook is the primary exposure to the target language aside from the inputs they obtained from their language lecturer. The students, as well as lecturers, are served from the evaluation method of the textbooks. It is crucial and valuable for lecturers' progress and

professional development. It supports the teachers to gain purposeful, reliable, organized and contextual insights into the overall quality of the textbook material. It considers the students' needs and assists the lecturers in getting the necessary quality materials.

5.3.4.8. A large number of learners within a class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.19. A large number of learners within a class

Table (5.19) shows that 83.3% of participants said the class's capacity is not comfortable for the learner. So, the students' number are larger than the classroom designed. Some participants indicated that the number of students in the classroom is very big, rendering the lecturers less able to interact effectively with students. Also, it is not easy for the lecturers to engage with each student. As the learners in the class are always heterogeneous, there is barely any time to pay attention to the weak or good learners. Even the average learner does not get adequate knowledge in the use of language. There is no scope for personal attention. This, indeed, hinders academic development. It is actually challenging to deal with large classes.

Although there are variations amongst the schools and colleges of urban and rural areas, the obtaining scene is unacceptable. Teachers of the English language encounter many difficulties in managing such large classes. It is hard to pay attention to individual learners, which is necessary in the English classroom. Furthermore, similar to the qualitative data, teachers cannot use new teaching styles and methods because of many learners. Teachers usually consider this class as 'extraordinarily large'. Results show that teachers are asked to adjust students groups and teach them the English language, but the original problem of making groups occurs due to this large number of students. Indeed, the general relationship between students and teachers is significant

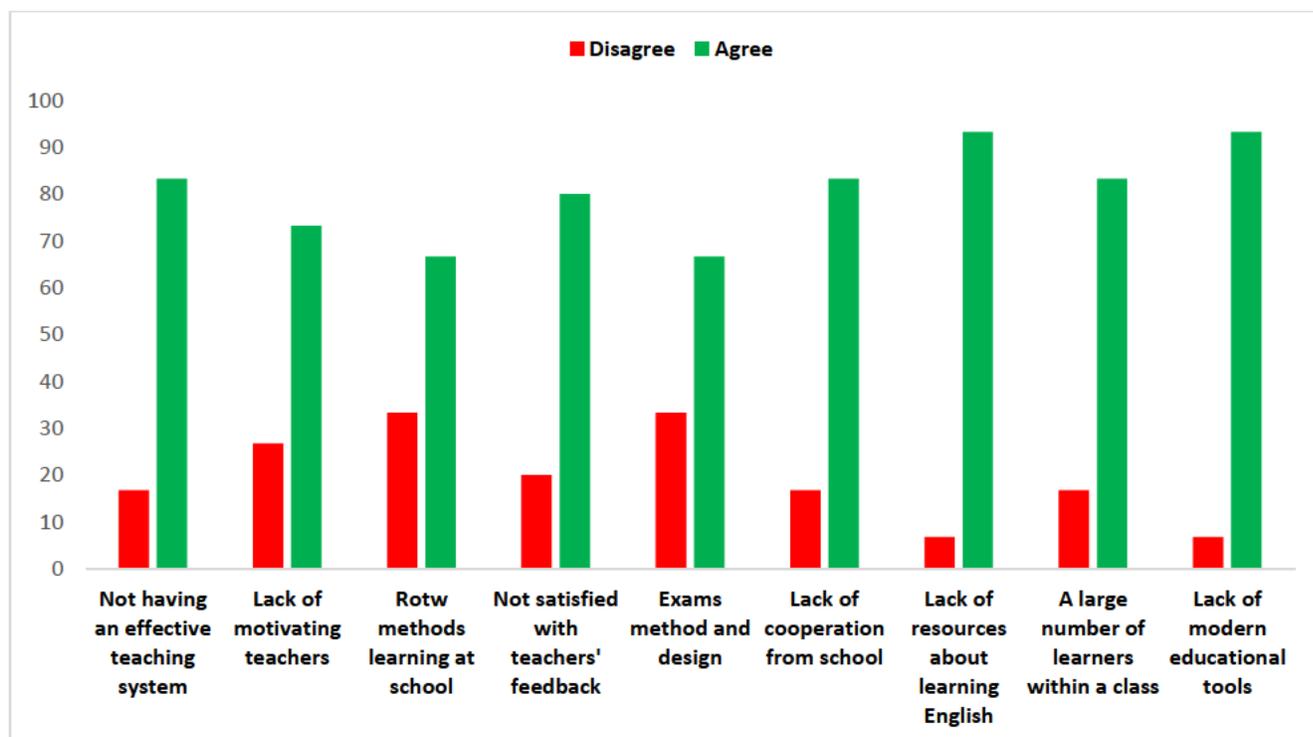
5.3.4.9. Lack of modern educational tools

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	6.3	6.7	6.7
	Agree	28	87.5	93.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.20. Lack of modern educational tools

Table (5.20) shows that 93.3% of participants agreed that schools lack of modern educational facilities to teach the English language. Also, the school environment is not conducive to the utilization of modern English teaching methods. The participants raised the issue that there is no internet at school; this essential source for successful teaching is not provided for any teacher. If access to computers and the internet were free, it would significantly help the teachers and their learners. Technology is an advantage for students, if available. Students will be supported to learn when the tools used are alike to what they think is entertaining. The lack of such facilities leads to a negative experience for the students and causes them to struggle to understand their study's essential parts.

Technology assists educators to stimulate the learners' ability in attitude and interest, which are considered essential for learning skills. The e-learning context helps the learners to get knowledge and develop critical thinking. Education becomes meaningful, and the learning methods build self-confidence and self-esteem among the learners. It encourages them to overcome the existence of a high affective filter. For instance, the students recommended that when the language material was developed within incorporating creative and stimulating learning strategies such as games or other interactive activities, a higher level of motivation to learn becomes evident.



Graph.5.4. Practicing English language at school

The participants' responses to the possibility of using English in the school atmosphere showed that students lack an appropriate instructional structure. Including a lack of inspiring teachers, rote methods of learning at school, frustration with instructor input, test procedures, and infrastructural problems. In addition, a lack of school collaboration, a lack of resources about learning English, and a high number of the learners within a classroom, including a lack of modern educational tools. Considering schools did not teach English appropriately, and the students were hence not exposed to it through their school experience; as a result, their English level is weak, and their English language skills are limited and under-developed. At the same time, many of the students with the right motivation find ways to mitigate these challenges.

Students often provide feedback in evaluations or reviews on the teamwork experienced during cooperative learning experiences. Peer review and assessments may not reflect actual experiences due to perceived competition among peers. Students might feel pressured into submitting inaccurate evaluations due to bullying.

The researcher suggests that the training program must be mandatory for every teacher at all levels of teaching. This training should be learner-focused rather than teacher-focused. The language should not be used as a simple course syllabus to educate, but it is an effective communicative tool with practical value for actual life situations. The latest methods of employing educational technology and devices to enhance learning should be introduced besides innovative classroom teaching to relieve boredom and stimulate the learners' interest.

5.3.5. Using Arabic language as a first language

It is expected that many students indicated that Arabic is essential to their studies, given the problems they face using English (Khalid, 2017). Items 1, 2 and 7 of the questionnaires requested the participants to present their views on using Arabic with English. The data indicated that they use Arabic language in their daily lives. Using Arabic language and code-mixing, social and cultural influences force speakers to use Arabic. Lecturers use the Arabic language with English during lectures and transferring the style of Arabic writing.

5.3.5.1. Using Arabic language daily life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	30	93.8	100.0	100.0
Total		30	100.0		

Table.5.21. Using Arabic language daily life

Table (5.21) shows responses on the difficulties encountered by Arabic-speaking learners as a foreign language due to the interference of it is native language in their development of the target language. The significant result is that 100% of participants agreed that the interference with learning English as a foreign language in the Arabic environment is more prominent and detectable. Even in the qualitative data, most students do not get enough chances to listen to or

speak in English. Because of their common social and economic backgrounds, they do not get adequate English outside the classroom to improve themselves.

5.3.5.2. Using Arabic as code-mixing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	3.1	3.3	3.3
	Agree	29	90.6	96.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.22. Using Arabic as code-mixing

Table (5.22) shows the magnitude of the practice, the unique conditions in which students take the mixing of codes, and how much the teaching class can use it. The findings of 96.75% of participants revealed optimistic attitudes towards code-mixing with English and Arabic. A greater degree of tolerance to code-mixing, and potential incorporation as a teaching practice (with refinements) in the EFL environment.

In the interview findings, some lecturers indicated that they use Arabic in the lectures in order to facilitate the students' understanding of the subject matter, as they know that this method will not improve the students' English language skills. It refers to the intervention of the learners' local language. Errors are likely to occur due to interference between the two languages where the native and target language rules are not similar. Another matter of making errors is inadequate teaching methods.

5.3.5.3. Social and culture forcing to use Arabic language

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Disagree	3	9.4	10.0	10.0
	Agree	27	84.4	90.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table.5.23. Social and culture forcing to use Arabic language

Students' relationships play a part in this area. For example, their natural, psychical, social and cultural conditions may drive them to make mistakes. Table (5.23) it takes place far from its cultural context, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is problematic. The data analysis results show that 90% of those surveyed agreed that cultural awareness is the key to effective learning and English in real situations.

Language learning is a very established social development that leads to new knowledge in a provided context. Therefore, various socio-cultural characteristics such as history, culture, and the learners' L1 context give the foundations for developing target language learning. Massri (2019) argues that socio-cultural factors influence attitudes to language learning which are seen as values that the English language students return to the Foreign Language classroom. These values are formed by expected psychological advantages and advantages of learning the target language in a classroom setting. Many factors influence the values that the student holds, which might be managed by a series of factors, including the language learning practice, the society of the target language and the attitudes towards the target language expressed by parents and companions of the language learner (Massri, 2019).

5.3.5.4. Lecturers are using Arabic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	4	12.5	13.3	13.3
	Agree	26	81.3	86.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.24. Lecturers are using Arabic

Table (5.24) shows the effect of using Arabic in English classes. 86% of participants indicated that using the Arabic language as a facilitating tool in English classes has negatively affected the learning of English. This lack of awareness of different characteristics and features is likely to confuse the EFL learners, leading them to fall back on their L1 to imitate some of its features and structures and employ them in L2 writing. Some students think that when lecturers use Arabic code switching might help them to understand everything said or explained in the lecture. As reflected in the lecturers' interview, some of the lecturers got the request from the students to translate some of the curriculum material into Arabic to be a significant challenge. This was both wasting time and not helpful, in their viewpoint, in making the requested transformation from Arabic to English as the medium of instruction. At the same time, the lecturers revealed that the students had already identified most of the material in Arabic from high school. Thus, the lecturers' role looked to be to translate most of the lessons into English.

In the Libyan university, lecturers use the Arabic language to simplify problematic vocabulary for their students. However, 86% of participants are considered a high percentage that indicated that using Arabic as an assisting tool with English does not improve their understanding of English. In my opinion, using Arabic in English lessons is not a misdirected. It relieves the atmosphere for students to learn and understand properly. However, we should not depend totally on the Arabic language. There should be a mix of both. We do not want to ignore the sense that the class is called an "English class" and try to assist students to acquire it well.

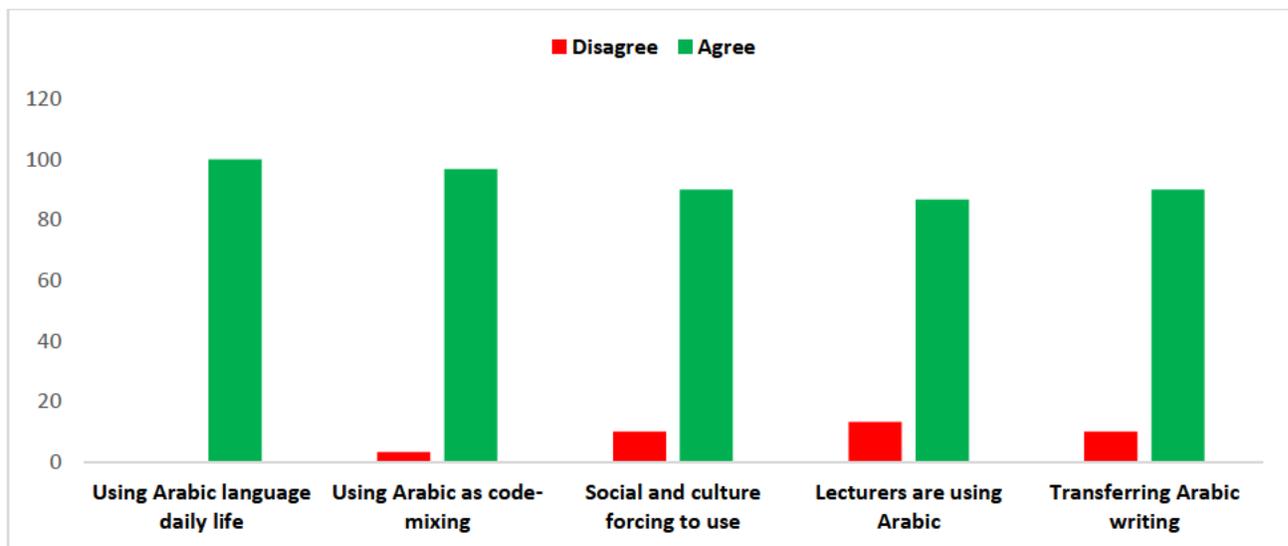
5.3.5.5. Transferring Arabic writing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	9.4	10.0	10.0
	Agree	27	84.4	90.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.25. Transferring Arabic writing

Table (5.25) examines the adverse consequences of Arabic language intervention to understand English. 90% of participants believed that Arabic writing ability would be adversely translated to the target language (English). However, to get around their language problems, the students translate their lectures into Arabic. However, the use of the native language is not always strategic or organized in the classroom. In my opinion, the matter of acquiring a new language has suggested opposing and supporting ideas. In contrast, some consider that the use of mother tongue can improve their English writing. This is because they think that using a new language will promote the way for teachers and students to deal with the new language. While others think that the first language will hinder students from learning new languages.

Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that some teachers' English skills were relatively poor, which made them use Arabic, affecting the level of students in English language learning. Because there is no option for an experienced and qualified teacher, who is skilled in language and its practice to teach the English language only, without support from the Arabic language. Inexperienced and unskilled English language teachers are the primary source of challenges faced in the teaching English in our schools.



Graph. 5.5. Using Arabic language as a first language

As can be seen, all participants recognize that interpreting English with Arabic during English lessons negatively affects them. English language teachers typically intend to concentrate on using English in their classrooms. However, they face a significant challenge: the lack of contact between teachers and their learners since they have trouble interpreting what they consider is a difficult foreign language.

The data study further reveals that the fundamental explanation for being weak English users is that the participants were not absorbed in the world of English, where English is used in its cultural setting. This suggests that language is embedded in the culture, and any effort to isolate language from its cultural meaning would undoubtedly contribute to the lack of language learning.

As cited from previous literature, the researcher clarified the forms of syntactic, lexical, phonological, morphological, and orthographical mistakes created by the Arab learners of English. Tenses errors, pronouns, relative clauses, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, articles, spelling, and punctuation are common in the construction of sentences.

5.3.6. University responsibility and its support in learning English

It is evident that the participants feel that the university is letting them down in various ways. Items 1, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire asked the participants for their views about these challenges because of the university system, such as lack of motivational support. There is also a lack of resources, and lack of continuous exposure to the English language during academic life. Students are not satisfied with how exams are conducted. There is a lack of modern educational tools such as modern computers, and accessibility for English language courses at university. University admin's system support is problematic and there is a lack of infrastructure at the university (library services and other complementary equipment) that is helpful to improve learning.

5.3.6.1. Lack of motivation

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.26. Lack of motivation

Table (5.26) shows that result, 66.7% of participants agreed that students could often lose their willingness and confidence in teaching and placing a significant challenge in the context of successful language learning. Since, some students are not self-motivated, lecturers should set explicit purposes for each lesson in preparing for class and constantly assume the best from their students, encouraging them to do the best they can in preparation. A positive and supportive atmosphere is the first step in improvement.

5.3.6.2. Lack of resources about English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.27. Lack of resources about English

Table (5.27) reveals that 83.3% of participants said it is difficult for them to develop their English language skills without enough materials. Lack of some facilities leads to a negative experience for the students and causes them to struggle to understand the essential parts of their studies. The students maintained that the necessary resources are not obtainable at the university, such as photocopiers. The students cannot find the required books and English resources, and the library does not help regarding this issue. Also, a shortage of essential resources affects the lecturers' ability to carry out their work professionally.

5.3.6.3. Lack of exposure to English

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Disagree	11	34.4	36.7	36.7
	Agree	19	59.4	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.28. Lack of exposure to English

Table (5.28) presents findings on the influence of English language exposure on language learning. 63.3% of participants responded to the questionnaire. Student respondents can increase learners' consciousness about the importance of learning the English language by regular exposure to the

language using multiple methods to boost second language acquisition (Al Zoubi, 2018).

Most Libyan students do not get sufficient chances to listen or speak in English. They attend the English language only in the English class. The teaching of the other subjects are mainly in the Arabic languages as the media of instruction is in their original languages. It is the same language in the cities and urban areas, and they are not getting enough exposure to English outside the classroom nor enough chances to improve themselves in using it. This naturally reduces their use of English and results from incompetence in the language.

5.3.6.4. Not satisfied with exams

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	12	37.5	40.0	40.0
	Agree	18	56.3	60.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.29. Not satisfied with exams

Table (5.29) shows that above, the 60% response shows that other variables add to students' difficulties, such as how difficult it is for them to deal with the university's demands. Or to deal with some exams and how one exam is administered. Also, lecturers who cannot support learners in the language they understand. The lecturers have attempted to adapt the exams to the students' weak level in English. To increase the learners' success in learning. It is essential to face students' difficulties for English foreign-language learners in university. The academic development and success of the learners are weak or adversely impacted. Students are unable to get their exams or do their academic work properly.

5.3.6.5. Lack of modern tools

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.30. Lack of modern tools

Table (5.30) shows that 66.7% of participants agreed that their university lacks technology and modern educational tools for learning English as a foreign language. Their responses explicitly demonstrate that computer applications, blogs for social networking, online videos, audio aids, and applications for mobile phones and tablets have a significant influence on learning English as a foreign language. Technology instruments will also quickly help develop students' language and communication skills. They also indicated that they cannot use the internet inside the university because sometimes there is no internet connection and, when it is available, the internet connection is poor.

5.3.6.6. Accessible for English courses

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	10	31.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	20	62.5	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.31. Accessible for English courses

Table (5.31) shows that 66.6% of participants agreed that they did not receive any English courses at university or the pre-university stage. However, the students usually are pleased with their mastery of English. The students enjoy English as a foreign language course and believe that their

English will be strengthened through course work and social contact. Professionals agreed that students' abilities are not satisfactory but may be enhanced and upon modifying their teaching methods (Andrade, 2009).

5.3.6.7. University admins system support

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	19	59.4	63.3	63.3
	Agree	11	34.4	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.32. University admins system support

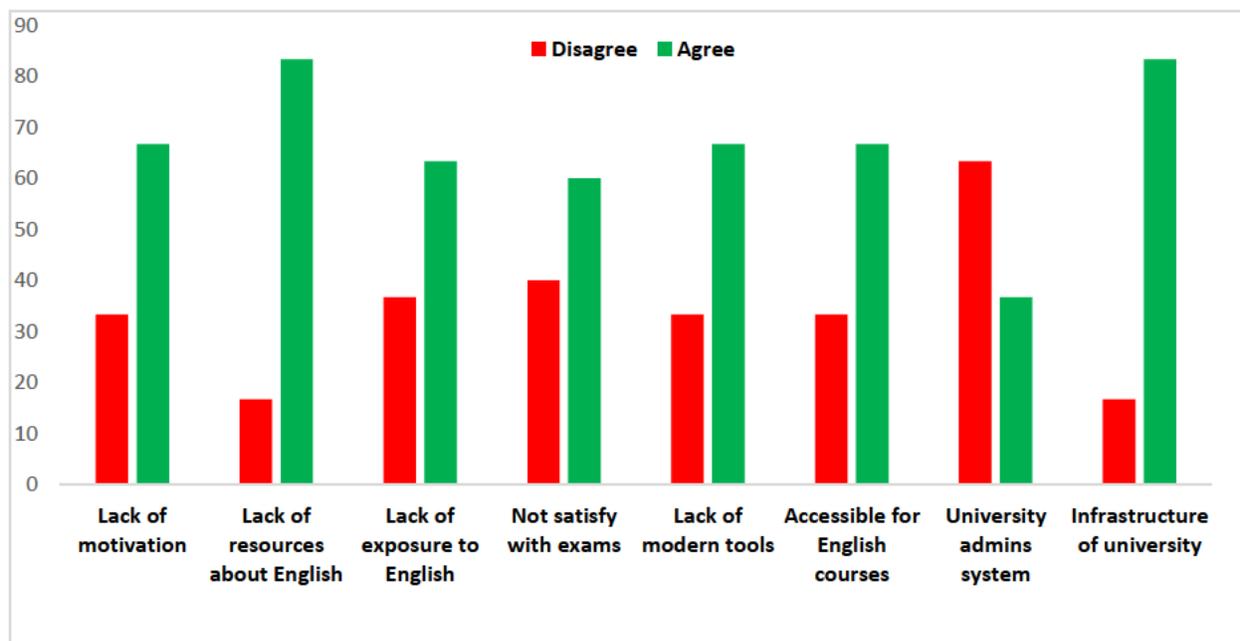
Table (5.32) shows that 63.3% of participants disagreed that the university administration supports them and solves their issues. As the teaching and learning flow as smoothly as possible across comprehensive frameworks, policies, and procedures. The rest of the students concerning the university's role are related to their assumption that the university administration is not responsive to their needs and do not have adequate lectures in English.

5.3.6.8. Infrastructure of university

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.33. Infrastructure of university

Table (5.33) shows that 83.3% of participants answered that investments in quality university facilities are strongly connected to enhanced learning results, even after monitoring students' social context and other significant covariates. It is clear that the university's infrastructure is not suitable for the students and does not meet their expectations. Some issues related to the infrastructure of the university and the three faculties impact on students and lecturers alike, making them less effective. They include poor equipment, library, laboratories, lack of online resources, and electricity outages.



Graph. 5.6. University responsibility and its support in learning English

Educational infrastructure-buildings, classrooms, labs, and equipment are crucial components of schools and universities' academic environments. It is clear that high-quality facilities, among other advantages, encourages improved teaching, increase student grades, and decreases dropout rates. There have been various problems impacting vast numbers of lecturers in diverse educational settings, such as inspiration, learning distinction, teaching large classrooms, discipline. Therefore, most of the students regarded their experience at university as disappointing. They reported that the university does not appear to exert any effort to develop their readiness to learn by providing the necessary services to improve their level of English.

5.3.7 Other reasons

Other reasons arise from Items 1 and 10 of the questionnaires. The participants mentioned some issues that are not related to their educational institutions. However, it is more related to their abilities to learn English and some other factors such as not knowing how to learn English. Other factors include the fear of learning English due to low proficiency, low self-confidence to use English because of being afraid of making mistakes. Political issues and their influence on English learning, living in rural areas with limited facilities to learn English. Increasing age and decrease in learning English as the mind is not free for learning a new language. These are some of the concerns with learning English as a second language.

5.3.7.1. Not knowing how to learn English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	13	40.6	43.3	43.3
	Agree	17	53.1	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.34. Not knowing how to learn English

Table (5.34) 56.7% of participants indicated that students do not know how to learn English while 43.3% said they do. Some participants indicated that they need motivation and encouragement to learn any foreign language as they need to practice and know some strategies to learn English. This may come from their families or the environment from primary school. For example, learning grammar, they can learn all of the rules and regulations through practice, but they will not be good at it unless they practice it, and it starts to become second nature to them. Students and lecturers should be aware of the purpose of English classes. Lecturers should inform the students that the primary purpose of the English course is to improve their skills in using a foreign language.

5.3.7.2. Fear of learning due to low proficiency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	15.6	16.7	16.7
	Agree	25	78.1	83.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.35 . Fear of learning due to low proficiency

An English proficient learner is one who can use English to ask questions, understand teachers, read materials, analyse concepts, and challenge what is required in the classroom. Thus, proficiency contributes to the four language skills. Table (5.35) shows that 83.3% of participants agreed with the connection between anxiety and language skills. Language skills and accomplishment are relatively low. Lack of proficiency is attributed to the assumption that students are separated from natural English language settings, culture, and people. It has been shown that the low proficiency of students and the additional load on them of learning their specialist knowledge in a language different from their mother tongue poses a significant challenge to them. Both lecturers and students must use a variety of strategies to address these challenges.

5.3.7.3. Low self-confidence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	25.0	26.7	26.7
	Agree	22	68.8	73.3	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.36. Low self-confidence

Table (5.36) revealed that 73.3% of participants indicated that students with low self-confidence do not do well and most certainly assume that they are incompetent learners. The learners suffer from confusion, vulnerability, anxiety, and social isolation where there is low self-confidence

5.3.7.4. Political issues and their influence

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Disagree	6	18.8	20.0	20.0
	Agree	24	75.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.37. Political issues and their influence

Table (5.37) reveals that 80% of the students agreed that the level of education can be calculated by variables such as economic development, funding for education, structural structure. In addition, they assert that their English weaknesses have been caused by political interference in the educational system, where English was prohibited from being taught in the schools for years.

However, English as a foreign language exists so prominently and has posed a concern to the government. Yet the language issue evolved more complicated without any practical solution. In teaching-learning, the teacher should attempt to understand the student first. Then only can they enable the learners to understand their instruction. Theory with practice on some teaching topics may allow the learners to understand the concept quickly.

5.3.7.5. Living in rural areas

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Disagree	18	56.3	60.0	60.0
	Agree	12	37.5	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.38. Living in rural areas

Table (5.38) demonstrates the difficulties of teaching the English language in a rural area. In this analysis, the variables influencing the students' performance in rural areas in the English language were analysed. 60% of participants suggested that learners were highly encouraged to learn English. In this area, students and lecturers should be aware of the purpose of English classes. Lecturers should inform the students that the primary purpose of the English course is to improve their skills in using a foreign language. The learners are from rural places, coming through provincial language medium schools. Holding in mind the criteria of the learners and based on their background, we should design the curriculum and assume methods to examine their English language proficiency.

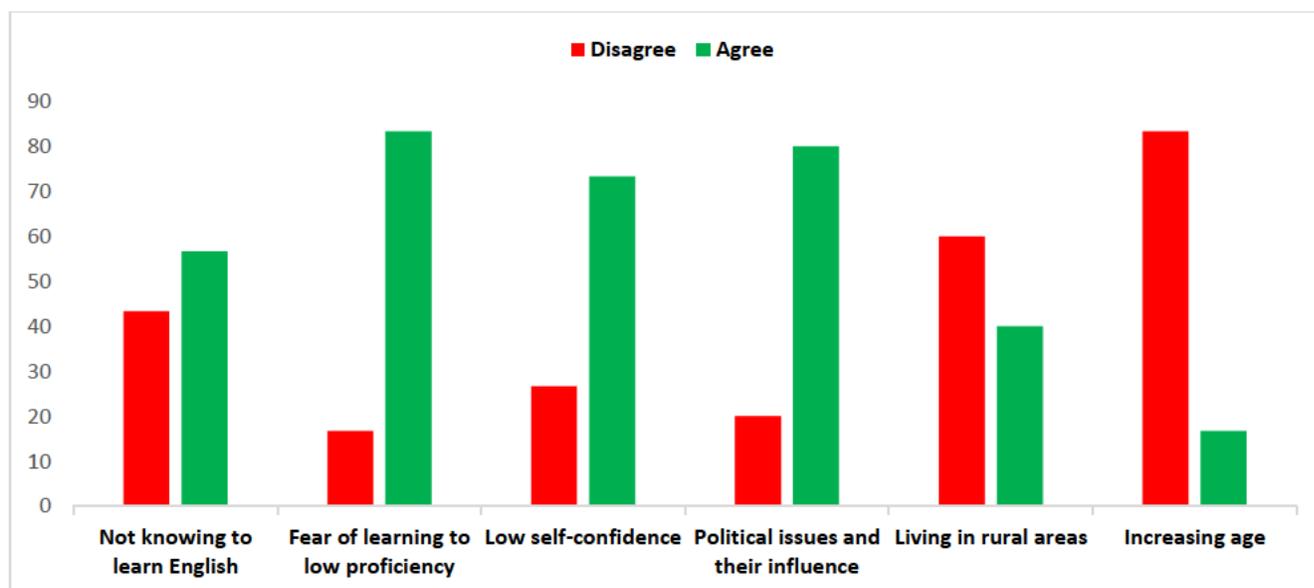
5.3.7.6. Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	25	78.1	83.3	83.3
	Agree	5	15.6	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	93.8	100.0	

Table. 5.39. Age

Table (5.39) reveals that 83.3% of the participants disagree that people will not perform well in language learning at an early age. Their age will not hinder their English learning. In contrast,

16.7% of participants answered that the old learners seem to be more effective in learning English.



Graph. 5.7. Other reasons

As can be seen from the responses above, the students' failure to learn English, low self-confidence, and living in rural areas affect their English language success in rural areas. They also disagreed on the effects of age on English literacy. In English language learning, older learners appear to be quicker and more effective learners, and young learners can learn the language better in certain areas of language than adults or teenagers and achieve success in the ultimate language learning (Hu, 2016).

In addition, lecturers in their interview stated that both anxiety and related issues when making errors in front of fellow learners, motivate the students to use their home language in lectures, groups and pairs even though they are supposed to be conversing in English. This tendency by students to use Arabic is expanded by their weak ability to express their thoughts and emotions in English. Students do not have a good background of vocabulary with which they can tell their narratives. Therefore, this weak ability and lack of good background are probable causes for shyness and anxiety.

5.4 Conclusion

The quantitative data findings revealed the main challenges of 73.3% of participants who agreed with the effect of culture and social barriers on English language learning. 66.7% said the students have no time to practice the English language lessons. The grammar is not well understood, according to 86.7% of participants. 90% of the participants accepted that English language students have shortcomings in all four parts of the English language: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The teaching methods used in teaching English lessons are not realistic, according to 83.3% of participants. 73.7% said their university does not provide them with extra English courses. The test is currently not an authentic experience. The detrimental effects of interference with studying English as a foreign language in an Arabic medium setting were overwhelmingly decided upon by all participants. 90% of those polled agreed that, in actual circumstances, cultural knowledge is the secret to successful learning and use of English.

Students will lose their willingness and confidence in teaching, according to 66.7% of participants. 83.3% said that students could not improve their second language skills without adequate materials. 66.6% agree that through coursework and social interaction, English is reinforced. Lecturers and parents should make the students more confident and self-dependent. The confidence is an effective strategy to consolidate students' personal skills.

Students do not know how to speak English, according to 56.7% of participants. 80% accepted that the quality of schooling should be assessed by considerations such as economic growth. 60% of participants agree that students were actively motivated to participate. The participants also think students' weak ability to speak English is negatively affected by their environment as they are surrounded by people speaking Arabic. Practising English-speaking is limited to the classroom, and this is an environment in which the students feel shy to communicate. Alanazi & Widin (2018) indicated that English language teaching and learning faces different challenges in Saudi Arabia. The EFL learners have low communicative ability or spoken skills due to many conditions, including low motivation, a focus on exams based on curriculum, lack of integration of modern

teaching tools or technology, still using traditional classroom teaching methods, and unqualified, untrained English language teachers. Also, they added that learners graduate from high school without carrying out a short conversation in English. Besides this, the social and cultural obstacles to effective language learning and teaching, particularly concerning the interaction between teachers and students, hinder learners' dialogic skills.

These factors cause serious problems for the students who experience this for several reasons, such as their tendency to speak Arabic, local culture and traditions, a lack of solid background in English vocabulary, and a general lack of proficiency. All of these factors have a negative result on their ability to learn English.

The qualitative data findings are presented and analysed in the light of the main research questions; its purpose is to investigate and to explore the challenges that first-year university students face in the learning of English in Libya and the imperative reasons for these challenges which impact effective academic performance. Moreover, the study aims to answer the three main research questions underlying the current investigation, which are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

This section presents the results gathered from EFL participants through two types of qualitative data collection: an individual interview and a focus group discussion (see table 5.40). Accordingly, the findings will be presented separately in two sections; and every section is divided into another two sections, one for EFL students and the other for EFL lecturers. To present each set of data separately will make the source of the particular information obvious to the reader. Each section will provide a brief introduction to the data, a description of the data analysis process, a presentation of the findings and, finally, a summary discussion and conclusion. The first set of data is presented from the individual interviews process.

Sections	Participants
1- Individual interview method	Contextual analysis of EFL university students' individual interview
	Contextual analysis of EFL Lecturers' individual interview
2- Focus group discussion method	Contextual analysis of EFL university students' focus group discussion
	Contextual analysis of EFL Lecturers' focus group discussion

Table 5.40. Division of chapter qualitative data analysis

5.5. Individual interview qualitative data analysis

This section provides the results of twelve interviews between six EFL students and six EFL lecturers. The reason for applying individual interview in a qualitative study is well approved and acknowledged (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Khalid, 2017; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). It is known to be an appropriate method for obtaining valuable information that exposes participants' experiences and perceptions. It is also valuable because it allows these individuals to express their experiences in their own words.

Cohen et al., (2011) suggest that the constant comparative approach is the analytical technique of qualitatively comparing and contrasting data from different data sources to develop categories and look for patterns between categories. Charmaz (2006) asserts that data are collected and interpreted in qualitative research by searching for themes based on the participant's response. The first step in the analysis process was to initiate the coding of all research data. Coding can be seen as the basis for an analysis that paves the way for a much more intensive study. Coding involves breaking

data into concepts and categories and categorizing data sections with a short name summarizing each section.

First, the researcher listened carefully to all the data and translated the Arabic interviews into English. The data for each participant was then kept in a file and transcribed. The transcribed texts were formatted; the lines were numbered, and the conversation turns were preceded by identifying the symbols. Second, coding was used to capture interview data and learn how participants make sense of their experiences and act in certain situations. The researcher went through each case study in-depth, outlined key points, wrote labels on the margins, and made notations to himself. The data was then reviewed again, arranged, and finally related directly back to the generated categories. The researcher did not use any computer programs to analyse qualitative data, as the data was not large enough to warrant such software. Instead, the researcher decided to use a manual approach that involved engaging herself in interview data and reading and re-reading transcripts to familiarize herself with the participants' perspectives.

The section starts with an explanation of the students' interview analysis procedure followed by the presentation and discussion of the interview findings related to the coding categories that have been established in response to the aims of the research questions mentioned above. This description will be supported by quotes from interview transcripts that provide insights into the participants' views on specific issues. Lastly, a summary of the results and a conclusion will be presented. The findings will then be triangulated with other data (questionnaires, focus group interviews) which will be described in chapter (6), and it is hoped that this will allow conclusions to be drawn on the EFL challenge on the learning of English for the target population, which relates to the original objectives of the study.

5.5.1. Data analysis of EFL university students' interview (from first-year students' perceptions)

The initial sources of data for this study are six interviews for six EFL students, and the findings are expected to contribute to the response of the main research questions. As students graduate to higher education institutions, many issues and challenges arise in adaptation to the environment of

higher education institutions (Khalid, 2017). Students have left high schools and admitted to higher learning institutions like universities, have a new experience in creating new relationships. They encounter different education processes that they may not be used to and communicate with people of high skills and qualifications. These issues become more complicated if the students that learn in a language other than their native language and do not have an adequate level of proficiency.

From these individual interviews, I will explore the students' perceptions of learning English. For the purposes of current research, this exploration is critical. This is because it unravels the nature of students' issues and challenges and how they deal with them. Since the use of English learning in Libya is a problem, we need to explore it from all participants' perception, including lecturers and students. After interviewing and analysing the students' responses, it is obvious that the challenges they face due to the use of English in their study fall within different categories, including their English proficiency, teachers, and school facilities. In the following discussion, I demonstrate every issue that is supported by the responses of the relevant students. Some of these interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated into English.

5.5.1.1. Previous challenges related to the school (before entering university)

Many participants indicated that their poor English language level is one of the issues they face in terms of English language learning during their university studies. They stated that many of the language fundamentals important to their progress on their education program are missing. Students assign their weakness in English to many factors:

- **Acquire the English language at a late stage of their education:** The participants indicated that lessons begin quite late in their school education and could mainly be ascribed to their weaknesses of English. English language is taught and is acquired as a foreign language. All students have to learn it effectively in year seven (when learners are about 13 years of age), meaning that students miss the opportunity at a younger age to learn and acquire a foreign language. Many students voiced their opinions on this issue:

Teaching the English language supposed to begin in the pre-school at five years old. At this age, the learner will be familiar with the basic of English such as letters and names of living creatures, vegetable and fruit. I mean, topics like these will encourage and assist learners to learn any foreign language unlike us, who did not learn English adequately in the first years of our education. So, we were shocked and dissatisfied when we came across the academic language at the university, because our English language proficiency is bad. (S1, S4, S5, S6)

Education ministry should apply different strategies and activities in the preschool stage promotes students' performances in four language skills. Combining reading and writing skills with some stories and simple books in the classroom promotes students' language skills and encourages extensive reading. (S2)

Some participants assert that this situation was complicated because their English teachers were only focused on good learners whose English language performance was high, without concern for weak learners whose English language performance or proficiency was low. Consider the next response:

I have learnt English at the age of twelve, and I had the same English teacher for the following two years. She was only interested in learners who did a good performance. I mean, the other learners have made significant efforts to get through (S3)

- **Students' English language learning experience at school:** Because the English language is one subject amongst ten subjects in schools in later years, other participants have asserted that the English they obtained at school was very simple English and teachers taught them the basics only; it is therefore not appropriate for them when they move to university. This is evident from the following responses:

The English language is a challenge for me because my English before I entered university was not enough; because in primary and secondary schools, the English language was taught to us at a primitive level which did not qualify a student to fulfil his university studies with English. Our teachers taught us how to pass the exam but not how to learn and practice the English language. (S4)

I have learnt the general English language in elementary and secondary schools. However, this English has been very simple, so I do not have any advantage from it. (S5)

The English subject in primary and secondary schools was taught as a normal course not as a foreign language, in which it needs more attention and practice but without any concern or care. (S2)

English language textbooks are an essential element in most language curricula. They are beneficial for both lecturers and students. For lecturers, provide a variety of frameworks in achieving the purposes and goals of the course and lead them in conducting lessons. For students, the textbook is the primary exposure to the target language aside from the inputs they obtained from their language lecturer. It should be valuable for lecturers' progress and professional development. It should support the teachers to gain purposeful, reliable, organized and contextual insights into the overall quality of the textbook material. It considers the students' needs and assists the lecturers in getting the necessary quality materials. (S6)

- **Deficiency of English language courses at schools:** Some participants indicated that they had no English preparatory work that much. They did not obtain any English language courses at school, to prepare them for university stage. Take the following responses:

It was not really nice, because we didn't receive any English courses before we entered the university. (S1)

They're not teaching us English at the university. I didn't have any courses in English before I entered the faculty. (S4)

These two responses indicated that some schools in Libya do not offer any English courses to improve their students' English before entering university. Therefore, some students may struggle with academic English when they start university without adequate preparation to cope with the demands of learning English as a second language. In addition, the language courses should be reviewed, redesigned, and restructured from time to time to include changes getting into English language usage and the changing requirements of the curriculum.

The participants also mentioned that there were no private English language courses or language centres available for them. As a result, students need to rely on themselves to improve their English skills. Besides, it was not possible for students to travel overseas to take private courses.

Before I joined my faculty, I did not find any English course to enhance my English. (S1)

In order to improve my language skills and be able to pursue my education at university, even directly after high school, I could not attend any courses in English. Thus, as I told you, I have to face many challenges in English learning. (S3)

I have not really taken private classes in order to enhance my English. From the beginning, I have relied on myself. Actually, I wanted to take an English course, but there is no one here in Zliten, and I cannot manage to go to another place at my own expense. (S6)

From this perspective, most participants agreed that their English proficiency is very poor, although under the conditions, they could not really be blamed for this. In this situation, the school system plays a vital role. As a consequence, it is not shocking that they had difficulties at the university in terms of their language skills.

- **English teachers at high schools:** Some participants stated that the low quality of school education influenced the key issue behind their low English proficiency. The students affirmed that some teachers were not qualified to teach the basic English skills to the students. Consider the following responses:

There were no proficient English teachers in high school who could teach you the kind of English that will assist you at university. The teaching we gained was very simple, and common things were not emphasized. (S1)

The main issue is that the teachers in secondary and high schools who taught us the English language were not qualified to teach a foreign language. Because of this, I struggled a lot. The teacher would have the book in her hand and would be able to spell the words and hardly pronounce them. It was hard to learn English properly. (S6)

Based on these responses, it is clear that some teachers' level of English skills was quite poor, and consequently they affect the level of students' understanding in language learning. Moreover, some students stated that there are not enough English language teachers, and there are no English teachers in some schools, so English is not taught in any way. Consider the responses below:

We did not study English in high school until the third year, because there were no teachers. The main cause was the school admin and the person who are responsible for education in the city. But also, if they had offered us a teacher, he had no competence. Therefore, the lack of

English teachers in our region was severe, which caused us challenges.

(S3)

Some participants mentioned to the teachers that feedback should develop when dealing with errors. They need to comprehend when and how to correct the students' mistakes. They should not frustrate learners by correcting each error. Teachers should correct high-frequency mistakes.

5.5.1.2. English language skills and challenges

Generally, the students indicated that they are weak in all the English skills (writing, speaking, listening, and reading):

When I joined my faculty, I realized that my studies were in English. My English is quite weak because I had language issues; I thought I would leave the course because of language difficulties. I mean, my English was not helpful enough to cope with the English language used in the university. (S1)

My communication in English is limited to a few words. I have a significant challenge in understanding English, even when it is expressed very slowly. Also, I can understand the main concepts in most conversations, except when speech is quick. My grammar is reasonably good and is not very bad, but I make errors with complicated constructions. (S3)

I cannot understand all basic meaning of most journal articles, regular messages, reports, and technical material in areas with which I am familiar, without using a dictionary. However, I need to refer to a dictionary to get the correct meaning of the whole text. I sometimes have struggles with complex sentences. (S6)

One of the main issues of concern was reading and grammar:

The lecturers often advise us to peruse some of the significant resources published by Cambridge University. Language in such publications is challenging because writers who write such books have much experience using the English language with a high educational record. So, I have significant problems reading such books because I do not have strong English language ability. After all, I was not good at high school. My English in high school was not advanced enough to study the English language at university. (S4)

In the following, I refer to more problems of English language skills that students experience:

- **Relevant challenges for pronunciation and speaking skill:** Most of the students affirmed that they face serious problems in pronunciation. This reduces and effects the communication between students and their lecturers:

It hard for me to speak English fluently which affects me badly because I am in my first year, and my English is not up to the standard it must be. (S3)

I am not happy with my English level because I cannot speak English properly. Besides, this makes me feel depressed because I am a university student, spending many years in studying English from the school phases until now, but I still cannot speak fluently. (S6)

Their difficulty in speaking English fluently makes the students become frustrated and confused. The students realize that they cannot pronounce words correctly. They find it hard to articulate the English terms, because of their weak level of English and lack of adequate practice. Some of them have never been exposed to the English language in real situations, making it a hard task to learn and pronounce. Even some teachers do not pronounce all the words and phrases correctly. This is evident from the following comment:

I cannot read properly, and even I cannot listen to the words properly. I do not know how to articulate the words correctly because I failed to listen to them correctly, and I cannot make words as a sentence together. If the teacher pronounces the words correctly, I will pronounce it correctly from the first time and practice them spontaneously in the lectures. But I recognized that the lecturer's pronunciation is something and the word is something else. (S2)

The influence of our first language causes pronunciation errors. Our first language interfering, our teachers, curriculum, and lack of students' use outside the classroom impact our pronunciation in English. As students, we are confused with some sounds; we may tend to put such sounds with other sounds similar to our L1. (S4)

Most difficult we face when learning English is their efforts to implement the same pronunciation rules of our mother tongue to follow the English pronunciation. Using these rules in the wrong positions will cause the wrong pronunciation of some vocabulary, which leads to confusion when we are trying to interact with each other. (S5)

Therefore, Libyan students' views on their poor English proficiency includes mispronunciation and phonological aspects.

- **Students' spelling errors:** Another problem the students added to the problems they encounter while learning English is spelling. They have problems when trying to write English words correctly. Some terms for them are similar in terms of pronunciation, but their spelling is different as one of the participants commented:

I make spelling errors when I express in English because English vocabularies are complicated, and some words are very similar and hard to remember its spelling. Also, indeed, the hardness of coming towards new words. (S1)

I always make many spelling mistakes, for example, most of my exam mistakes are because of my spelling errors. Actually, these mistakes reflect badly on my English exams' performance. Hence, it is necessary to write correctly and without errors. (S3)

I can write nearly simple things, as a short note to a friend, which relates to important messages, but often contains many misspellings and grammatical mistakes. (S5)

The nature of the English language is also a cause for spelling errors. English is a complex language, which is not easy to learn or acquire. The leading cause of students' spelling mistakes is some of the silent letters, making it difficult to understand for Libyan students to spell words when comparing them with Arabic. (S6)

The primary challenge is that the students do not understand the spelling rules. They are unaware of English sound recognition and are not familiar with the exact articulation of words. (S4)

Most of my friends argue that we comprehend the new vocabulary items during the lecture, but we tend to forget newly learned terms after a short time. Maybe this is because of the need to use these vocabularies in their daily conversation.

Apparently, the fact that students make spelling errors in their work or assignments and the fact that teachers notice these and mark down the work accordingly may play a significant role in decreasing a student's marks and thus affecting their progress. Wahid and Farooq (2019) state that word-formation has a crucial role in developing spelling, word recognition, vocabulary, grammar, production of different lexical categories. It promotes not only reading, grammar, vocabulary but also lexical processing and writing, or overall learning. Also, Most EFL students argue that they comprehend the new vocabulary items during the lecture, but they tend to forget

newly learned terms after a short period of time. This is due to the need to use such vocabulary in their daily conversation. Lack of vocabulary knowledge impedes the actual communication of EFL students to a great extent. Thus, it is predictable that undergraduate EFL students should learn proper vocabulary.

- **Relevant challenges for listening and understanding skill:** Another challenge raised by the students was their deficiency in properly understanding the lecturers. Much of what the lecturers say is missed by them, due to poor listening skills is inadequate to absorb everything said during the lecture.

The difficulty we mainly face is related to listening and understanding lectures because there are some lecturers whose English is weak, which makes it difficult for them to convey their thoughts properly and has a massive impact on us as students. We face these problems from both local and foreign lecturers. (S1, S3, S5)

Sometimes I blame myself for not understanding a sentence or anything they say it in English because of my poor English, and my level should be better than it is. (S4)

I can ask and answer questions about prevalent topics. I can understand simple questions if they are talked slowly and sometimes repeated. My vocabulary is restricted to basic needs, such as food, asking directions, welcoming people. I make many grammatical mistakes, but others can usually understand them. (S6)

The difficulty in understanding of the lecturers affects their performance. The following student mentions the important role of Arabic in his understanding:

I cannot understand the whole lecture in English, or maybe I can understand some of it. I feel that I need to translate the whole lecture to the Arabic language. Sometimes I understand the first part of the lecture but, if the lecture continues in English, I cannot comprehend the entire lecture. (S2)

5.5.1.3. The effect of the Arabic language on English learning:

Many students indicate that Arabic is an essential language to their studies, because most of their modules or subjects are in the Arabic language, which is their mother tongue. They are easier for them to understand English lectures when it is explained in Arabic, similarly, some lecturers indicate that the reason behind using Arabic during their lectures, is because most of the students require that for understanding. Thus, they use coding switching between English and Arabic languages during English lectures.

Teaching a foreign language like English will be more difficult if the lecturer does not give lectures in a mixture of English and Arabic and translate the essential thing in the lecture. It will be easier to understand the basic of the subject... (S1, S4, S5)

In addition, some students referred to how they use Arabic because they do not get enough support from lecturers, as the following student claims:

We speak Arabic during the lecture, and even when we read something, for example, one page in English and then to explain and understand this page we use Arabic. (S1)

Most the explaining of the lecture done in Arabic and English at the same time. Which makes it easier to understand. (S6)

At the same time, other students attest to how they attempt to use English in their studies as much as possible, whether they are encouraged by their lecturers or not:

In my opinion, we must use English all the time to learn it. I always try to use it in the lecture and even on the campus because I want to improve my language and pursue my studies abroad. (S1)

5.5.1.4. Practicing and using the English language in daily life:

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, it is not common for people to speak another language in Libya. They use the Arabic language as an official language in the country. Thus, the participants indicated that they do not use the English language in their daily life, in public or even at campus. It is rare to get a chance to use English as they rely on themselves to promote their English.

My critical challenge is that I do not use English at university or outside of it at all. Even with my family, sometimes I try to talk with, but they do not respond to me or involve with me in my dialogue. (S1)

I depend mostly on myself to practice English; actually, I do not want to be funny in front of other people. Because in my culture, I am not allowed to speak with another language that the people around you do not understand or use. So, I would say that it is a culture barrier to not use the English language as a foreign language. (S5)

The same opinion is confirmed by other participants, that it is rare to use English outside the university campus:

Community and the environment we stay are among the reasons we do not have the willingness to learn English. For example, when people hear someone speak in English, they are amazed as if he was a strange person as they ridicule you. (S3)

Yes, actually people make you feel as if you are arrogant when you talk to them in the English language. (S4)

I feel like a foreigner in my society when I speak English outside the university. (S6)

Some participants do not practice English or try to do so because they do not have enough terms to enter any action to improve students' skills.

I do not have sufficient words to be able to express everything. Also, we do not practice English at university or on the street. Thus, if the situation remains, our English level will get to its lowest because of a lack of daily use. (S1)

I only attend to English in the lectures, and after that, I go back home, and I do not use it. I haven't had any opportunity to talk in English. (S2)

5.5.1.5. The impact of English language challenges on EFL students

The students feel frustrated because of their poor English skills. Thus, their low level of English impacts them psychologically in that the students are less self-confident. The stress that students experience when they try to talk or write in English is a sense of losing motivation and confidence. As some students comment on this:

Yes, there is a psychological impact, which is obvious in the student's articulation that I do not know how to transfer some English information. That is the way I do not want to speak in English. (S1)

Sometimes I feel very depressed due to my deficiency in speaking English fluently and getting full information across in the right way. (S3)

There is an obstacle that I cannot express myself or convey my ideas due to my bad English, even though I know a lot about the topic. This impact is language. (S5)

This discouragement is most serious among students who are in the first year of their studies. They are discouraged that they cannot write or speak English correctly, which makes them lose their motivation. Also, they think that their weak skills hinder their performance.

The difficulty to speak in English fluently has a significant impact on my personal motivation. As a result of this, I have started to look for an intensive English course to improve my language. (S1)

The lack of English language usage negatively impacts my personal motivation because it makes me feel an inferiority complex. I have not got the ability to convey

the information to others appropriately. So, I become hesitant about asking the lecturer questions, which makes my understanding of the subject decrease. (S3)

5.5.1.6. The university's responsibility towards its students

According to the participants, it is clear that they feel that the university is disappointing them in many aspects. Consider the following section reply:

Entering university does not add much to my English learning, it becomes worse than before. The university even does not support us in many aspects, such as I cannot find a relevant book about English learning in the university library... (S1)

In the following, I highlight the issues that students encounter due to the university system and how it deals with them:

- **Administrative matters:** The participants' claim that the university administration is not reacting to their needs in making available the required number of English language lecturers as there is a shortage.

We do not have a considerable administration that we can depend on and complain to. They do not hold lecturers to account and do not force them to do their work properly. It is common for us to go to university in the morning and not get the lecture. Such as yesterday, we had a lecture scheduled for 8 am; we have it at 9.30 am. (S2)

Furthermore, the participants indicated that, when the university enrolls a lecturer, it does not seem to be concerned whether this lecturer is good or not at teaching English as a foreign language. The students asserted that some lecturers' English level is inadequate, consequently affecting the students' level of English.

The serious issue that is the university does not assist us or recruit a lecturer who is excellent in English and who understands us well. But the majority are their English is poor, and that makes the problem worse. (S5)

- **Organization issues:** Claims of poor organisation are evident from the following replies:

I am suffering so much because there is no organization, I come up with different timetable whole the year of study. The examination timetable also changes, and I often prepare and go for my English exam and discover that it was cancelled. (S4)

Sometimes we are not ready and prepared, and we don't come because no lectures are scheduled for that day. But you come the next day, and you are shocked to inform that there was a lecture the day before. Yes, we are still suffering from the organization issue. (S6)

It is clear that the participants feel extremely unhappy with the university and with the system it follows and how it deals with their needs.

- **University's library resourcing:** Many other problems raised due to the university resources influence students' ability to learn. For example, the university does not provide a language laboratory for students to practice language skills. In addition, it does not provide them with useful English resources and references that the students need at the library:

The university must work hard to provide us with the required references with adequate quantity for all students. Also, it has to expand the library and extend the work hours. (S1)

The university does not provide language laboratory for students to practice language skills such as listening, conversation, and

pronunciation. Thus, we do not have a chance to practice English at phonetics lecture. (S3)

Furthermore, the university has to update its education system, so it would be more modernized, and providing the students' needs like other Libyan universities do, such as free internet for all students:

There is another issue that we in our university are different from other universities in Libya. In this university, they do not apply the education basics and rules. (S4)

Yes, they do not follow the education regulations, as they must develop their education system every year. It should provide free internet for all students like other universities. (S6)

In brief, most of the participants considered their experience at university as dissatisfying. They indicated that the university does not appear to spend any effort to develop and provide the necessary services to improve their English level. They also indicated that the shortage of English lecturers negatively impacted them and assumed that some lecturers might teach modules without any experience in them.

5.5.2. Data analysis of EFL Lecturers' interviews (from lecturers' perceptions)

The sources of data for this study are six individual interviews with six EFL lecturers, and the findings are expected to contribute to the response of the main research questions. From these individual interviews, let us explore the challenges from the lecturers' perspectives. For the purposes of current research, this exploration is very important. This is because it unravels the nature of the issues and challenges faced by EFL students and how they deal with them.

To obtain an objective understanding we need to explore EFL teaching and learning from all participants' perceptions, including lecturers. After interviewing and analysing the lecturers' responses, it is clear that the challenges they face due to the use of English in their study fall within different categories, including their English proficiency, teachers, and school facilities. In the following discussion, I demonstrate every issue that is supported by the responses of the relevant lecturers. Some of these interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated into English.

5.5.2.1. Students' challenges in English learning from lecturers' perceptions

Academics lecturers focused on many issues relating to what EFL students face about language skills. Generally, most lecturers suggest a relation between such matters and the general position of higher education in Libya and the problems students encounter when joining this education system. In the following sections, these known issues are discussed.

- **Previous challenges of English learning and its impact on entering higher education:** The most common problem stated by the lecturers is that students' English language knowledge is very limited, thus their preparation for the requirements of higher education is inadequate. They considered that the students were not qualified for university studies. Many of the lecturers mentioned the fact that students encounter crucial problems in their first years in adjusting adequately to the course requirements, which requires them to have a good level of English. Some lecturers explained that the students' language weaknesses, were due to their insufficient preparation at school, before entering university, and some lecturers responded as follows:

First-year students, their English language is very poor, as they were not taught properly in the previous years before university, and they were not ready to join the university. This is one of the main issues that they face. (L1)

Actually, it is very hard for some students to receive all the information in English due to their English level is weak, and the language that they learnt in schools is not adequate to enable them to study fully English at English department. (L2)

Other lecturers focused on the issue that the school education system is not suitable for the development of English skills, because schools do not start teaching English from a primary school phase:

The matter with learning English, is that the teaching process has to begin at an early age because learning at a young age is easier, English should be taught from pre-school, and the methods of teaching it should be efficient at the same time. Also, the teaching of the English language should be observed. (L4)

I believe that learning a foreign language like English should be from school. English should be applied from their basic school education. So, when they enter the high education field, they will be at least a bit relievable to write a few sentences, understand at least one comprehensible line in English and so on. (L6)

Other lecturers indicated that the students' poor language skills are caused by factors away from the school education system and the students themselves. Students' low language preparation is due to the decisions taken by the country in the past, to prevent English being taught in schools. This decision made students not to be exposed to it during their school days:

The students' English is weak due to political issues that they had a bad effect on English learning in Libya. The English language was cancelled from education for a long period, and the impact of that action still exists. All the students and teachers were prohibited from using English. (L2)

It is obvious and shown in the above replies that preventing English teaching in the past has hampered students' language skills. Thus, we can conclude that all lecturers agree that the students' level and language skills are weak. Whereas some of them look at their weakness from a different perspective; they assert that the students' language weaknesses, are due to their insufficient preparation at school while others argue that it has been caused by political

intervention in the educational system, where English was forbidden from being taught in the school.

- **Common challenges when students have started their studies:** The extent to which the students have a good level in English language will dictate the extent to which they can understand the lecturers' meaning with ease. Thus, their understanding will be better, and they will not find it difficult to receive any knowledge conveyed to them. But without this, students face problems in grasping the topic at hand and encounter difficulties to interact with the lecturers:

Most of the students do not realize or understand what the lecture or the topic is about, that is because of their English level. The better their English level is, the quicker and easier they will understand the subjects. (L1, L2)

Yes, there is a correlation between students' level of English and their university studied; if their English is poor, they absolutely will struggle with their studies. (L3, L5)

English proficient learners should use English to ask questions, understand what teachers explain, read materials, make thoughts, and challenge what is required in the lesson. So, it relates to their four language skills proficiency. (L4)

Other lecturers said that English is necessary for students who are studying in the English language department, because all the exams are written in that medium. Students have to write their answers in English, and as a result, students with poor English writing skills obtain low marks. In addition, students have to define the meanings and spelling of the words they encounter in order to understand the information properly:

English plays a crucial role for English language students; they have to write up most of the topic in English and understand how to express everything in English. (L4, L6)

Some lecturers also indicated that even though the students encounter many issues, many of them try their best to work hard and show their understanding of the subject matter. It is clear that Arabic students are highly motivated to learn the English language.

Lecturers indicated that most students' issues are related to the four main language skills (writing, listening, reading, and speaking). The students in general must use all of these skills to perform the tasks. If the student has a problem with one of these skills, the other skills will also be affected. The following comments indicate such:

Some students spend much time translating their lectures, which is the main problem as they do not have much vocabulary to write. (L3, L6)

The student also suffering when they try to speak, they have difficulty in pronouncing some words. Some language difficulties in writing make some spelling mistakes. (L4, L5)

Two of the lecturers complained about the language hindrance, which forces them to repeat the lesson many times during the lecture. This will lead them to use Arabic with English to facilitate teaching:

However, I take a long time in my lecture because I repeat it and translate everything into Arabic, at the same time I cannot blame them because they have no previous experience, and English is not their mother tongue. (L1, L3, L5)

It is probable that what lecturers are saying is related to motivation. Lecturers tried to enhance and maintain students' motivation and engage them in learning in challenging contexts. Many lecturers showed empathy for their students' struggle with low levels of English.

In the following paragraph, lecturers' views towards the issue facing the students are looked at, regarding the four English skills:

- **Writing skill problems:** All lecturers agree that most of the students have poor English writing competence. They consider it as a significant challenge:

I gave the students an assignment to write twenty lines about themselves, and it was hard for them to write four or five lines in good English, with good grammar, even they have difficulties in writing their names correctly in English. (L2)

Lecturers might give students a low mark because they do not understand the students' ideas and expressions. this is a result of their poor writing. (L3)

All the lecturers' shared concern about spelling errors made by most students:

Sure, you find out some spelling errors in their questions' answers in the exam. (L4)

Yes definitely, there is a lots of spelling mistakes even when they write small topic. (L5)

Moreover, the lecturers considered students common grammatical mistakes in their writing, these include the correct word order. They do not have a clear and coherent structure. The lecturers also stated that students have grammatical mistakes in their writing, and the lecturers themselves make grammatical mistakes:

Not only the students make grammatical and spelling mistakes when they were writing their exams, but also some lecturers make these grammatical mistakes. (L6)

Most of the students who have grammatical mistakes are in the first- year students. (L1)

Therefore, first-year students' challenges are a serious issue because they cannot express their ideas or answers properly. They encounter problems in grammar and spelling. This frustrates students.

Some participants mentioned that the students had a negative perception of writing due to the lack of time to practice in the class and the limited writing course design.

There are four significant areas of writing challenges for Libyan students including firstly, they cannot write within a restricted time. Secondly, they cannot compose academic writing through the usage of English. Thirdly, they are incapable of employing the grammatical rules in writing an essay and lastly, they are unable to develop a proper structure.

- **Speaking skill challenges:** Another issue that the lecturers encountered is that participants find it difficult to talk or practice the English language. They stated that speaking English properly is important for the students, this issue makes it hard to communicate with their lecturers:

Definitely, some students find it hard to speak in English. This is one of the main problems that I face with my students that I find it hard to hold a conversation in English with them. (L1, L2, L4, L5)

Some lecturers indicated that some students cannot make a short conversation, this shows the weakness of the students' level in English. (L3)

The ability of some students to practice oral language properly and adequately in learning activities, such as collaborative oral activities sessions within the classroom and social interactions within the campus is constrained. Therefore, the lecturers should be cognisant of these limitations.

- **Comprehension difficulties:** Some students cannot read, comprehend and understand text at the age and grade-appropriate level. Also, students lack the ability to listen properly and understand the lecturers' language and instruction, learn and extract information, and catch the instructional discourse. These comments were made by these lecturers:

When I teach, it is necessary to use English and Arabic in the lecture, because students do not understand English except one or two students, as it is challenging for them to write their answer in English. (L1, L3, L4, L5)

Other lecturers indicated that the students cannot comprehend the questions directed to them, and this prevents their progress:

Even though they may not understand the exams questions, I have to translate it into Arabic. We definitely have a lot of difficulties. (L2, L4, L5)

These issues are mainly due to a lack of comprehending English terminologies and English grammar, which must be adequately understood for students to avoid facing any problems related to understanding:

Most students do not have enough vocabularies to understand the meaning of the sentences or questions. They could not form a sentence, because they did not teach grammar properly at school. (L5, L6)

5.5.2.2. Lecturers' responsibility towards the students' challenges

Lecturers have a responsibility towards their students, in that they should assist them in overcoming their English learning challenges. It has been shown that the low proficiency of lecturers, and the additional load on them of giving their specialist knowledge to the students in English, can be a significant challenge for these lecturers.

Lecturers deal with these challenges in the following ways:

- **Assessment and Exams format:** One of the instruments to assess students' level in foreign language learning, are exams. It is a prevalent measure method in any educational institution. There are many types and methods of examination questions. In this regard, lecturers indicated that they use some methods to adapted to the students' low English proficiency and are designed in a way to limit their answers and essay writing for longer length tests and exams. Therefore, exams are formulated to be responded to in a short answer:

In this university, the exam answers formed to short notes, which do not need to use and link words and sentences. The students do not write a long paragraph; all they need is to write some points. Because questions with a long answer, it takes a hard time for lecturers trying to understand the meaning the student is trying to convey. (L1, L3, L4, L5)

I asked my students to write short answers because most of the students cannot correctly answer the questions that require long answers, then they will fail their exams. (L6)

Short answers can help the students reduce writing mistakes. Some lecturers also designed exams questions with multiple-choice answers that do not need writing or speaking skills:

Mostly, we give the students question papers based on fill in the blanks, as we do not give them long essays because that will help them avoid lots of mistakes. (L1, L3, L4, L5)

The additional method we use in the exams is MCQ (multiple-choice questions). This method does not require them to worry about their writing skills to answer the questions:

I use a new method of the exam called MCQ, and I see this method as a solution for most students struggling with writing skills. as it allows them to use less writing in their answers and also it is the easier way of assessment than before. (L2, L4)

We chose the MCQ method in exams to avoid questions need long answers, as MCQ requires short answers. (L6)

It can be noticed that lecturers have tried to adapt the exam questions to the students' poor level in English. These questions were designed not to rely on the student's skills, such as writing. However, this method won't improve their writing skills, and this does not give lecturers a chance to examine students in various aspects of writing. Such as essays and some paragraphs. This design of questions makes it easier for students to get high marks and pass their undergraduate studies.

The problem with these procedures is that oral skills are ignored. Teachers also find it hard to motivate the students because they always intend to memorise the notes from poor guides and reproduce them in the examination.

- **Utilizing English and Arabic languages in code-mixing:** Most lecturers present different attitudes towards using the Arabic language in the lectures to explain their subject. One of them indicated that he used Arabic in the lecture to help the students understand the subject matter better. However, some students complain that lecturers use the Arabic language during lecture and that decreases their chance to learn English:

Even me, who I am a faculty lecturer, often find it hard to explain and reach the meaning in English, and it is easy for me to use my mother tongue. (L1)

Yes, most of the time, students use Arabic in the lecture, and we do not force them to speak English, because speaking English all the time might hinder their understanding of their subject. (L4, L6)

However, some lecturers indicated that they use only English in their lecture; they do not use Arabic because they believe that students will not improve their level of English:

Learning the English language is important, but there are some requirements for it such as practicing English by using its four skills, writing, listening, speaking... that why it is good that lecture should be in English. (L2, L4, L5)

Furthermore, lecturers stated that the students use Arabic because of their shyness towards using English:

We notice that some students are shy to speak in English, maybe they feel shame to make mistakes. So, they use Arabic to communicate with each other. (L4, L5, L6)

Some of the lecturers were requested by the students to translate some of the curriculum material into Arabic, as understanding the material was a challenge. This was both wasting time and not helpful. At the same time, the lecturers revealed that the students had already identified most of the material in Arabic from high school.

Other lecturers pointed out that using Arabic in the lecture might be a better choice, as some of the students may graduate from universities in non-English speaking countries such as Germany:

Some lecturers got their masters and PhD degree from non-English speaking countries such as Germany, Poland, Ukraine, France... Thus, when I begin teaching here, I used to say German words instead of English ones, because I did my Masters in Germany. (L1)

Therefore, from the lecturers' perceptions, there are two different aspects for the use of Arabic language. These are the possibility that students cannot understand their lecture, and to get a chance to communicate with their lecturers in Arabic. As there are some lecturers who have not graduated from English- speaking countries. Even the lecturers who insist on using English in their lectures as a medium of communication try to use a simple English form. These lecturers need to use English as an explanation within the lecture because this may improve the students' level of English.

- **English language courses at the university:** In addition, the lecturers assert that the university should provide some courses aimed at improving students' level in English. They think that these courses may address their problems:

There are no English courses at the university to assist EFL students to improve their English level. These courses should be free and during their study time. (L1, L2, L3, L5)

NO, no, the university does not offer any English courses; however, the students are interested in having some courses to improve their language. (L6)

This section shows the lecturers' responses to the challenges students encounter due to the use of English as a medium of teaching. Most of them indicated that they are aware of these challenges and design the exams in simple methods to enable the students to answer without the need for fluency in English. Moreover, lectures always accommodate students' mistakes in these exam settings. Some lecturers insist on using Arabic during their lectures to facilitate the process of explanation. Due to the traditional teaching method at this university, lecturers dominate the lecture without giving students a chance to participate in the lecture due to students' inability to communicate effectively. This makes students depend completely on

lecturers. However, students need to speak in front of the whole class to improve their inter-language system. They need to practice the language while focusing on accuracy and fluency. Giving time to prepare the description encourages them to think about what they say. This motivates the students to ask about the language they need and are more likely to acquire it.

5.5.2.3. Students' environment and practicing English

Most of the lecturers indicated that the students' weaknesses are caused by their environment, among other factors. For example, the lecturers stated that most of the students do not have a chance to practice English because their environment does not help them speak English. It is uncommon to use English outside of the classroom, or anywhere in Libya. For instance, you will not find people who read English newspapers, journals or find people who can use English to communicate with native speakers.

The lecturers are worried that there is little benefit when students attend listening and conversation lecturers for a few hours and then go back home where they do not speak English. Also, the faculty has to assist students in using English on the campus. Then they will get more chances to improve their language. In fact, in a society such as Libya it is a big challenge for people to get exposure to English language:

The main challenge to learn English comes from practicing the language; it depends on the person and his environments. If they like us, we do not have the opportunity to practice English in our environment. Even in the campus force us to speak Arabic. (L1, L3, L4, L5)

It is a big challenge to speak English in public, even at university, nothing encourages us to speak English. (L2)

Most of the students do not get enough chances to listen to or speak in English. Because of their common social and economic backgrounds, they do not get adequate English outside the classroom to improve themselves. (L6)

It depends on the social-related issues; parents have to encourage their children to interact with each other and speak English to enhance their abilities. Regarding some lecturers, the interaction between students is affected by some cultural factors which prohibits prevent male students from interacting with female students. It is a sensitive situation inside and outside the university.

5.5.2.4. Lecturers' proficiency and accent

Some lecturers expressed their concerns about other lecturers' accents and pronunciations. Some have a different English accent which is very hard to follow, and most of the students complain about this issue. Even the lecturers themselves could not sometimes understand their pronunciation:

Most of the students have complained that they have some issues with some lecturers because their accent is not clear, and they could not figure out what they explained. Even we sometimes cannot understand our colleagues because of their poor accent. (L2, L4)

In addition, lecturers mentioned many reasons behind their poor accents which are as follows:

First, lecturers sometimes do not pronounce the English words correctly because the English language is not the Libyan teachers or lecturers' first or second language. Second, even the foreign teaching staff come from countries that English is not their mother tongue. For example, Indians and Egyptians whose accents vary from one another even the Libyan lecturers do not have the same accent and pronunciation. Therefore, the accent is a real obstacle for the students to grasp their studies. (L2, L3, L4, L6)

One lecturer stated that some lecturers could not speak English well. They do not have fluent English skills:

Honestly, My English language is not fluent as any English lecturer should be. I am not qualified as linguistics to give an entire lecture in the English language. (L1)

The deficiency of mastery of English language skills causes them not to communicate well with the students:

Lecturers have to be expert on their subject. They may be a professor in his field, but they cannot properly transfer the ideas or scientific facts, even if they have a good relationship with their students. (L3, L4)

A language lecturer needs to determine a suitable method to teach all English skills adequately. Thus, the teacher should use critical thinking skills to involve the learners and improve their learning process.

To conclude this section, it is clear that most of the lecturers and the students agreed about many issues relating to what EFL students' challenges. Generally, most lecturers suggest a relation between such matters and the general position of higher education in Libya and the problems students encounter when joining this education system. Also, the most important problem is how student environment impacts on their practice of English. Some teachers and lecturers' level of English skills were poor, which effects students in language learning. They indicated that the university does not appear to make any effort to develop and provide the necessary services to improve their English. There were no English language courses or language centres available for them. Both the lecturers and the students concurred on the same issues above, as this confirms the validity of my research data.

5.6. Focus group discussion

This section provides the second source of data for this study and the findings of twelve focus group interviews with six EFL students and six EFL lecturers. It is used to explore people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours during the discussion. A focus group discussion enables the participants concerned to pay attention to the thoughts issued by other participants and express their own perceptions at the same time. In this case, focus groups are expected to provide valuable data, particularly when participants are allowed extended periods to reflect on their own experiences while other participants speak.

The focus group discussion was a team consisting of a skilled facilitator and an assistant (Cohen et al. 2012). The facilitator (me) was central to the discussion by managing current relationships and creating a relaxed and comfortable environment for the participants in a secluded separated venue. Also, the assistant's role included documenting the general content of the discussion. Data is collected and interpreted in qualitative research by searching for themes based on the participant's response. The first step in the analysis process was to initiate the coding of all research data. Then the researcher listened carefully to all the data and translated the Arabic interviews into English and transcribed.

The section starts with an explanation of the students' discussion analysis procedure, followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings that have been established to respond to the aims of the research questions mentioned above. This description will be supported by quotes from interview transcripts that provide insights into the participants' views on specific issues. It is hoped that this will draw on the EFL challenge of learning the target population in English, which relates to the study's original objectives.

The main discussions and the initial questions that I asked the focus group participants were the following:

- 1- What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university?
- 2- Which language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) do you have in English learning?
- 3- Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your home language background?
- 4- Did you take any English language courses before you started your degree?
- 5-Why do students have these challenges?
- 6-What do you think you need to overcome these challenges? What do you suggest?

5.6.1. Data analysis of students' focus group discussion

This source of data is a focus group discussion for the other six EFL students, and also, the findings are expected to contribute to the response of the main research questions. It is clear from the

students' interview responses, that they have many challenges that arise when they moved to higher education, and they mentioned to many reasons behind these challenges. Let us explore more challenges of the students' perceptions, and it may be similar or different from the challenges we explored in the individual interview.

Let us first explore the issues and the challenges that the participants in both individual interview and focus group discussions have agreed:

- **Teaching the English language from primary school:** these students concur with the other individual interview students that lessons begin quite late in their school education and could be ascribed to their lack of proficiency in English. All students learn it effectively in year seven as they start learning English at age 13. Students miss the chance at a younger age to learn English:

It supposes to start learning the English language from playgroup age, we mean before starting primary school. Thus, we will be familiar with English basic, and we were not happy when we came across the academic language at the university because our English language proficiency is low. (S1, S2, S4, S5, S6)

- **Teaching the English language subject as one subject a year:** students assert that in our school the English language is taught as one subject among ten Arabic subjects in schools and only in one class a week, other students have complained that the English subject teaching at school was very simple English and teachers taught them the basics of English language only, it is therefore not appropriate for them when they move to the university education:

I have learnt the general English language as one subject in elementary and secondary schools. However, this English has been very simple, so I do not have any advantage from it. (S1, S3, S4, S6)

- **School English teachers' level of English teaching:** From students' responses, it was obvious that some school teachers' level of English was quite poor, in which they affect the level of students in language learning. Moreover, some students stated that there are not enough English language teachers in some schools, and there are no English teachers:

The main challenges for us that the teachers in schools who taught us the English language was not qualified to teach a foreign language. Because of this, I struggled a lot. (S1, S2, S5, S6)

Qualified teachers of English are found in an inadequate number in Libya. So, not having a skilled teacher of English is a common experience for all English students. The teachers of English are either not trained by the teachers of English in Libya but not by the native speakers. There is barely any scope to improve natural and spontaneous knowledge of the language. With all obstacles discussed above, the standard of English in our country is deplorably low. Hence, all the responsibility is thrown on the teachers that they do not make any efforts to make their classes enjoyable and teach English productively. They have to gear up to meet the demands of their position and successfully perform their duties. (L3, L4)

There is no option to an experienced, skilled, and qualified teacher who is skilled in language and its practice to teach the English language appropriately. Inexperienced and unskilled English language teachers are the primary challenge for teaching English in the schools.

- **Students' challenge with the four English language skills:** Generally, the students indicated that they are weak in all English skills (writing, speaking, listening, and reading). They think that their English does not meet the university's required level. The following responses reflect their experiences:

I always worry about my English level because I cannot speak English properly, and this depressed me as I am a university student, spending

many years studying English from the school phases until now, but I still cannot speak fluently. (S1, S4)

We cannot understand the whole lessons in English. We always translate the whole lessons to the Arabic language. Sometimes we understand the first part of the lesson, but we cannot comprehend the entire lesson. (S3, S4)

I always have spelling mistakes in my writing, such as most of my exam mistakes because of my spelling errors. These mistakes impact on my English exams' performance badly. (S1)

EFL students' writing challenges recognize that the significant challenges the EFL students face are the rhetorical and the linguistics aspects throughout the writing tasks. Within the Libyan context, the students avoid writing due to their difficulties performing writing tasks. Namely cognitive problems, linguistics problems concerning paragraph organization and text structure. Psychological issues, such as moods and challenges in starting writing.

Writing in English is so challenging because, at the same time, I concentrate on my composing and focus on my grammar and my spelling. The second reason that I have to master is the vocabulary to get good writing with different idioms to avoid misunderstanding of meaning by readers. That makes English writing is so difficult. (S2)

EFL students in the Libyan context are primarily unaware that good writing is seen from the language and the content that talks about one idea, and how the ideas are connected logically and meaningfully for the reader. There is more of an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary rather than comprehension. They become demotivated to write and experience a high level of stress. As a consequence, they have a negative attitude to writing.

- **Using Arabic instead of the English language in public:** All the six participants hoped to use the English in public because this would improve their skills as there is no suitable environment where they can practice the English language:

Another challenge for us is that we do not practice English after our lessons at university or outside. Even with our families, we do not even think to speak English; otherwise, we will be strangers for them. (S2, S3, S5, S6)

The effect of the Arabic language on our English progress is evident, because most the explaining of the lecture done in Arabic and English at the same time. Which makes it easier for us to understand. (S4, S5)

Therefore, the use of English is restricted to an educational subject. There is a lack of possibilities to practice the English language outside the classroom or in its actual communicative atmosphere.

- **The university support:** The participants indicated that their university does not support their English learning in many aspects. The shortage of English lecturers impacts negatively in the English department. It has to update its educational system and provide for the students' needs such as free internet for all students:

We do not enough lecturers for all our modules; we sent a letter to the administration, but they do not respond. (S1, S3, S4,)

The university does not provide language laboratory for English students to practice language skills such as listening, conversation, and pronunciation. (S5, S6)

The university library does not provide us with useful English books or journals that we need for our assignments and research. (S1, S2, S3, S5, S6)

The university has to provide free courses at least twice a year to help EFL students improve our English level. (S4)

In the above issues that the six students raised, are mostly like the same issues mentioned by the six students in the individual interviews. The following parts bring new information added to the previous data. We know the reason for applying the focus group discussion, is to gain more information as the participants pay attention to the other participants' views to validate their perceptions.

In the next subsection, I will show the students' perceptions of their lecturers.

5.6.1.1. Lecturers' function and their efficiency in performing their role

This sub-section shows the students' perceptions of their lecturers' performance in lectures including their relationship with their lecturers and how it effects learning, and the issues related to their teaching methods:

- **Students' relationship with their Lecturers and their support:** Some students indicated that their relationship with some lecturers is not good. This impacts the communication between them. The students mentioned that they are not motivated to have good relationships with lectures or vice versa:

Our relationship with some lecturers is not very good; it depends on the lecturer himself. There are some whose dealings with students are limited, and some who give a lecture and leave without asking if we need any clarification or assistance, and few of them who deal with students in a friendly way and always their office for any help. (S2, S3, S5, S6)

Some lecturers do not give a chance to interact with them, which makes us feel frustrated and have less wish to interact with the lecturers during the lecture. Even the number of students decreases attending some lectures. (S1, S4)

Moreover, the students attribute their poor communication with their lecturers due to their low English level and lack of confidence:

When I need to ask my lecturer something in English, I cannot make a full sentence to get information from him, and it is hard for me to converse with my lecturers. (S1)

- **The lecturers' attitude in lectures:** Some students described how lecturers manage their lectures and convey information. Some of them are moody, and it is difficult for the students to follow their lectures. Moreover, other students described how lecturers support the students in memorising their studies instead of assisting them in understanding it:

Some lecturers are moody and angry, and it might be because of something that happened outside of the university. Also, they give the lecture in destructive behaviour, and not responsive to the students' needs. (S2, S4, S5)

Some students claimed that some lecturers are not devoted to their teaching class as they are not concerned with some teaching aspects or what the students need. As reported, some practices by some lecturers, do not help the students.

Yes, it is expected that the lecturer leaves the venue in the middle of the lecture and apologize because he has an urgent issue. (S1, S5)

One of the great challenges and issues are lecturers' speaking speed. Their accent is not good, and they speak fast, I miss lots of words. I have to concentrate more to follow them. Therefore, after half an hour of concentration, I found myself exhausted, and I cannot focus more, so I waste most of my lecture. (S4)

Some lecturers do not pay attention, as they do not care if we understand the lecture. When the lecture has done, they immediately leave without giving the students a chance to ask questions. (S6)

However, we cannot ignore that some lecturers are very helpful and always try to provide us with what we need. (S3)

These practices provide empirical evidence for some lecturers' lack of sufficient attention or preparation for the educational process and the students' needs and concerns. It is clear that the students have been disappointed by some lecturers' behaviours, which negatively affect their progress.

- **Lecturers' take towards using Arabic during a lecture:** Some students think that they should be taught in English with some use of Arabic, while others do not take the view that Arabic should be used in the lecture:

There are some lecturers refuse the fact that we speak with them in Arabic during a lecture. They advise us to speak English for our benefit. However, other lecturers do not care about the language we use with them as they speak Arabic during the lecture. (S1, S2, S4, S6)

The students' response indicated no clear strategy in the department towards motivating students to use the English during the lectures. This depends on the lecturers themselves and their perception.

- **Teaching methods that lecturers use:** The students assert that the lecturers do not follow the same teaching method, but everyone has their own teaching methods. However, most of them use PowerPoint to explain the lectures. The students have many concerns about these devices, in respect of this modern technology as another problem to facilitate learning:

Generally, many lecturers do not have a robust teaching method that is easy to pursue. As we suffer from regular power outages that make some lecturers who rely on PowerPoint presentations, they stop delivering their lectures. (S3, S4)

Every lecturer has their own method, but most of them use the data show to explain their lecture. Most of the students prefer lectures to be explained on the board because lecturers read the slides fast and goes to the next without

asking us whether we have understood or not. Therefore, most of the students understanding is very limited. (S3, S5, S6)

Other students described how some lecturers use a very traditional teaching method such as “chalk and talk”. It is very boring for them:

The main issue is that even with the development of the teaching tools, lecturers still use the same methods; their performance is not developed. Before years ago, the explanation was on the board, and the lecturer made a hard effort explaining things smoothly. Now we have used data show, and the lecturer is only one benefited from these tools. Instead of standing by the board and explaining, he found himself sit and relaxed and changing the slides. (S3, S5, S6)

From the students’ responses, the lecturers keep using the traditional way of teaching or using modern methods without trying to assist their ability to present the subject properly.

- **Lack of oral participation during the class lesson:** English learning is a process that requires interaction between teachers or lecturers and students about a given exercise or activity. The purpose is to enhance students and encourage them to express their thoughts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

I know that my oral participation in the lessons will improve my learning, reflecting my ability to develop communication skills. Still, I rarely participate in my class because I can't speak properly, and I always have to be encouraged to join by the teacher during the lesson. (S2)

Teachers must create an environment and encourage us to participate in the class to avoid making errors and build our self-confidence. During our discussion, we should be allowed to correct our mistakes, such as weak vocabulary knowledge and grammar errors. (S4)

Oral participation increases independent learning, indicating the students' ability to develop communication skills that individuals may enhance through new teaching assistants. In this interactive mode, it is necessary to consider the way students learn to achieve the English teaching objectives. In performing so, teachers have to overcome a range of obstacles that may harm oral participation.

- **Students' feedback:** The students indicated that there is no chance for them to give any feedback for their studies or evaluate their teacher performance:

The other challenge for us is that lecturers never ask us for feedback, and even the university never asks. There should be an evaluation model that can be used by students to assess their lecturers' performance and their studies.

(S1, S2, S3)

- **Lecturers' strikes:** Another issue mentioned by the students is a disruption in their studies because of the continual staff strikes due to their low salaries and other frustrations. This, of course, impacts negatively on the students' studies:

There was a conflict between the university admins and the lecturers because of some financial problems. Thus, lecturers went on strike for three to four months and insisted to not back to work until they received their full dues and then they went back to work. These issues between them have a negative impact on the students, who cannot solve these issues. (S1, S3, S4, S6)

To conclude this section, it is clear from the students' responses that the learning of English is riddled with problems, given their low skill levels in the English language. Also, they indicated that their poor level is because of the inadequate preparation they received at school. This results in them struggling at university. What makes it worse is the situation of the lack of attention paid to their English level by the university leadership and lecturers. There are no introductory courses in English, which would improve and develop the students' English level. The students also stated that some lecturers' level of English is not advanced, which also negatively impacts the students' English progress. In the same vein, the students highlighted issues related to the difficulty of their study and

how the modules are managed, and the exam set. Furthermore, the students reported problems related to the university infrastructure and library facilities, which do not allow the students to study effectively.

5.6.2. Data analysis of lecturers' focus group discussion

This data analysis is a focus group discussion for the six lecturers, and also, these findings are supposed to contribute to the response of the main research questions. As mentioned before, in the previous data results, the students have many challenges that affect their studies and their English learning and the reasons behind these challenges. From these lecturers' focus group discussion, we may explore new challenges that may differ from the previous challenges that we discovered before. In the following section, I demonstrate every challenge that is supported by the discussion of the relevant lecturers:

- **University administration and financial support:** Other issues raised by some lecturers are the way the university works. They indicated that its system makes the educational process more difficult. one of these problems is a lack of money:

The university's financial office refused the budgets assigned by the government to this institution, as they were claiming needed more money. (L1, L2, L3, L5)

In this university you cannot find what we need ready for our class when we ask for it, it takes a long time to supply because they say there is no budget for it. This problem is amongst a list of unaccountable issues. (L2, L4, L6)

There is a challenging circumstance which the universities find themselves in; budget deficit and could not provide students with what they need such as our department needs a laboratory for listening and pronunciation lectures because students need to practice the language. (L1, L2, L4, L6)

- **Shortage of staff (English language Lecturers):** Lecturers indicated that the English department encounters many problems, a lack of lecturers, which puts pressure on the current lecturers and does not allow them to work efficiently. Especially when all the foreign lecturers left the country during or after the revolution, they left a significant gap in the university departments' staff:

There are a few foreign lecturers in our department where there is no experienced staff. There are some local lecturers, but experienced lecturers are not there in many departments. (L2, L3, L6)

Also, there is an increasing number of students, and there is a shortage of teaching staff. There is a massive contradiction between the number of students and the number of teaching staff. (L5, L4, L6)

- **Consistency in university education:** Despite these challenges facing the lecturers, they describe another issue is the lack of consistency in the university education among Libyan universities:

There is no education stability in this university, the continuous opening and closing of the university. There is a delay in exams, which negatively impact the students' language learning and lecturers' delivery because they cannot do the teaching correctly, as they have to keep starting and stopping every time. (L2, L4, L5)

Some lecturers assert that the university administration have to take action towards students' absenteeism. According to the university regulations:

Some students do not attend my lecture; I meet them only in the exams time. This university must have attendance regulations, forcing all the students to attend the classes a whole semester. (L1, L3, L4)

- **Lecturers' training centre:** All lecturers stated that there should be training for themselves to appreciate the importance of the teaching method. Also, to make them aware of some teaching issues they encounter, and to avoid these issues:

However, the English language is not our home language, and the university should provide a centre for studying English and improve teaching methods. (L1, L2, L4, L5)

When there is an assessment centre that assesses the lecturers and their development, it will help the lecturers do their job properly and avoid their mistakes. (L2, L3, L6)

As indicated above, the lecturers demonstrate lack of teacher training is one of the several challenges that face them. They describe their view that lecturers need appropriate training, particularly in new methodologies.

Inexperienced and unskilled English language teachers are the primary obstacle in the teaching of English. Teachers are trained in traditional methods and do not know new techniques but remain satisfied with traditional methods. Also, the teachers who conduct English lessons in rural areas in Libya do not hold the minimum educational qualification required to teach English.

The training program must be mandatory for every teacher at all levels of teaching. This training should be learner-focused rather than teacher-focused. The language should not be used as a simple course syllabus to educate, but it is an effective communicative tool with practical value for actual life situations. The latest methods of employing educational technology and devices to enhance learning, should be introduced to relieve boredom and stimulate the learners' interest.

Actually, qualified English teachers are found in minimal numbers in Libya. Not having a qualified English teacher is a common fact for all the students of English. The teachers of English are either not appropriately trained, or they are the teachers of additional subjects. Even if they are trained, they are trained by Libyan English teachers but not by native trainers.

- **Inadequate Objectives of teaching and Learning of English clarification:** There is a need for clarity on the purposes and objectives on the teaching and learning of English in Libya. The policy planners and educationists have tried repeatedly to let learners and teachers know about the aim as well as the objectives and consequences of learning English but failed to define obvious aims and objectives of learning and teaching English in schools, colleges and universities.

However, students acquire English as a language for foreign communication with a paucity of resources and in challenging contexts compounded by outdated pedagogies. This is why teaching and learning English in educational institutions of Libya requires revision.

A study has shown that almost every subject and syllabus of English from class six to twelve covers a paragraph writing topic named ‘Need of Learning English’. But it becomes so unfavourable that students learn about this subject from an available notebook found in the market as the teachers force them to memorize it without realizing the necessity for linguistic and communicative competence.

- **Lack of cooperation with other universities:** Some lecturers asserted that the lack of cooperation between their university and other universities made it hard for them to expose other universities’ experience, as this will develop their teaching abilities, and it will assist the student in learning a foreign language:

We hope if there is a cooperation system between faculties, which would assist in contact with others in the same specialization, and exchange students, teaching staff., our experiences, research papers, and types of equipment. (L1, L2, L3, L6)

Even for the students will improve their English learning if there is cooperation with foreign universities; this would also include other staff could visit our university such as external examiners, or organize for giving extra lectures in different modules, or attending a beneficial

conference with universities in other countries. But the actual situation in Libya is a real problem. (L4, L5, L6)

Additionally, all lecturers indicated that this lack of cooperation is due to the political situations with other countries. This has a negative impact on the standard of universities in Libya, not only our university:

Because of the country's security and political situation, it is challenging to maintain our relationship with other universities. This leads to the students missing the chance of getting good teaching and acquire good expertise. (L2, L4, L6)

- **Political influence and English cancellation:** Because of Libyan foreign policy, that made many decisions related to the teaching English cancellation. This decision has had a negative impact on the students' level of English skills:

One of the main reasons behind the students' poor English level is the cancellation of the English language; because of the political factors when the language was cancelled from education for a long time. Political issues influence negatively on English learning in Libya. All the learners and teachers were prevented from using English at school. (L2, L4, L5, L6)

Regarding challenges that we face when we teach the English language to the Libyan student's English is poor due to historical and political events between Libya and the USA that prevent from teaching English at schools. (L1, L3, L5)

- **Deficiency of Clarified Policy of English Language Teaching and Learning:** One of the leading causes of the poor standard of English is the lack of a definite and constructive policy. There have been various changes in the policy of the government towards English teaching and learning. Though English is taught as a compulsory subject, only a pass mark is awarded. As

the percentage of low achievers has been ever-increasing, the government has decided not to consider English results essential for entrance into a university course.

The educationists and politicians differ on the use and status of English in Libya. If we aim at good English standards, it is time that the government decides to implement and formulate suitable policies that improve students' English learning. Moreover, lecturers suggest that sufficient and special time should be granted, and good services and material should be provided to make a language club and particular place for language practice in schools and Libyan universities.

To conclude this section, from this focus group discussion, I explored more challenges encountered by the English language department. Such as lecturers that assert that they need a training centre at the university to develop their teaching methods. They indicated that the students' big challenge, is the ban of English from the education system for a long time, because of political issues. This impacted negatively on the student's level of English. Therefore, lecturers hope that if there is cooperation with foreign universities, the students will improve their English learning.

5.7. Conclusion

Most of the participants (lecturers and the students) agreed that many issues relating to EFL students' challenges about English learning and many issues relating to their poor language skills (writing, speaking, listening, reading). The participants indicated that the students' low English level is one of the issues they face at university. They stated that many of the language fundamentals essential to their progress in their education program are missing. Generally, most lecturers suggest a relationship between such matters and the general position of higher education in Libya and the problems students encounter. In addition, the most important issue is how student environments impact their English development. Some teachers and lecturers' level of English skills were relatively poor, which affected the level of students in language learning. They indicated that the university does not appear to make much effort to develop and provide the necessary services to improve their English levels. Both the

lecturers and the students agreed on these issues. This is one way of confirming the validity of my research data.

Although the students face some challenges using and learning English, all lecturers and students believe that learning and using English is significant for their future. From the previous focus group discussion, I explored more challenges encountered by the English language department such as, a lack of lecturers, lecturers need for a training centre at the university to develop their teaching methods. Finally, lecturers hope that if there is cooperation with foreign universities, the students will improve their English language skills.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the qualitative and quantitative findings, related to the research questions, and based on the fieldwork data. This chapter will bring together understandings from across the qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions.

This discussion of findings is from individual interview methods, focus group discussion, and questionnaires on students' and lecturers' experiences and perceptions of their challenges in English language acquisition.

The data findings are presented and analysed in the light of the main research questions. The study aims to answer the main three research questions underlying the current investigation, which are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions of students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

The discussion is analysed in three sections according to the three research questions.

6.2. Section one: What are the challenges that EFL students' face in learning English at a Libyan university?

In the Libyan EFL context, the participants encounter many challenges in learning English at university. These challenges emanate from a school based English instruction, which is rudimentary at best. Khalid (2017) observes that learners do not gain much from their pre-

university learning in terms of English skills. Consequently, it is suggested that the school curricula be revised to enhance the teaching of English. This problem is also manifest in other Arabic speaking countries. According to Alanazi & Widin (2018), teaching English and learning the language skills pose challenges in Saudi Arabia. The EFL learners have a low communicative ability due to many conditions. These include low motivation, a focus on exams based on curriculum content at the expense of linguistic and communicative competence, a lack of integration of modern teaching tools or technology, orthodox teaching methods, and unqualified English language teachers. The social and cultural obstacles to effective language learning and teaching of the target language, particularly in the interaction between teachers and students, hinder learners' dialogic skills. From this perspective, most participants indicated that their English proficiency is very poor. Although, under the conditions, they could not be blamed for this. In this situation, the school system plays a vital role. The participants complained about the lack of motivating teachers to practice English in the class, as they are not satisfied with teachers' feedback. Consequently, it is understandable that they had difficulties at the university regarding their language skills.

When comparing school English with university English, a simplified form of skills and vocabulary is not adequate for students to fulfil their language needs at university (Khalid, 2017). The students indicated that they are weak in all English skills (writing, speaking, listening, and reading). They do not think that their performance is adequate for the required level at university. Students have to develop their reading and writing competencies and be exposed to increasingly challenging reading materials and writing tasks at school. The goal is to make students read and write effectively. At the research site, it was observed that a negative attitude to writing emanates from feelings of frustration with not being able to communicate effectively in the target language.

Students encounter challenges in learning a foreign language if they lack vocabulary knowledge. Al-Omairi' (2020) findings make this explicit. Students have difficulties in vocabulary learning, the pronunciation of complex words, and poor memory strategies. Vocabulary learning in Libya relies on teachers as the primary source. But teaching the English language in Libya requires more sophisticated methods, rather than traditional teaching. Traditional teaching focuses on grammar rules rather than meaningful vocabulary in the context of extended prose (Khalid, 2017).

Furthermore, the assessment method is based on testing knowledge about the language in a final exam rather than using the language in authentic situations (Khalid, 2017).

In addition, Libyan EFL learners recognise the importance of acquiring vocabulary, but they do not know the best ways to learn and extend their vocabulary. They may encounter difficulties with accurately identifying the meaning of new words while reading texts in the English language. They face problems in remembering new words; as a consequence, they prefer to avoid using them.

Spelling is regarded as a primary element of written language. The data indicates that spelling is problematic for Libyan students with inadequate exposure to the target language. Participants felt English is a complex language, which is not easy to learn or acquire. The leading cause of students' spelling mistakes is the difficulty they experience with silent letters. This makes it difficult for Libyan students to spell words when comparing them with the orthography of Arabic. They have challenges with silent letters as in the words (know and no or hour and our). This also affects the pronunciation of the previous vowel, such as the difference between (ball and bawl, or heel and heal) and many other words with similar pronunciation. This is a source of anxiety for these students as they are unable to figure out the differences between their linguistic domains, but which are manifest in the target language.

The traditional approaches to language teaching emphasized grammatical competence, with instruction predominantly in the mother tongue. Researchers considered that foreign language learners would find it simpler to learn another language when exposed to drilling and grammar activities (Nalliveetil, 2014). Traditional scholars in foreign language learning demonstrated that fundamental errors would immediately become repeated in the learner's speech and recommended grammatical proficiency from the initial stages of learning a new language. Though grammatical competence was required to produce correct sentences, there was a turn to other language features for communication purposes. Some participants cannot write their work without grammatical mistakes due to limited knowledge of English grammar; they could not express their thoughts in context, and they did not know how to write simple sentences.

Based on the findings in this study, it is clear that some teachers' level of English skills was also relatively low, which affects the teaching of students in language learning. As one of the participants indicated, qualified teachers of English are few in Libya. Therefore, not having a

skilled teacher in English is a common experience for most English students in Libya. There is barely any scope to improve natural and spontaneous knowledge of the language. Consequently, there is much room for improvement and developing of English academic competence. This places an unsurmountable burden on English teachers, many of whom lack the expertise to meet English academic competence goals.

However, Khalid (2017) in his study found that the content of the new English textbooks designed for elementary, primary, and secondary schools is inadequate. The textbooks pose a challenge for teachers as well because of the poor levels of English proficiency. English is not the medium of instruction within Libyan universities. Most students do not have sufficient language skills to comprehend lectures, and textbooks and take part in discussions or generate satisfactory written work when the materials are memorised instead of understood. It is just a teacher-centered approach. When I talk about the four language skills, I refer to language acquisition. As Krashen (1981) suggested a high level of anxiety in adults might be the cause of apparently lower levels of competencies and performance. Therefore, to reduce it, Krashen points out that the hypothesis of comprehensive input is a necessary provision for second language acquisition to occur. Comprehensible input requires repetitions, confirmation, clarifications, and modified structures used for interactions.

These findings also suggest that the students need to develop their language skills, and specifically, their academic English in order to understand and make the most effective use of their study materials and understand the specialized language and vocabulary relevant to their subject. This includes interpreting assignment questions and selecting the relevant and appropriate material in their response, as well as writing well-structured and coherently presented assignments. Solak & Bayar (2015) studied English language learning and teaching challenges at a university in Turkey. They suggest that teaching and improving the four language skills should focus on authentic usage rather than grammar teaching. English studies should be planned based on practice rather than theoretical knowledge and focussing mostly on grammatical rules at the expense of coherence.

Another challenge for students is that they could not understand what their lecturers explained in English. The students lack the understanding required of their lecturers and this affects their performance. Langan (2000) states that writing is a process of discovery that involves a series of steps starting by discovering a thesis often through prewriting, developing support for the thesis,

organizing the thesis by making the first draft, revising, and then editing to ensure an effective, error-free paper. This is often a difficult task given the ratio of weak language competence in the majority of classes. These challenges are common with Arab learners from other Arabic countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan, who encounter similar challenges when they learn English in both listening and writing (Al-Johani, 2009; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

The students are frustrated with their poor English skills, which they acknowledge are essential for their studies and future careers. Their poor level of English impacts them psychologically in that the students lack self-confidence and are subsequently anxiety ridden. Students' lack of knowledge and confidence may lead to withdrawal from learning, which becomes apparent in students choosing to remain silent during lectures.

Another challenge mentioned in the qualitative and quantitative findings is the Arabic language's effect on their English learning. Despite the degree of similarity in some linguistic structures between English and Arabic such as the existence of the relative clauses in the two languages, negative transfer can take place. The major obstruction to second-language acquisition stems from interference emanating from the first-language. This is seen in the following:

1. English is in the Latin alphabet and is written (and read) from left to right. Arabic uses Arabic script and is written from right to left. It does not differentiate between upper- and lower-case letters and does not follow punctuation rules as much as English does - one example that stands out is that there are no capital letters in Arabic.
2. In respect of spelling, Arabic spelling directly correlates to its pronunciation. In other words, if you can read Arabic, you should know how to pronounce the words as there is a discernable correlation. English, on the other hand, is not phonetic at all, as we can determine from the different pronunciations of the letter (*o*) in *hot* and *month*.
3. There are numerous grammatical constructions that appear in English but do not exist in Arabic. One important aspect is the verb *to be*. It exists in Arabic but is used less frequently than in English, with the result that many Arabic speakers will omit it in their language production of the target language. This is the same with the auxiliary *do*, as well as modal verbs and the indefinite article. This can result in sentences like *I going home; He happy, and You like pizza?*

4. In Arabic, adjectives come after the noun they qualify, whereas in English they come before the noun. This will lead to Arabic learners having problems with word order and saying, for example, *the car red* rather than *the red car*.
5. English has about three times as many vowel sounds as Arabic, which makes English vowel sounds problematic for Arabic learners. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to differences between long and short sounds, for example as in *ship* and *sheep*. It is also a problem when it comes to differentiating words with short vowel sounds, for example, *pot*, *put* and *pat*.
6. Also problematic, is that some English sounds do not exist in Arabic. For example, there is no /p/ and /v/ sound in Arabic so Arabic speakers will often pronounce these sounds as /b/ and /f/ respectively. Similarly, Arabic speakers may also confuse /t/ and /d/.
7. In addition, English has more consonant clusters than Arabic. As a consequence, this creates problems with pronunciation. For example, Arabic does not have three-segment initial consonant clusters like *spr*, *skr*, *str*, and *spl*. Arabic speakers usually insert a short vowel sound to help them say the sound. So, *spring can* become *sipring*.

Rajab, Darus, & Aladdin (2016) indicated that the ignorance of the difference between Arabic and English in terms of linguistic system makes learning writing and speaking skills more difficult in Libya. This lack of awareness of Arabic and English's different characteristics and features is likely to confuse the EFL Libyan students, leading them to fall back on their L1 to imitate some of its features and structures and employ them in L2 writing, (Rajab et al. 2016). As a result, this will produce some semantic errors and different structures in L2 written production. Thus, these lead Libyan students to commit semantic mistakes in their English written production.

Palestinian learners usually change the stylistic features of their first language; Arabic, to the target language; English, as Abu Rass's (2015) indicated. For these reasons, Arabic speakers face specific challenges in English learning (Qutob, 2020). Many students indicated that Arabic is an essential language to their studies because most of their modules or subjects are taught in Arabic. It is easier for students to understand an English concept when it is explained in Arabic. However,

this detracts from mastery of the target language and makes communicative competence even more elusive.

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, the learners in Jordan, for example, learn English in their native language which is Arabic. The only way to learn English is through formal instruction, which is inside the lecture hall where the English lecturers are native Arabic speakers (Kassem, 2014). Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, Ebrahim and Afzal (2015) indicated that since Saudis speak their native language at home and interact with their friends, peers, and classmates in Arabic, there is no chance to practice English in a day-to-day setting. Ishtiaq, Ali and Salem (2017) indicated that in Saudi Arabia, EFL teachers mainly apply traditional teaching methods. Grammar translation is the most commonly utilised method in Saudi Arabia. Students engage in rote learning. Teachers presume that their learners will acquire new words independently, without much direction or explicit instruction. These practices are significant causal factors in poor communicative competence in English language learning.

In addition, the influence of learners' first language causes pronunciation errors. The first language interference, teachers, curriculum, and lack of students' practice outside the classroom are the factors that influence Libyan students' pronunciation of English. Also, Libyan students' views on low proficiency in English reflect phonological challenges. As students are confused with some sounds, they tend to put such sounds with other sounds similar to their L1. This concurs with Thakur (2020) who demonstrated that some factors that produce incorrect pronunciation are first language interfering with the target language and lack of exposure to an English-practicing environment.

Some students think that when lecturers use Arabic and code-switching, it might help them to understand everything said or explained in the lecture, but this will not improve their English learning significantly. This concurs with Van Wyk & Mostert (2016) who assert that the mother tongue should not be ignored for second language learners to reach adequate proficiency but should be used judiciously. Students can properly learn subject material when the content is translated through their mother tongue. Learners should be able to learn in a language that they know well considering the mother tongue creates an essential part of the learner's environment, as it is the fundamental basis for developing verbal skills.

The participants indicated that they do not use the English language in their daily life. It is rare to get a chance to speak English, so they rely on themselves to improve their English. Akbari (2016) noted from Iranian EFL students' perceptions of their challenges, that the main inhibition in learning English as a foreign language was mainly due to lack of opportunity to practice authentic communication in the target language.

Most of the participants considered their experience at university as disappointing. They indicated that the university does not appear to spend any effort to develop and provide the necessary services to improve their English proficiency. In Libya, the university does not provide a language laboratory for students to practice language skills. It does not provide them with useful English resources and references that the students need in a library. Lastly, they also indicated that the shortage of English lecturers negatively impacted them and that some lecturers might teach modules without any experience in them.

Therefore, Libyan universities have to implement policies to improve their students' English language. Students' views in the focus group aligned with perceptions in individual interviews. The students' responses indicated no clear strategy in the department for motivating students to use the English language during lectures and at other opportune times. It is clear that the students have been disappointed by some lecturers' incompetence, which negatively affects their progress.

Youssef & Bose (2015) suggest that it would be helpful for Libyan lecturers to develop their teaching methods and to improve their English learning ability. Therefore, there is a critical need to innovate and re-model classroom teaching from traditional to interactive methods. Adopting the learner-centred method would give students opportunities to engage with the target language. The language courses should be reviewed, restructured, and redesigned from time to time to include changes in English language practice. Solak & Bayar (2015) suggest that course books, videos, and internet websites should be chosen carefully according to the students' levels and needs.

It is apparent from the study's qualitative and quantitative findings that acquiring communicative competence in the target language is hampered by the factors enumerated above.

6.3. Section two: What are EFL lecturers' perceptions regarding students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

To understand the current social reality, it is essential to explore lecturers' perceptions about their learners in an EFL context (Moloi, 2009). The most common problem stated by the lecturers is that students' English language knowledge is very limited and does not meet the requirements of academic endeavour.

Many lecturers mentioned that students encounter critical problems in their first years in adjusting adequately to the course requirements, which requires them to have good English language competence. Similarly, as the students mentioned earlier, some lecturers claimed that this was due to a history of poor English language preparation emanating from schools. A similar problem presents in Iran where Akbari (2015) found that most students cannot express themselves in English competently after studying English in junior and high school for seven years.

The qualitative and quantitative data findings indicated that there are four significant areas of writing challenges for Libyan students including firstly, they cannot write within a restricted time. Secondly, they cannot compose academic writing using English. Thirdly, they are incapable of employing the grammar rules in writing an essay. Lastly, they are unable to develop a properly structured essay. These shortcomings are linked to late quality exposure to learning the English language.

Writing skills development must be planned over an extended period. Writing programs in colleges or universities usually consist of writing sessions; session I, session II, and session III at the English department. To develop students' writing ability, lecturers also have to assist students to learn grammar and vocabulary. Muth'im & Latief (2014) found that in Indonesia, English lecturers teaching writing realized that giving feedback should help students overcome their writing problems. It is assumed that the students' feedback from their teachers makes them more focused and concentrated on what is being taught. Furthermore, it is also required that the feedback provided by the teachers makes them more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses. So that they can make use of these strengths to overcome their weaknesses. In the quantitative data analysis, 80% of participants were not satisfied with teachers' feedback.

Providing feedback improves learners' writing ability. Feedback also is useful for the teachers. (Muth'im & Latief, 2014). For teachers, it provides information about their learners and indirectly, evaluates their teaching. It is considered that by having feedback, the students become motivated in English learning. It is suggested that the concept of formative and summative assessment would greatly facilitate teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

Research in feedback has focused on the learners, apart from the teachers, and their capacity to give feedback to themselves and peers. Such research has been informed by sociocultural concepts like the zone of proximal development (Liu and Hansen, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978) and is increasingly influenced by proliferating works in formative assessments and assessments for learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Gardner, 2006; Sadler, 1998; Sadler, 2010), which posits that the learner has an important role to play in the feedback process. Research that explores students' roles in evaluating their peers' writing, and in self-monitoring their own learning is a much needed addition to new knowledge in the current research base regarding feedback in writing (Lee, 2014).

Lecturers indicated that most students' issues are related to the four main language skills (writing, listening, reading, and speaking). The students, in general, must use all of these skills to perform assigned tasks. The qualitative and quantitative data reveal that some students cannot read, comprehend, and understand texts as required.

Comprehension reading is challenging for some Libyan students. To address this, teachers should clarify what comprehension entails for learners. Successful comprehension needs the coordination of skills at many levels to obtain and create meaning (Westby, 2012). The level of complexity associated with understanding certain content depends on the degree of complexity in the language used. There are fundamental differences between the language we use in daily conversations and in academic discourse, where everyday conversations are used to perform daily tasks and share personal information. Academic language includes (Qarqez & Ab Rashid, 2017):

- Different, specialized words.
- More complex grammatical structures.
- Other text organization in term of genres to express content that describes complex relationships.

Lecturers noted that first-year students face many writing challenges. In addition, they encounter problems in grammar and spelling. Poor performance increases frustration, particularly in the rhetorical and the linguistics aspects of writing tasks. Within the Libyan context, the students avoid writing due to their difficulties in performing writing task namely, cognitive problems, linguistic problems concerning paragraph organization, and text structure, and psychological issues, such as anxiety in writing. A lack of understanding of the main terminologies and text structure is also a problem.

We can conclude that all lecturers agreed that the students' level and language skills are weak. Some blame also is placed on insufficient preparation at school. The viewpoints of El- Hawat (2009), Al-Hussein (2014); Abuklaish (2014); Khalid (2017) about the political decision to stop teaching the English language in all sectors, negatively impacted the educational sector in Libya.

Massri (2019) revealed that technology integration in the classroom was actively and positively associated with the passion and motivation of the EFL students. Her findings indicated a connection between the teaching material, its usage, and the student's motivation. For instance, the students recommended that when the language material was developed with games or other interactive activities, a higher level of motivation ensued.

At the research site, my observation suggests that students' motivation was high, but they became disillusioned due to the poor communicative competence of the lecturers.

The use of MCQ questions also limits the acquisition of English. It shows the lecturers' responses to the challenges students encounter due to English as a medium of teaching. Observation of students' attitude towards English as a Foreign Language classroom assessment indicates anxiety, confusion, frustration, and fear about the assessment results. EFL students worry about the outcome of the assessment rather than understanding assessment as a tool to improve and enhance their language skills.

Lecturers always accept students' mistakes and their English weaknesses without corrective feedback. Some lecturers insist on using Arabic during their lectures to facilitate the process of explanation. Due to the use traditional teaching method at this university, lecturers dominate the lecture without giving students a chance to participate in the lecture due to students' weak command on English. This makes students depend entirely on lecturers.

To conclude this section, most lecturers and students concurred about EFL students' challenges in English learning. It is suggested that training programs must be mandatory for every teacher at all levels of teaching. This training should be learner-focused rather than teacher-focused. The language should not be used as a simple course syllabus to educate, but as an effective communicative tool with practical value for actual life situations. The latest methods of employing educational technology and devices to enhance learning should be introduced besides innovative classroom teaching to relieve boredom and stimulate the learners' interest. They indicated that the university does not appear to spend any effort developing and providing the necessary services to improve their English level as there were no English language courses or language centers available for them. Both the lecturers and the students' views aligned, so this confirms the validity of the research data.

6.4. Section three: Why do students have these challenges?

The participants stated several reasons behind the challenges they experienced:

- When comparing school English with university English, it becomes apparent that English acquisition in school is too simplified and not adequate for students to fulfil the needs of academic discourse at university.
- Acquiring the English language at a late stage of their education.
- Trained teachers who are experienced, skilled, and qualified are required.
- The participants complained about the lack of motivation for teachers to practice English in the class, as they are not satisfied with teachers' feedback.
- Some students stated that there are not enough English language teachers, and there are no English teachers in some schools, so English is not taught in any way. A lack of cooperation from school to assist learners in practicing English. Barrios & Garay (2020) recommend a group of strategies such as creating an enabling environment, reducing students' anxiety

including, associating topics to the students' experiences, introducing speaking chances outside the class, avoiding the anxiety of making errors, raising self-confidence, increasing vocabulary knowledge, and dealing with overpopulated classes.

- A lack of modern educational tools such as modern computers at schools.
- A lack of university infrastructure, such as language laboratory and library services and other complementary equipment. Uddin (2017) states that most universities have their libraries, but none have English journals, nor computers, and audio-visual aids.
- The lecturers do not support the students to practice English inside and outside the university; thus, their English levels do not improve.
- Libyan examinations encourage rote memory as the questions are based on summarising, and sometimes they are MCQ questions. The English language skills are not examined to any significant degree, and oral skills are ignored.
- There is no teaching training centre at the university or the school to develop their teaching methods.
- The cancellation of the English language from education for an extended period because of political conflict was disabling for students.
- Another reason mentioned in qualitative and quantitative findings is the Arabic language's effect on their English learning.
- The students' environment impacts their English practice, and they do not use English in daily life as there is a lack of free time to spend on learning English. Most of the students do not get enough chances to listen to or speak in English. Because of their common social and economic backgrounds, they do not get adequate English outside the classroom to improve themselves.

- Culture and social barriers are also evident. Social and cultural demands force students to use the Arabic language in their daily lives.

6.5. Conclusion

Although the students face some challenges in using and learning the English language, all lecturers and students assert that learning and using English is significant for their future. The qualitative and quantitative findings can be classified into four categories of EFL Libyan learning challenges: linguistic, cultural, institutional, and structural challenges.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1. Introduction

Although EFL challenges have been a topic of scholarly interest in several Arab countries, it has been relatively unexplored in Libya; hence this study aimed at addressing this gap. This study aimed to explore first-year university students' challenges in learning English as a foreign language in Libya and how these challenges impact effective academic performance.

This chapter provides a summary and a conclusion of the findings of this study, as well as the researcher's conclusions and recommendations. The chapter will also provide the researcher's interpretation of the research findings. Moreover, the study aims to answer the main three research questions underlying the current investigation, which are:

1. What are the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university?
2. Why do students have these challenges?
3. What are EFL lecturers' perceptions regarding students' challenges in learning English at a Libyan university?

7.2. The conclusion from the theoretical implication

For this study, Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition theory was used to establish a clear picture of language acquisition and language learning. The theory's five hypotheses are related to the analysis of the lecturers' and students' opinions. They were examined in order to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning and acquiring the English language at a Libyan university.

This theory details the critical five assumptions about Second Language Acquisition. I have used these hypotheses to inform my view of the university students and their English language lecturers in the three faculties. The study used the theory mentioned above to offer productive ways of thinking about EFL challenges in learning English at university. Of particular interest were the Natural Order Hypothesis and the Input Hypothesis, as well as the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The Natural Order Hypothesis is about acquiring grammatical structures in a predictable order. Brown (1973) states that children acquiring English as a first language acquire particular grammatical morphemes, or function words, earlier than others. Instead, the lecturers' perceptions during the semi-structured interviews revealed that students make common grammatical mistakes in their writing including syntax; thus, they are unable to outline a clear and coherent structure. The lecturers also stated that students make grammatical mistakes in their speaking and writing. This is attributed to mother tongue dominance and limited opportunities to use the target language.

The second hypothesis is *the Input Hypothesis*, this attempts to answer the important question in this theory which is, how do we acquire language? It says we acquire by "going for meaning" first, and as a result, we acquire structure (Krashen, 2009). Krashen (1981, p. 33) demonstrates that "the defining characteristic of a good teacher is someone who can make input comprehensible to a non-native speaker in order to facilitate language acquisition, regardless of his/ her competence in the target language". In my findings, the students indicated that some lecturers do not collaborate with students to overcome their language learning challenges; they should give them opportunities to become more flexible and helpful. This is also attributed to the lack of English language mastery by the teachers themselves.

The last hypothesis is the *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, which states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process. This hypothesis is classified into, motivation and self-confidence. A student with high motivation generally does better in second language acquisition. Self-confident students, with a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition (Krashen, 2009). In this study, lecturers argued that the motivation to learn is a very important factor. Some students have not practiced English but are intensely motivated to learn the English language. The basis of the affective filter hypothesis is the learner has to feel relaxed and confident

to ensure that the filter is down, so that comprehensible input gets in. Krashen argues that if teachers insist on learner production too soon, or if they correct errors in communicative activities, the learner will be inhibited from learning.

In summary, the conclusions drawn from the literature research are as follows:

- The goal is communicative skills.
- Comprehension precedes production.
- Production emerges when the learner is ready.
- Acquisition activities are central.
- The affective filter needs to be kept low.

7.3. The conclusion from the Empirical findings

The main empirical findings were obtained through the data analysis and were presented throughout the data analysis chapter. This section will synthesise and conclude the findings of this study with respect to the overarching research questions.

The quantitative data findings revealed the main challenges of 73.3% of participants who indicated that culture and the social environment as culture and social barriers to English language learning. 66.7% said the students have no time to practice the English language lessons. The grammar is not well understood, according to 86.7% of participants. 90% of the participants accepted that English language students have shortcomings in all four aspects of the English language: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The teaching methods used in English lessons are not effective, according to 83.3% of participants. 73.7% said their university does not provide them with extra English courses. The test is currently not an authentic experience. The detrimental effects of interference with studying English as a foreign language in an Arabic setting were overwhelmingly decided upon by all participants. 90% of those polled agreed that, in actual circumstances, cultural knowledge is the secret to successful learning and use of English.

Students will lose their willingness and confidence in learning, according to 66.7% of participants. 83.3% said that students could not improve their second language skills without adequate materials. 66.6% agree that through coursework and social interaction, English is reinforced. Lecturers and parents should make the students more confident and independent. Building confidence is an effective strategy to consolidate students' personal skills.

Students are unable to speak English, according to 56.7% of participants. 60% of participants agree that students were actively motivated to participate. The participants also think students' weak ability to speak English is negatively affected by their environment as they are surrounded by people speaking Arabic. Speaking in English is limited to the classroom, and this is an environment in which the students feel shy to communicate. Alanazi & Widin (2018) indicated that English language teaching and learning faces different challenges in Saudi Arabia. The EFL learners have low communicative ability or spoken skills due to many conditions. These include low motivation, a focus on exams based on curriculum, lack of integration of modern teaching tools or technology. In addition, the use of traditional classroom teaching methods, and unqualified and untrained English language teachers, also impact negatively on EFL learning. Also, they added that learners graduate from high school without carrying out a short conversation in English. The social and cultural obstacles to effective language learning and teaching, particularly concerning, is the poor quality of interaction between teachers and students that hinder learners' dialogic skills.

These factors cause serious problems for the students who experience this such as, their tendency to speak Arabic during lessons, local culture and traditions, a lack of solid background in English vocabulary, and a general lack of proficiency. All of these factors have a negative impact on their ability to learn English.

The findings suggested that the poor levels of English language competence are due to the inadequate preparation they received at school. This results in them struggling in their university studies; their low level of English impacts them psychologically in that the students are less self-confident. The stress that students experience when they try to use the English language manifest in loss of motivation and confidence. This is compounded by the teaching program for English language. There are no introductory courses in the English language, which would improve and

develop the students' English level. The findings also show that some lecturers' English level is not advanced. This also negatively impacts the students' progress. The findings highlighted issues related to their studies' difficulty, how the modules are managed, and the exam design. Furthermore, the students reported problems related to the university infrastructure and library facilities, which do not allow the students to study properly.

Most of the participants (lecturers and the students) agreed that many issues relating to EFL students' challenges about English learning and many issues relating to their poor language skills (writing, speaking, listening, reading). The participants indicated that the students' low English level is one of the issues they face at university. They stated that many of the language fundamentals essential to their progress in their education program are missing. Generally, most lecturers suggest a relation between such matters and the general position of higher education in Libya and the problems students encounter. Also, the most important issue is how student environments impact their English development. Some teachers and lecturers' level of English skills were relatively poor, which affected the level of students in language learning. They indicated that the university does not appear to make much effort to develop and provide the necessary services to improve their English levels. Both the lecturers and the students agreed on these issues, this is one way of confirming the validity of my research data.

Although the students face some challenges using and learning English, all lecturers and students believe that learning and using English is significant for their future.

It is suggested that Education policies in Libya improve English language instruction by exposing students to authentic language use on a regular basis. The insular politics ignore student aspirations and militate against student success.

One of the main conclusions of the current thesis is highlighting how cultural trends and customs within one community can determine the community's teaching styles and techniques. The whole thesis reveals the necessity of using new and different teaching methods in the context of English as a foreign language. The lecturers ideally should follow a student centered approach to teaching English language.

7.4. Limitations of the study

The limitations of this research study stem from a number of reasons, such as, for example the sample size, time, and language.

The major limitation of this research is common to all applications of the mixed methods approach applied. Regardless of an in-depth focus and rich information, it was time-consuming, especially during data analysis. The reader should consider that some of the study's findings might not be entirely representative of all university students in the target context. These two reasons are individuality and participants' number. Each student is unique, and what is preferable or challenging to one person might not be the same to others. The number of participants was limited by the small number of faculty members as there were only three departments in three faculties that participated in the study. There were only two lecturers who accepted to be interviewed in the law faculty, and the rest refused to participate. Moreover, it was not easy to collect my data because of the COVID-19 epidemic, as everything was closed, especially during the lockdown. However, during the data collection phase, I tried to obtain all the information needed.

The findings may not be generalizable because the study is mainly concerned with three faculties in one Libyan university.

Lastly, the researcher could not find relevant studies or resources for this study in Libya because there is limited research on English teaching studies at Libyan universities.

7.5. Recommendation

From the study findings, the following series of recommendations have arisen:

- When designing English language curriculum, lecturers have to consider students' needs. It is recommended that the English language be used in computer science (as an example) as the primary communication tool to perform various activities. It should be designed specifically for each field, not only the same generic design for all study fields. It should also correspond with what the students learn in their academic and professional areas.

- As Libyan students are classified as EFL learners, they do not communicate with native English speakers. Therefore, English language teaching methods should be changed from traditional passive lectures to active group learning to be easily exposed to English language use.
- Lecturers need to be aware of how oral language helps students with reading. Students can listen and speak well when this is more developed. In addition, their reading and writing skills will improve. They should incorporate some strategies to promote reading and writing skills.
- It is recommended that teachers at schools need to be exposed to learner centered strategies of teaching the target language.
- The curricula should focus on students' challenges and provide ways to accelerate the acquisition of English language competence by eliminating these challenges.
- The findings also suggest a lack of collaboration between the English language department and other disciplines; further research should enable clarification and identification of such lapses and be dealt with accordingly.
- As the lecturers suggested in the study findings, it is recommended that cooperation with foreign universities will improve the culture of teaching and learning.
- The university should provide a communication skills centre and a language laboratory to facilitate language acquisition and learning for students.
- It is recommended to teach the English language subject from primary school level, at an early age, at least six years old as acquiring a foreign language will be easier at a young age.
- As it is evident, the Communicative Approach is sometimes blocked because of cultural beliefs, which delimit other methods. Attention needs to be paid to how elements of a Communicative Approach could currently be incorporated into Libyan higher education, taking culture into account. Once again, if lecturers and students could communicate about such issues, share concerns, and discuss the challenges together, a more mutually beneficial system may begin to emerge.
- The thesis reveals the necessity of using new and different teaching methods in the context of English as a foreign language. The lecturers ideally should follow the teaching methods that stimulate the students to search for new information. This thesis indeed reinforces

other work that calls for a complete change towards the new teaching methods, aiming to render the students competent in their subjects.

- The Education ministry should provide a training program for teachers at school and for the lecturers at university, for every curriculum change to get more knowledge on how to teach these materials
- The Education ministry should hire some foreign native-speaking English lectures to reduce the teaching staff shortage at some universities.
- The Libyan government should separate its political decisions and issues from the education ministry and its policies.
- It is recommended that the Ministry of Education in Libya put in more effort in teaching English as a foreign language at all levels. It is beneficial to improve the students' language performance in the different phases of education, especially in the fields where English is the language of instruction.

7.6. Implications for future research

From the study's findings, the following might be needed for further research:

- The small sample in the current study makes it difficult to generalize the findings of this research to the entire population of EFL majors in Libya. Future research needs to be conducted on a wider scale to generalize the findings to the entire population.
- Based on the findings of this small-scale study in Libyan universities, it suggests pertinent aspects for further research; investigation of English language challenges is still new in the Libyan universities' settings. This work may be a starting point for reconsidering and developing the English language curriculum at Libyan schools and universities. It could also create other research opportunities to investigate language use or other areas of English language teaching at universities. Moreover, to understand and evaluate English language use in the university, there is a need for more investigation of each discipline's language requirements.

- Further research on is also needed concerning the specific English language situation in other departments to explore how students can overcome their English learning challenges.
- More effective approaches to teaching English should be researched and incorporated into the foundation phase program.
- Furthermore, there should be an understanding among the students, lecturers, parents, and the community about the impact of culture regarding language, and, where possible, put aside these cultural barriers.

7.7. Conclusion

The aim of this case study research project was to investigate and explore the challenges that first-year university students face in learning English in Libya and the reasons these challenges impact effective academic performance. A mixed methods research design was used where data was collected through qualitative and quantitative methods in an interpretative paradigm.

Firstly, I defined the EFL challenges of English learning within the context of this study by examining English language learning and teaching in Libya in general. The case study then focused on discovering the challenges that students face in learning English at university and the reasons behind these challenges by employing semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion of six lecturers and twelve students, followed by a questionnaire of thirty randomly selected students.

From the literature review of this thesis and all readings that were referenced, it is evident that there is a vast amount of literature on students' challenges in English learning internationally. However, this research project's findings emphasized and confirmed that there are many challenges to English learning in the selected university. Although the students faced some challenges in using and learning the English language, all lecturers and students asserted that learning and using English is significant for their future.

The qualitative and quantitative findings in this study can be classified into four categories of EFL Libyan learning challenges: linguistic, cultural, institutional, and structural challenges (Bradford 2016). Linguistic challenges are those related to language issues confronted by both lecturers and

students. Most participants (lecturers and students) agreed that Arabic and English are linguistically dissimilar.

They stated that many of the English language fundamentals essential to their education program's progress are missing, such as, they could not comprehend their lecturers regarding what was explained in English. Also, they are unable to comprehend published academic literature in the English language because of their low English proficiency. Their low level of English impacts them psychologically in that the students are less confident. It is considered the most common linguistic challenge related to the students' anxiety of inadequacy regarding English proficiency. They could not produce good content-based English assignments or exam responses due to problems in understanding the basic concepts.

The cultural challenge is described as a mismatch between students' culture's characteristics and expectations and the foreign language, and how students' environment impacts their performance in English. For instance, there are social and cultural forces that insist they use the Arabic language in their lives daily, and it is forbidden to use foreign languages such as French or English. Also, some lecturers' level of English is low, as most of them use Arabic during their lectures, which negatively impacts students' progress in English.

Institutional challenges in this study are described as the general position of higher education in Libya, and the problems students encounter when joining this education system. The effect of insular politics also negatively impacts effective institutional operations.

Lastly, structural challenges were related to overall teaching program coherence. They included the lack of fundamental curriculum design standards and poorly clarified policies on English language teaching and learning. One of the leading causes of the poor English standard is the lack of a definite policy. There have been various changes in the approach of the government towards English teaching and learning, yet no effective consistency has been achieved.

I have discussed the findings of this research project with the lecturers and the first-year university students. They were willing to make necessary changes in the quest of improving their English performance. The participants mentioned that the suggestions and recommendations made by me will be considered by the lecturers and the university.

Finally, reflecting on this study, the selected area of investigation has been chosen not only because of my interest but also to gain more experience and knowledge of the English language learning challenges.

Additionally, the four-year research process for this thesis has provided me with abundant knowledge of English language learning challenges. This long journey has equipped me with many study skills, including improving my academic reading and writing, presentation skills, and finding relevant sources. Additionally, it has improved engaging in intellectual discussions with my tutors and colleagues inside and outside the university and thinking of diverse methods of solving issues, as well as managing working under pressure. These, in turn, will make it easier for me to produce such work and carry out further academic research. However, completing my thesis defines the beginning of my academic research, to think about what could be done to develop my profession and the field of learning and teaching EFL in Libya.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Informed Consent of participants

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: *Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan students challenges in the learning of English*

RESEARCHER

Full Name: Mrs Entisar Khalifa Aljoundi

School: Education

College: Humanities

Proposed Qualification: PhD research

Email: entisar.aljundi@yahoo.com

SUPERVISOR

Full Name: Prof. Ayub. Sheik

School: Education

College: Humanities

Email: Sheika@ukzn.ac.za

I, Entisar Aljoundi, Student no. 211560253, I am a PhD student at Media and Language in Education Department, College of Humanities, at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: *Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan students challenges in the learning of English*. The aim of the study is to investigate the challenges that first year university students face in the learning of English in Libya, and their needs to overcome these challenges which impact effective academic performance.

Through your participation, I hope to explore the challenges that you face in learning English at your university. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate in the study. Please sign on the dotted line to show that you have read and understood the contents of this letter. Your active participation in the study will take two sections, one is answering a questionnaire and the other An Audio-record interview, a focus group discussion will take approximately 60 minutes.

- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
 Govan Mbeki Building
 Private Bag X 54001
 Durban
 4000
 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
 Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I..... (Full Name) hereby confirm that I have read and understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research project has been clearly defined prior to participating in this research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participants.

Signature..... Date.....

APPENDIX 2: Informed Consent of the gatekeeper

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

Declaration of Consent from the gatekeeper

Good day

Request to conduct research with first year university students in your faculties

I am Entisar K Aljoundi, Student no. 211560253, I am a PhD student at Media and Language in Education department, College of Humanities, at the university of Kwazulu-Natal. My supervisor Prof, A. Sheik from the university of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. Undertaking research on the topic entitled: *Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan students challenges in the learning of English*. The aim of the study is to investigate the challenges that first year university students face in the learning of English in Libya, and their needs to overcome these challenges which impact effective academic performance.

I hereby request your permission to conduct this research at the School of Arts and the two faculties are located at Al- Asmarya university in Zliten city. An Audio-record interview, a focus group discussion and questionnaires shall be employed to collect data from six lecturers and twelve students to get their experiences and perceptions of the challenges that they face in the learning of English.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at entisar.aljouni@gmail.com, my cellphone number is **0027 813221304** or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Entisar

DECLARARTION OF CONSENT

I,, I give permission for the research to take place in the faculties of Art, Education, and Law by Entisar Khalifa Aljoundi. I understand that the aim of the study is to investigate the challenges that university students face in learning English in Libya, and their need to overcome these challenges which impact effective academic performance.

signature.....

Stamp

Date:.....

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of the study

Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first-year Libyan students challenges in the learning of English

Invitation to participate in my study

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the challenges that first year university students face in the learning of English in Libya, and their needs to overcome these challenges which impact effective academic performance.

Through your participation, I hope to explore the challenges that you face in learning English at your university. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. As your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you do not participate in the study.

Why have you been invited?

You have been invited because as you are EFL students at university; you will have knowledge about my research data in which this study investigates EFL's challenges in English learning.

Do you have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. We will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which we will give to you. We will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your active participation in the study will take two sections, one is answering a questionnaire, the other An Audio-record interview and a focus group discussion will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

I will give you a brief information about my study in order to inform you about the aims of the current study and to make clear my areas of interest.

- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded or not, if not then I can use my notebook
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

What will you have to do?

You will only have to answer the questions in the questionnaire and for the interview discussion.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. The potential physical and/or psychological harm or distress will be the same as any experienced in everyday life.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, but it is hoped the information we get from the study may will help to discover the challenges that you and other

Libyan students face in English learning. Results will be shared with participants in order to inform their professional work.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any complaints about the project in the first instance you can contact any member of the research team. If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University of KwaZulu-Natal to take your complaint further (see below).

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

Should the research stop earlier than planned and you are affected in any way we will tell you and explain why.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Data shall be kept safe at a secure location at UKZN Edgewood campus for the specified minimum period of five years. The documents which formed part of the open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedules will then be shredded and burnt. Moreover, confidentiality will be maintained through the incineration of audio-recorded equipment.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed and cancelled.

Further information and contact details:

RESEARCHER

Full Name: Mrs Entisar Khalifa Aljundi

School: Education

College: Humanities

Proposed Qualification: PhD research

Email: entisar.aljundi@yahoo.com

SUPERVISOR

Full Name: Prof. Ayub. Sheik

School: Education

College: Humanities

Email: Sheika@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

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Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I will introduce myself; I am Entisar K Aljoundi a Ph.D. student at UKZN.

This interview is designed to conduct research on “*Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first-year Libyan students’ challenges in the learning of English*”. The major objective of this study is to explore the challenges that EFL students face in learning English at a Libyan university. The following questions will reflect your opinion as accurately as possible. The data collected through this interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for academic research only.

.....

- Do you speak a language other than Arabic?

.....

-What is your experience of learning in English?

.....

- Do you have any challenges in your English learning?

.....

- Which language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) do you have challenged in English learning?

.....

When they will start responding and telling me their challenges, I will try to get a chance and ask them the following questions:

- Why do you have these challenges?

.....

- Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your first language background?

-
- If yes, to what extent does this problem affect in your performance in exams?
.....
 - Do the lecturers want you to speak in English at all times? I mean, are you practicing the English language during a lecture?
.....
 - Did you take any English language courses before you started your degree?
.....
 - Does the university help you directly with improving your language skills?
.....
 - Do you think that using English is a barrier facing the students in Libya?
Why.....
 - Is there a Lack of free time to spend learning English?
.....
 - Are there other reasons for such difficulties?
.....
 - What do you think you need to overcome these challenges? What do you suggest?
.....

Thank you for your time and for your cooperation.

Appendix 5: Focus Group discussion Questions

Focus group discussion questions

I will introduce myself; I am Entisar K Aljoundi a PhD student at UKZN.

This focus group discussion is designed to conduct research on “*Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan students’ challenges in the learning of English*”. The major objective of this study is to explore the challenges that EFL students’ face in learning English at a Libyan university. The following questions will reflect your opinion as accurately as possible. The data collected through this discussion will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for the academic research only.

The main discussions and the initial questions that I asked the focus group participants were the following:

- 1- What are the challenges that EFL students’ face in learning English at a Libyan university?
- 2- Which language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) do you have challenged in English learning?
- 3- Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your first language background?
- 4- Did you take any English language courses before you started your degree?
- 5- Why do students have these challenges?

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for participants

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to conduct research on “*Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan students challenges in the learning of English*”. The major objective of this study is to explore the challenges that EFL students’ face in learning English at a Libyan university. Please complete the following questions to reflect your opinion as accurately as possible. The data collected through this survey will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for the academic research only.

Thank you for your time and for your cooperation.

.....

1- Please put a tick mark on your appropriate answer:

Some challenges in the learning of English (Problems and weaknesses)	Agree	Disagree
-Lack of free time to spend on learning English		
-Limited vocabulary knowledge		
-Limited grammar knowledge		

-Weakness in the four language skills especially speaking, listening, and writing.		
-Lack of continuous exposure to language during academic life.		
- Lack of English language learning resources.		
-Not knowing how to learn English.		
-Limited knowledge of pronunciation and Spelling.		
-Increasing age and decrease in learning ability as mind is not free for learning anymore.		
-Not having effective teaching system throughout academic education.		
-Weakness in recognizing the grammatical functions of different parts of a sentence especially in complex and compound sentences.		
-Fear of learning English due to low language proficiency.		
-Low self-confidence to use English because they are afraid of mistakes and shy feeling.		

-Living in rural areas with limited facilities for learning English.		
-Lack of English demanding environment mainly in the workplace and in the academic settings. - lack of cooperation from school before entering university.		
-Not enough use in daily life.		
-Lack of motivating teachers whether language teachers or content teachers for learning English during undergraduate studies.		
-Transferring the style of Arabic writing.		
- Not satisfy with lecturers or teachers' feedback		
- Not satisfy with exams method and design		
- The political issues in Libya and its influence on English learning.		

- **Please answer these questions:**

2- Do you face difficulties in learning English due to your first language background?

Are there other reasons of such difficulties?

.....
.....

3- Did you take any language courses before you started your degree?

.....

4- Does the university help you directly with improving your language skills?

.....

5- Do you think that using English is a barrier facing the students in Libya?

Why?.....

.....

6- Do you have problems in spelling or in other language skills?

If yes, to what extent does this problem affect in your performance in exams?

.....
.....
.....

7- Do the lecturers want you to speak in English at all times?

.....
.....

8- Is there Lack of free time to spend on learning English?

.....
.....

9- What are the challenges that you face in learning English?

.....
.....
.....

10- Why do you have these challenges?

.....
.....

Appendix 7: Ethical Clearance Certificate



24 June 2020

Mrs Entisar Khalifa Aljoundi (211560253)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Aljoundi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001455/2020

Project title: Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first year Libyan university students challenges in the learning of English

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 08 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 24 June 2021.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 8: Language Editing Certificate

ASOKA ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

45 Vausedale Crescent, Escombe, 4093.



DECLARATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOLLOWING THESIS HAS BEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITED

Learning English in an Arabic context: A study of first-year Libyan university students challenges in the learning of English.

CANDIDATE: Aljound E.

DISCLAIMER

Whilst the English language editor has used electronic track changes to facilitate corrections and has inserted comments and queries in a right-hand column, the responsibility for effecting changes in the final, submitted document, remains the responsibility of the client and the editor cannot be held responsible for the quality of English Language expression used in corrections or additions effected subsequent to the transmission of this certificate on 30/07/2022.

Prof. Dennis Schaffer, M.A.(Leeds), PhD, KwaZulu (Natal), TEFL(London), TITC Business English, Emeritus Professor UKZN. Univ. Cambridge Accreditation: IGCSE Drama. Hon. Research Fellow, DUT. Durban University of Technology.

Appendix 9: Turnitin Report

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