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Obstacles Libyan Teachers of English Encounter While Implementing English Language Curriculum in Libyan High Schools

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate and evaluate the implementation process of the new English language curriculum in Libyan high schools, identifying the obstacles teachers encounter in their implementation of the curriculum. The study was an attempt to answer the following research questions: How have Libyan high school English teachers implemented the new curriculum? What factors facilitate or inhibit implementation of the new curriculum? What effects are these factors seen to have on the implementation process? Results of this study showed that there were differences between the degrees of CLT principles practice. Results also showed a number of factors that were considered as major concerns by the participants. Results showed that the mismatch between the realities of the classroom, student resistance, and the principles and goals of the new curriculum created a significant challenge for the teachers. Results showed that there had been a gap between what was expected in the new curriculum and what was actually being done in classrooms. Interestingly, the results of this study assumed that the challenges of curriculum reform were not limited to certain educational system or specific contexts but rather they were global.

Key words: English language curriculum, curriculum implementation, English language teaching

1. Introduction

The field of foreign language teaching has been under the influence of educational theories such as behaviorism, functionalism, and cognitivism as has any other discipline in the humanities and social sciences. Specialists have developed different approaches and methods to find more effective ways to teach language. As a result, there have been numerous shifts and changes in classroom practices in the area of foreign language teaching. New approaches and methods are produced every quarter century, with each new method presenting a break from the old (Brown, 1980; Richard, 2013). Proponents of each new method believe theirs to be more effective than the one's preceding it. These claims are based on the notion that the newer methods are sounder theories of language teaching and learning than their older counterparts.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Curriculum in Libyan Educational System

Compared to other educational systems — such as those in Europe, America, and Japan — and despite the government's attempts at decentralization, the Libyan educational system is still very standardized, and the Ministry of Education is in charge of everything related to schools. All decisions and policies regarding administrative regulations and curricula are made at the level of the Ministry of Education. Yet, to facilitate the application and follow-through of these decisions and policies, the country, Libya, is divided into 15 educational regions. The Ministry of Education has direct contact with the regional administrations that are, in turn, in charge of implementing the policies and decisions.

The Department of Curricula and Instruction at the Ministry of Education is responsible for making all curricular decisions, including setting the goals and objectives. The Department also produces the textbooks, teachers' guidebooks, and other instructional materials. These textbooks and guidebooks are sent to the local administrations for distribution in the schools. As a result, teachers are required to teach the textbooks and follow the guidebooks as prescribed by the Ministry of Education within a specific period of time. Teachers do not have room to use their own creative capabilities and intuitions in instruction and are restricted by these standards and regulations.

The English language curriculum begins in the 7th grade in Libya, four classes a week. The class period for English, as for other subjects, is 45 minutes a day. Prior to the introduction of the new curriculum, schools used a textbook called *English for Libya*, published and produced by the Ministry of Education. This curriculum was based on a teacher-centered approach and was taught by teachers according to the grammar translation method (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). However, students would leave high school lacking knowledge of how to use the English language in communicative settings both orally and in a written form.

With the advent of information technology and globalization, communicative competence in English has become a necessity. Therefore, in 2005, the government decided to make top-down reforms of all curricula, including English language. The new curriculum is based on a communicative approach to language teaching. This approach focuses on teaching language in authentic contexts and emphasizes the communicative and social aspects of English.

2.2 Methods and Approaches to Language Teaching

The paradigm shifts in language teaching have been driven partially by variations in the challenges and conditions of foreign language teaching, and also by theoretical advancements in the areas of linguistics, psychology, and psycholinguistics. However, within foreign language teaching methodology, there is a distinction between methods and approaches. The former refers to fixed teaching methods, while the latter refers to the teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in different ways. The American applied linguist Edward Anthony suggests three hierarchical levels of methodologies: an approach, a method, and a technique. The approach is defined as "a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 16). Thus, the approach is axiomatic because it involves beliefs and principles, while the method is "an overall plan for orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 15).

In other words, the approach is broader in notion than the method. As cited in Richards and Rodgers (1986), within one approach "there may be many methods. A technique is implementational — that which takes place in the classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance which accomplishes an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with a given approach" (p. 15).

According to this view, an approach is the level at which beliefs and assumptions about language teaching and learning are identified. On the other hand, a method is the level at which theoretical principles and philosophies about language teaching and learning are experienced and where choices are selected regarding the skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the organization the content will be presented (Brown, 1980; Richard & Rodgers, 1986). At the technique level, which is identified as the level of or at classroom procedures and practices are described, the rapid development in theory and the reaction among schools of thought during the period between the 1950s and 1980s is often known as "the age of methods" (Howat, 1984).

Because of the appropriate fit in certain circumstances in the area of language teaching, some methods and their affiliated approaches kept their status long after they had fallen out of general favor. What is taught and how it is taught depend in part on students' needs and also their previous knowledge and experiences, or simply on other sources. For example, the relative importance of speaking over writing and reading, or grammar over pronunciation, may impact the method chosen by the instructor.

A further distinction between second language learning and foreign language learning is important in this context. Second language is defined as the language "that is learned in a location where that language is typically used as the main vehicle of everyday communication for most people" (Macintyre, 1998, p. 37). Visual and auditory stimulation are usually present in the context of the second language. Nonetheless, when learners of a second language happen to be in an informal setting or inaccurate model of language learning, such as in some immigrant communities, focusing on grammatical structure and accurate pronunciation may be important to make them aware of the correct forms.

Macintyre (1998) defines foreign language as the "one that is learned in a place where that language is not typically used as a medium of ordinary communication" (p. 37). In foreign language learning settings, learners are usually found to be missing a lot of elements that would help enhance their learning conditions. This may be because of the role of the first language in such contexts, as foreign language learning usually takes place in the first language environment. Unlike second language learners, foreign language learners usually receive the target language input in classroom settings and lack opportunities to practice and use the language in everyday life as second language learners do. In foreign language settings, great emphasis is put on formal usages, accuracy, and correct grammatical structures if the learners want to speak the language fluently and accurately.

In the 1920s, the British applied linguist Harold Palmer gave a summary of the most general principles of language teaching methodology. These principles and concerns are represented in most of the language teaching methods described later in this section. These principles include:

- Initial preparation, guiding and encouraging students toward language learning;
- Habit formation, creating and establishing correct habits;
- Accuracy;
- Gradation, each level preparing the learner for the next;
- Proportion, each aspect of language receiving equal emphasis;
- Concreteness, moving from the concrete to the abstract;
- Interest; and

- Order of progression, building the language skills as babies do in their first language learning, starting with listening and ending with writing (Richard, 2001).

The paradigm shifts over the past century in the area of language teaching reveal how cyclical the field is in terms of methods and approaches used. According to Brown (1980), these shifts and changes produced various methods, and each new one emerged from the previous one. Common to each new one has been the claim that it is more effective than the old ones, because it is based on sounder theories of language learning and teaching. These paradigm shifts in language teaching have also been influenced by advances in psychology and linguistics.

2.3 Curriculum Evaluation and Assessment

The preferable type of curriculum evaluation and assessment by many educators is the formative evaluation because of the reliable and valid information it provides (Westbury, 1970). Thus, the process of curriculum evaluation is about collecting evidence for the decision makers and providing reasons behind the selection of certain programs. Westbury defines curriculum evaluation as "the body of techniques, methodologies, and principles created deliberately to give some systematic form to the ways in which the assertion can be made to work" (p. 240).

Murphy (1991) adds a new definition of curriculum evaluation in terms of the outcome value of a program; other definitions for the process of curriculum evaluation were made by (Taylor-Powell, Steele, & Douglah, 1996; McKay, 1989). Taylor-Powel, Steele, Douglah and McKay believe that curriculum evaluation has to be systemic and thoughtful to answer specific questions and give accurate reliable information. Curriculum evaluation — as a systemic process — is also the focus of Chen's (2005) definition of the process, stating that curriculum evaluation is "the application of evaluation approaches, techniques, and knowledge to systematically assess and improve the planning, implantation, and effectiveness of programs" (p. 3).

Therefore, collecting valid and accurate information about curriculum implementation is at the heart of curriculum evaluation studies. This applies to the current study as a means to evaluate and assess English language curriculum implementation in Libyan high schools by measuring the teachers' perception in order to arrive at results that identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, so that can be used and considered in future decision making regarding curriculum change in Libyan schools.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate and evaluate the implementation process of the new English language curriculum in Libyan high schools and how it is taught and reflected in the classroom practices. This study was conducted in two regions of Libya called Tarhuna, southeast of the capital Tripoli, and Benghazi in the eastern part of Libya. The study was an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How have Libyan high school English teachers implemented the new curriculum?
- What factors facilitate or inhibit the implementation of the new curriculum?
- What effects are these factors seen to have on the implementation process?

The purpose of this study was to investigate and evaluate the implementation process of the new English language curriculum in Libyan high schools by seeking and identifying the barriers and the obstacles that teachers may encounter in their implementation of the curriculum.

The researchers designed a survey to answer the research questions. A survey is defined as "a method of getting information on certain selected topics from a number of people — usually a large number and often

chosen at random" (Wallace, 1998, p. 260). Gay and Airasian (2003) define a questionnaire as a "written collection of self-report questions to be answered by elected group of research participants" (p. 590). For the convenience of the participants, the survey used in this study was written in both English and Arabic and developed through a literature review, a pilot questionnaire, and back translation techniques.

The advantage of the survey method is its easy administration because many subjects can be contacted simultaneously, and subjects in remote or distant areas can also be reached. In particular, a mailed survey has the advantage of confidentiality, which is very important in order to maintain ethics in the research. Also, the survey method is an important technique when the purpose of research is to describe and explore a phenomenon, which matches this study's aims: to explore implications and to describe actual situations in high school English classrooms in Libya from the teachers' perspectives.

This study involved the participation of English language teachers in Libyan high schools. The participants were in-service teachers. They were all Libyans who either hold a bachelor's degree in English from the university or a diploma from a higher education institute. The study took place in an area southeast of the capitol Tripoli called Tarhuna and an area in the eastern part of Libya called Benghazi. The reason behind choosing these geographical areas was that, first; the researchers are native to the areas and have some background information about the conditions of curriculum implementation in these areas of the country. Second, the researchers have personal connections with many teachers, administrators, and principals and so could access a research sample. The total number of high schools in these regions is 89, with 345 teachers and 10,814 students in addition to 16 English language inspectors (Department of Education, 2012).

4. Results

A total of 104 surveys were distributed to English language teachers in Libyan High Schools. Sixty seven surveys were returned with a response rate of 64.42%. The average age of respondent teachers was 32.28 years (N = 61, SD = 6.02, range = 22–49). Age data for all respondents appear to be approximately normally distributed with skewness of .43 and kurtosis of .16. The average age of female teachers responding to this questionnaire was 32.29 years (N = 41, SD = 6.12, range = 22–45), and the average age of male teachers responding to this questionnaire was 32.25 years (N = 20, SD = 5.96, range = 22–49. There was no significant difference in the reported age by gender in this respondent sample pool: $t(59) = -0.03$, $p = 0.98$.

In terms of years of experience, the data showed that the average number of years of experience reported by respondent teachers was 8.98 years (N = 64, SD = 4.18, range = 1–17). Data on the average years of experience for all respondents appear to be normally distributed with skewness of .26 and kurtosis of .63. The average years of experience reported by female teachers responding to this questionnaire was 9.07 years (N = 43, SD = 4.45, range = 1–17) as indicated in Figure 2 , and the average years of experience reported by male teachers responding to this questionnaire as explained in Figure 3 was 8.71 years (N = 21, SD = 3.65, range = 1–13). There was no significant difference in the reported years of experience by gender in this respondent sample pool: $t(62) = -0.32$, $p = 0.75$. However, there was a significant correlation between teacher age and reported years of experience: $r = 0.85$, $p < 0.01$.

Sixty of the respondent teachers provided information on their highest level of education attained. Ten teachers obtained a higher diploma; 48 teachers held a bachelor's degree, and two had completed a master's degree. No teachers included in this sample pool and as shown in Figure 4 do hold a PhD. There was no

significant difference in the level of education achieved by gender: $\chi^2(2) = 1.05$, $p = 0.59$.

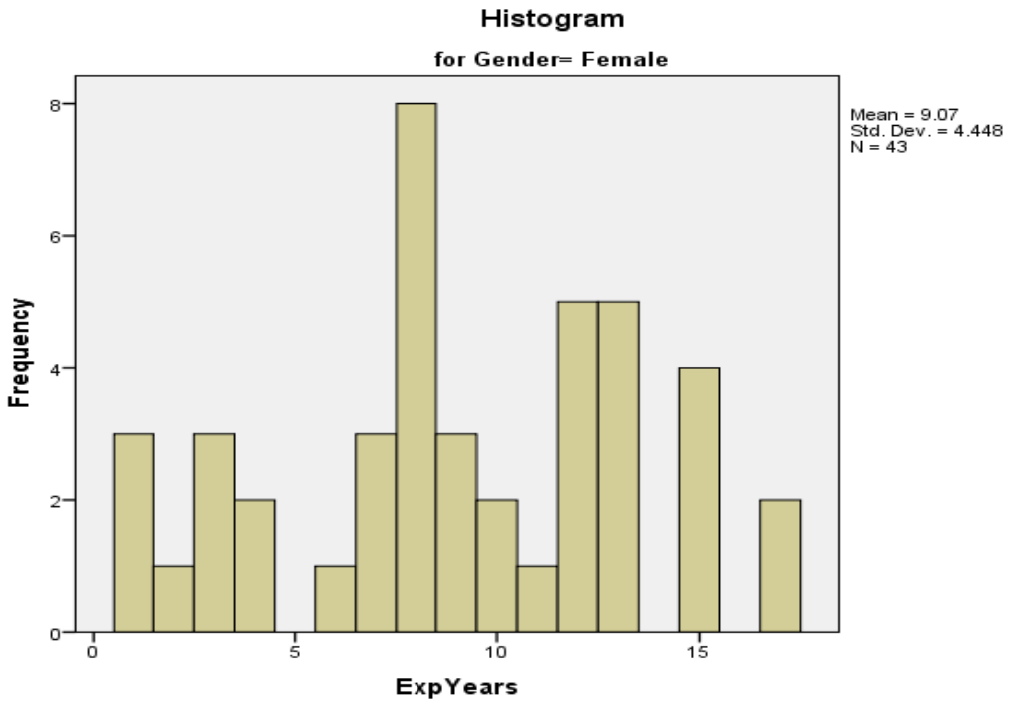

Figure 1 Female Teachers' Experience in Years

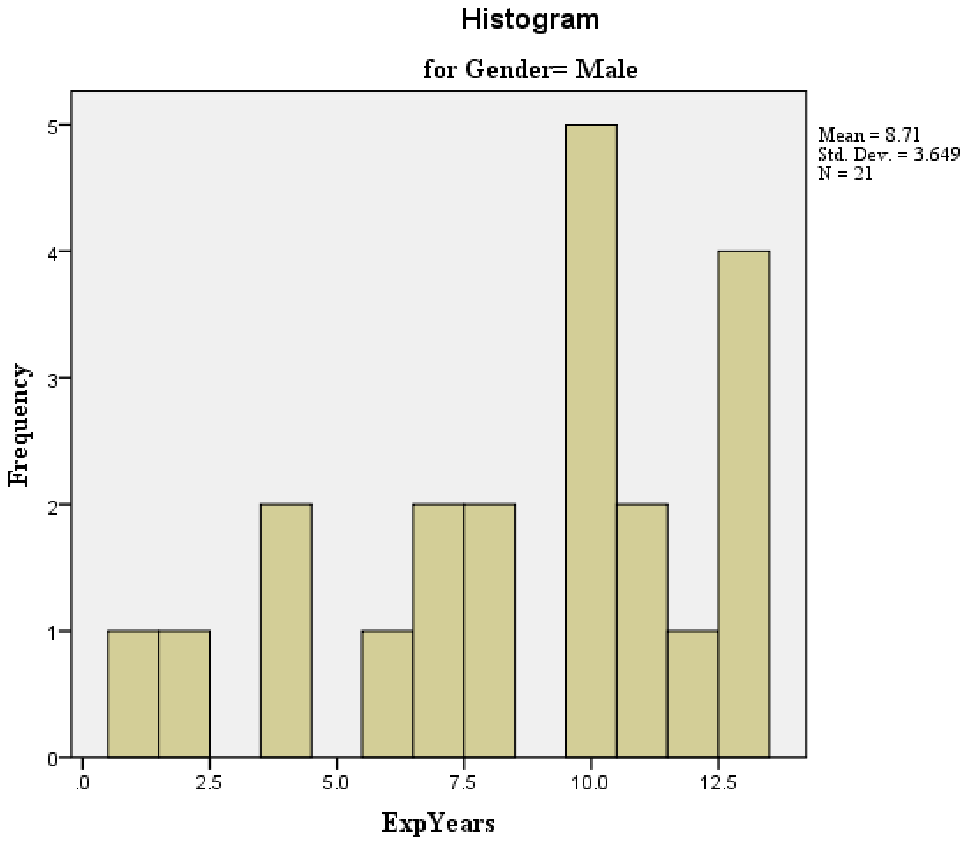

Figure 2 Male Teachers' Experience in Years

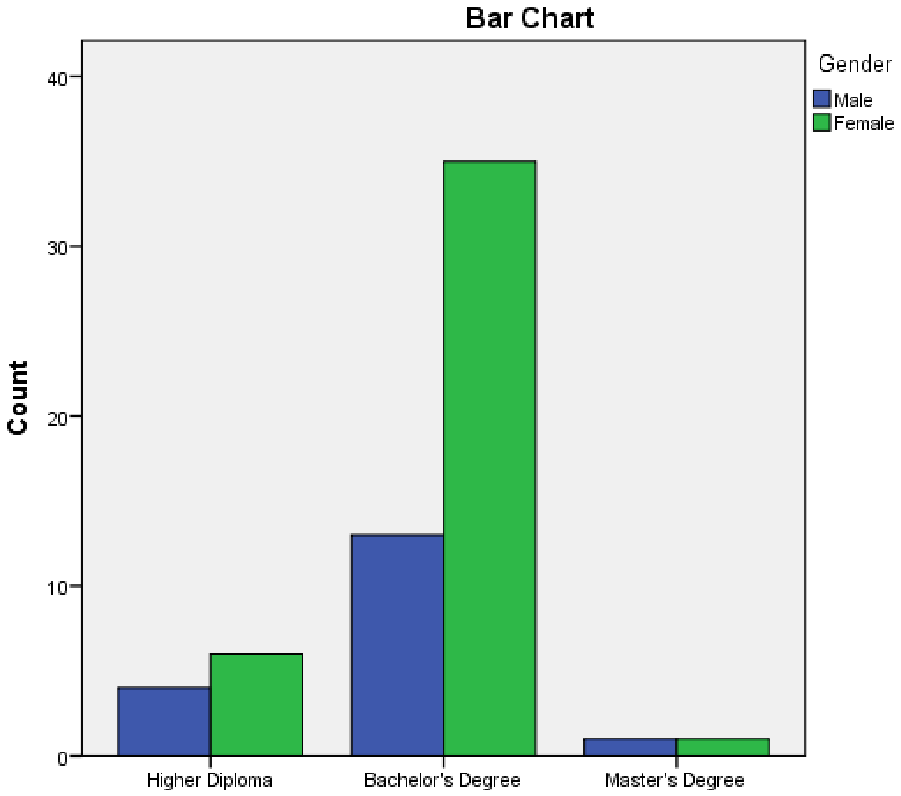

Figure 3 Teachers' Attained Level of Education

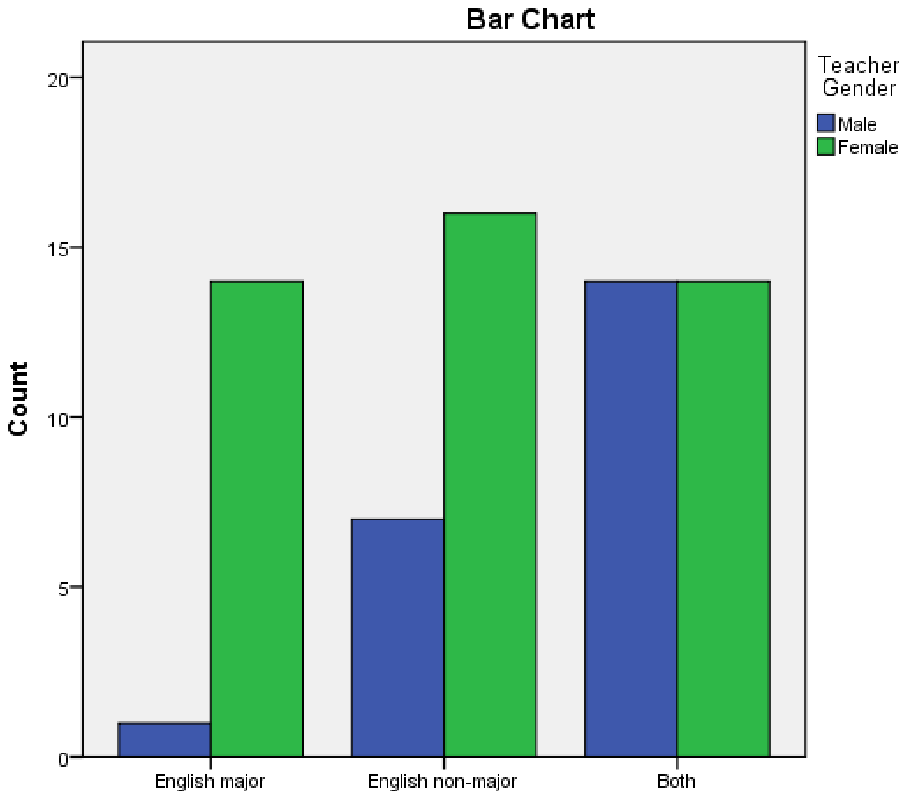

Figure 4 Type of Students Instructed by Respondent Teacher

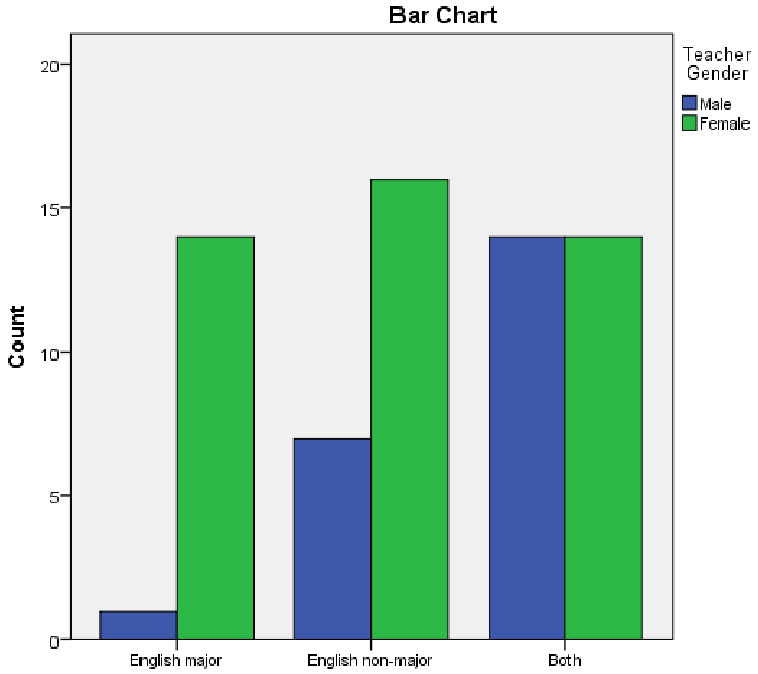

Figure 5 Type of Students Instructed by Respondent Teacher

The data also showed that66 of the respondent teachers provided information on the type of students they instruct (Figure 5). Fifteen teachers instruct students who are majoring in English; 23 teachers instruct students who are not majoring in English; and 28 teachers report instructing students who are both English majors and non-English majors. There was a significant difference in the type of students instructed by teacher gender: $\chi^2(2) = 8.39$, $p = 0.015$. Female teachers reported instructing significantly more English major students. There was no significant difference in the type of students instructed by teacher's level of education attained: $\chi^2(4) = 1.72$, $p = 0.79$.

Question 6 of the questionnaire asked the participants about the subjects they teach. The participants' responses are reflected in Table 1, with no significant difference associated with gender.

Table 1 Instructional Subjects by Teacher Gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Subjects	Reading	2	2	4
	Speaking	0	2	2
	Reading and writing	2	3	5
	Reading and speaking	0	2	2
	Writing and speaking	1	6	7
	Reading, writing, speaking	3	5	8
	General education	7	13	20
	Economic science	0	1	1
	Engineering	0	1	1
Total		15	35	50

The quantitative data also showed that the majority of the participants (n = 42, 62.7%) learned about CLT in their teacher education programs, and 25 participants (37.3%) did not, as presented in Table 2 below. The

researchers noted no significant difference associated with gender though more female teachers reported to have learned about CLT in their teacher education program: $\chi^2 = .18$, $p = .67$.

Table 2 Did You Learn About CLT In Your Teacher Education Program?

		Teacher Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Did you learn about CLT in your teacher education program?	Yes	13	29	42
	No	9	16	25
Total		22	45	67

Responses to Question 9 presented whether the participants claimed to have practiced CLT in their classrooms. The numbers and percentages of the participants who were currently using CLT, the ones who were not using CLT at the time, and the ones who never used CLT were computed. Table 3 below shows the response numbers and percentages

Table 3 Have you tried CLT?

		Gender		Total	percentage
		Male	Female		
Have you tried CLT?	yes, and I am still using it now.	12	29	41	61.2%
	yes, but I am not using it now.	4	11	15	22.4%
	no, never.	6	5	11	16.4%
Total		22	45	67	100%

To evaluate the implementation of CLT principles and to answer the first research question, the participants were asked to rate their responses to items addressing CLT practice on a Likert scale. The mean for each item was calculated. The following table (Table 4) displays the participants' ratings of CLT practice in classrooms. The total responses were 54 out of the total number of the sample (N = 67): 80.59%. Thirteen teachers answered with "never" to Question 8, which means they neither learned about CLT in their teacher education program nor practiced it in their teaching. A t-test was applied to check and evaluate any significant differences associated with gender, level of education, or years of experience. The tests showed no difference between the groups or association with education or experience.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The objective is to develop students' communicative competence.	54	4.09	1.15
The role of the student is a communicator.	54	3.46	1.20
Four skills "listening, speaking, reading, and writing" are integrated in the classroom practice.	54	4.02	1.05
Instructional materials may include thematic development materials, task-based materials, and authentic, real-life materials.	54	3.93	.86
Students are evaluated both on fluency and accuracy by being asked to perform a real communicative function (i.e., to assess students' writing skill, they are asked to write a letter to a friend).	54	3.37	.91
Valid N (listwise)	54		

Note: Scale was 1= rarely practiced to 5 = fully practiced

The data showed that the five principles of CLT were perceived by teachers to be practiced as intended in the curriculum. However, teachers encountered many barriers and obstacles in achieving the goals of the intended curriculum in classroom practice, as indicated in the following part of the quantitative data that was used along with the qualitative data to answer the second research question: What factors facilitate or inhibit the implementation of the new curriculum? What effects do these factors have on the implementation process? The data were drawn from Question 11 on the questionnaire. The analysis began by reporting the participants' responses to each factor as a major problem, potential problem, or not a problem. Responses were calculated to identity which factors were facilitating and which ones were inhibiting to the process of implementation.

Item 11 in the questionnaire and the interview questions were used to explore and identify the factors and sources of difficulties that teachers encountered in implementing the CLT curriculum in Libyan high schools. Research question two asked the participants which factors inhibited or facilitated the implementation process and what impact these factors have on the teaching process of the CLT curriculum. The researchers computed the percentage of each item response as a major problem, potential problem, and not a problem (Table 5). Then, the total number of responses to each item was tabulated and ranked from being problematic to less problematic (Table 6). Each factor that had more than 50% of the responses as a major problem was considered an inhibitive factor to the implementation process of the curriculum.

Table 5 Items Perceived As Major Problems, Potential Problems, or Not A Problem

Item	M. problem	P. problem	Not-problem
Teachers' limited proficiency in spoken English.	27 (40.3%)	31 (46.3%)	9 (13.4%)
Teachers' limited sociolinguistic/cultural competence	16 (24.0%)	37 (55.2%)	14 (21.0%)
Teachers' lack of training in CLT.	54 (80.6%)	11 (16.4%)	2 (3.0%)
Teachers have few opportunities for in-service training in CLT	52 (79.0%)	10 (15.2%)	4 (6.1%)
Teachers have little time for teaching materials for CLT classes.	59 (88.1%)	3 (4.5%)	5 (7.5%)
Lack of authentic teaching materials	25 (37.3%)	26 (39.0%)	16 (24.0%)
Large classes	51 (76.1%)	11 (16.4%)	5 (7.5%)
Insufficient funding, school facilities (few language labs, technology equipment).	58 (88.0%)	3 (4.5%)	5 (7.6%)
Lack of support from colleagues and administrators.	44 (67%)	17 (26%)	5 (7.6%)
Grammar-based examinations	11 (16.4%)	21 (31.3%)	35 (52.2%)
Lack of assessment instruments.	15 (24.4%)	31 (46.3%)	21 (31.3%)
Students' low English proficiency.	56 (84.0%)	9 (13.4%)	2 (3.0%)
Students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence.	36 (54.0%)	25 (37.3%)	6 (9.0%)
Students' resistance to class participation.	34 (51.0%)	30 (45.0%)	3 (4.5%)
Students' resistance because teacher is central and knowledge transmitter.	39 (58.2%)	25 (37.3%)	3 (4.5%)
Students' resistance because of the concept that learning should be serious, not playing games.	13 (19.4)	45 (67.2%)	9 (13.4%)
Using the prescribed textbooks in teaching.	12 (18.2%)	16 (24.2%)	38 (58.0%)
Using English language to teach CLT curriculum.	30 (45.5%)	18 (27.3%)	18 (27.3%)
Emphasizing the process or the product.	9 (14.0%)	31 (48.0%)	25 (38.5%)
The conflict of doing grammar explanation and error correction.	12 (19.0%)	24 (37.5%)	28 (44.0%)
Focusing on rote memorization and repetition.	42 (67.6%)	16 (24.6%)	7 (11.0%)

Table 6 Inhibitive Factors

Inhibitive factor	Count	percentage
Teachers have little time for teaching materials for CLT classes	59	88.1%
Insufficient funding, school facilities (few language labs, technology equipment).	58	88.0%
Students' low English proficiency	56	83.6%
Teachers' lack of training in CLT	54	80.6%
Teachers have few opportunities for in-service training in CLT	52	79.0%
Large classes	51	76.1%
Lack of support from colleagues and administrator.	44	66.7%
Focusing on rote memorization and repetition	42	64.6%
Students' resistance because teacher is central and knowledge transmitter.	39	58.2%
Students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence	36	53.7%
Students' resistance to class participation	34	50.7%

5. Data Discussion

5.1 Research Question One

Research question one asked the participants about the way they practiced the new curriculum. How has the CLT curriculum been practiced in classrooms? To answer this research question and to identify the way the curriculum was implemented; two sets of data were used. The researchers used two sets of questions in the questionnaire: one was whether the participants practiced CLT in their classrooms, and the other question was about their rating of the five principles of CLT. The emphasis of these principles is on the way language is used by speakers in various communicative contexts. CLT principles aim at building up the communicative competence to enable learners to use the language effectively and appropriately in real communicative contexts.

In this approach, the focus shifted away from grammar and structure towards the social aspects of language. The emphasis is on the way language is used by speakers in various communicative contexts. Thus, in communication-based curricula and instruction, the purpose of language learning and the goal of language teaching are communication. Since "one of the characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 1)

The quantitative data showed that not all the participants practiced CLT in their classrooms. Fifty-six out of 67 respondents indicated that they have practiced CLT. Eleven of the participants reported that they never practiced CLT, although the curriculum they used was based on CLT principles. Table 8 presents participants' responses regarding CLT practice in their classrooms. The quantitative data showed that not all the participants practiced CLT in their classrooms.

Table 7 Have You Tried CLT?

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Have you tried CLT?	yes, and I am still using it now.	12	29	41
	yes, but I am not using it now.	4	11	15
	no, never.	6	5	11
Total		22	45	67

Then, participants were asked to rate their practice of each principle of the CLT curriculum. Five principles were used in this question (Table 9). However, due to the incomplete answers in this part of the questionnaire, the number of responses in Table 9 is different from the one in Table 7. Participants were asked to rate their responses to each principle on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is rarely practiced and 5 is fully practiced. On the 5-point scale, each principle receiving a 3 or higher on the scale was considered practiced.

As the table shows, 54 of the participants claimed to have practiced CLT principles. However, differences between the degrees of practice among these principles are noticeable. The percentage of CLT principles practice was 75.4%, with an average mean score of 3.77. The results also showed that developing communicative competence and creating communicative roles for learners were perceived positively as these two principles received higher means, which indicated they were practiced in classrooms.

Table 8 Practice of CLT Principles

Principles of CLT	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
The objective is to develop students' communicative competence.	54	4.09	1.15
The role of the student is a communicator.	54	3.46	1.20
Four skills "listening, speaking, reading, and writing" are integrated in the classroom practice.	54	4.02	1.05
Instructional materials may include thematic development materials, task-based materials, and authentic, real-life materials.	54	3.93	.86
Students are evaluated both on fluency and accuracy by being asked to perform a real communicative function (i.e., to assess students' writing skill, they are asked to write a letter to a friend).	54	3.37	.91
Valid N (listwise)	54		

The data drawn from items 9 and 10 in the survey and the first question of the interview showed that although teachers tried to implement the CLT principles and attempted to create interactive environments needed for CLT implementation, inhibiting factors were more prominent than facilitative ones. As presented in Table 9, communicative competence and developing the interactive roles of learners topped teachers' ratings of practicing CLT principles. These results were not different from other studies conducted in similar contexts where English is taught as a second language (Al-Darwish, 2006; Alharrasi, 2009; Cheung, 2011; Hung, 2009).

Therefore, it must be stressed that administrators and policy makers need to be aware of the contextual conditions and their suitability to the new change. It has frequently been reported that "innovation proposals must fit to available funds, specific student characteristics, the communities' language patterns, teachers' abilities, parents' expectations, cultural values and much more" (Thomas, 1994, p. 1853). These inhibiting factors have a negative influence on the implementation process of the CLT curriculum. Policy makers, curriculum specialists, administrators, and school principals need to recognize these factors and need to find solutions for these problems to help teachers improve their teaching and achieve successful implementation of CLT.

5.2 Research Question Two

What factors facilitate or inhibit the implementation of CLT? What effects do these factors have on CLT implementation as enacted? To answer this research question and to identify the obstacles that teachers encounter and how the inhibitive factors affect the implementation process, item 11 in the survey asked the participants to rate the items as a major problem, a potential problem, or not a problem.

Results showed a number of factors that were considered as major concerns by the participants. Eleven of

these factors were identified in the data, and they included the following: teachers' limited time for teaching CLT materials, insufficient funding, students' low English proficiency, teachers' lack of training in CLT, few opportunities for in-service training in CLT, large classes, lack of support from colleagues and administrators, a focus on rote memorization in teaching and learning, students' resistance to a learner-centered classroom, students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence, and students' resistance to class participation.

The results also indicated that the implementation process was negatively influenced by these factors, as they were rated as major or potential problems by the participants with high percentages. For example, the teachers' limited time for teaching CLT materials and funding came on the top of the ranked barriers in teaching the new curriculum as in Table 6.

6. Conclusion

The overall results showed that high percentages of the participants practiced the CLT principles. However, later in the study it was determined that the practice of CLT principles was hampered by several factors, as presented in the results from the second research question. Each principle that received 3 or higher on the scale was considered practiced.

The data showed that not all the participants practiced CLT in their classrooms. Fifty-six out of the 67 respondents indicated that they have practiced CLT. Eleven of the participants reported that they never practiced CLT, although the curriculum they used was based on CLT principles. However, differences between the degrees of practice among these principles were noticeable. The study also revealed some of the obstacles and difficulties that teachers encounter in implementing the new curriculum.

Results showed a number of factors that were considered major concerns by the participants. Eleven of these factors were identified in the data, including: teacher's limited time for teaching CLT materials, insufficient funding, students' low English proficiency, teachers' lack of training in CLT, teachers' lack of opportunities for in-service training in CLT, large classes, lack of support from colleagues and administrators, focusing on rote memorization in teaching and learning, students' resistance because teachers are considered the knowledge transmitter, students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence, and students' resistance to class participation.

Thus, policy makers need to recognize that funding and sustainable support for change programs is a must for successful implementation. People involved in the process of curriculum change should realize that there are realities and factors related to schools, teachers, and students that can impact the process of change negatively or positively, such as students' low proficiency, professional support, class size, and time. Principals and inspectors also should realize that overloading teachers with extra activities and demanding them to focus on the quantity of the curriculum will hinder the implementation process rather helping the teachers.

There was a consensus among the participants that miscommunication among the principals and teachers, the absence of collaborative work, and the overwhelming demands were hampering teachers from successful implementation of the curriculum. The data provided evidence about the imbalance between the time available for teachers and the content of curriculum to be taught affected the implementation process.

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