

Exploring the Gap between Libyan English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Beliefs and Teaching Practices in Primary Schools: A Case Study in Zliten, Libya

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الفجوة بين معتقدات معلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية وممارساتهم التدريسية في المدارس الابتدائية: دراسة في مدينة زليتن، ليبيا

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Abstract

This paper investigates the incompatibility between Libyan English as a Foreign Language teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practice in primary schools in Zliten. The study collected data by using a mixed-methods design combining both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with twenty-two English teachers. The triangulation tool raises the research validity and reliability. The findings of the study revealed a noticeable gap between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. The research recommends strengthening professional development programs for English language teachers. Such efforts are expected to enhance the quality of English language education and improve teachers' performance in primary schools. This paper is derived from the author's Master's thesis submitted to the University of Tripoli in 2022.

Keywords: Mixed-Methods Research, Primary Education, Teachers' Beliefs, Teaching Practices, Triangulation.

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث الى الكشف عن اوجه عدم التوافق بين معتقدات معلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا و ممارساتهم التدريسية الفعلية في المدارس الابتدائية في مدينة زليتن. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج المختلط الذي جمع بين الأسلوبين الكمي والنوعي، من خلال استخدام الاستبيانات و الملاحظات الصحفية والمقابلات الشخصية. شارك في هذه الدراسة اثنان وعشرون معلماً للغة الانجليزية خلال الفصل الدراسي الأول من عام 2021-2022. أظهرت النتائج وجود فجوة وضحت ما يؤمن به المعلمون من معتقدات تربوية وما يطبقون فعلياً في الصف الدراسي. كما بينت أن هذه الفجوة تتأثر بعدة عوامل

مثل الخلفية التعليمية. والخبرة التدريسية، والبيئة الاجتماعية. توصي الدراسة بضرورة تعزيز برامج التدريب المهني لمعظمي اللغة الانجليزية وربط الجانب النظري بالتطبيقي، بما يساهم في تحسين جودة التعليم وتطوير أداء المعلمين في المرحلة الابتدائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التثليث في البحث العلمي، المدارس الابتدائية، معتقدات المعلمين، معلمون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية، منهجية البحث المختلط.

1. Introduction

Having a successful language course can be achieved by ensuring the compatibility between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning the language and their actual teaching practice. To enhance the learning process and outcome, teachers should be aware of the importance of teaching language and the appropriate method to use. Teachers of English, in particular, should be aware of its importance nowadays. They should also be aware of the appropriate approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques that should be adopted for successful teaching and learning processes. Teachers' beliefs form teachers' comprehension about teaching and their practice in the classroom. Past learning experience can form teachers' beliefs, though teachers started forming teaching beliefs when they were learners from their teachers in their learning process. This study aims to investigate the teachers' beliefs towards teaching English as well as their actual teaching processes in the classroom to reveal the consistency between their beliefs and their practice. Making teachers aware of such incompatibility is believed to help them overcome such a deficiency.

Statement of the problem

The statement of the problem for this research is that there is a consensus belief among the Libyan EFL teachers at the primary school in Zliten that communicative language teaching should be provided more emphasis. When teaching, they place emphasis on the form of language rather than communication. Being aware of this problem, the researcher believes, the teachers should have consistency between their beliefs and practices.

Questions of the study

- 1- What are the beliefs of the Libyan EFL teachers at the primary schools in Zliten?
- 2-Are these beliefs consistent with the teachers' classroom practices?

Purpose of the study

The study aims to raise teachers' awareness of the discrepancy between their teaching beliefs and their practical teaching methods.

Significance of the study

The significance of the study is to support teachers in understanding the impact of their beliefs on classroom practices and encourage a critical examination of their knowledge, emphasizing the role of culture and society in forming beliefs.

Literature review

Hutner & Markman (2016) [1] (p. 1) believed that beliefs are related to other mental constructs as knowledge, dispositions, or attitudes. Teachers' beliefs are formed from teachers' ideas and knowledge of the learning and teaching process. However, Acikalin (2009) [2] (p. 4) believed that beliefs are influenced by personal experience and cultural sources. He believed that beliefs are used interchangeably with knowledge.

Teachers' beliefs are formed during teaching experience and influenced by the teacher's knowledge, which is formed by the teacher's educational behaviour (Robert et al, 2014) [3] (p. 14). In short, Brog (2001) [4] (p. 186) summarized the definition of beliefs as they can be conscious or unconscious. They can be accepted by an individual with emotive commitment. In addition, beliefs guide thoughts and behaviour.

Beliefs are difficult to change; however, beliefs that are newly acquired are the most vulnerable to change or delete. Pajares (1992) [5] (p.316-317) divided beliefs into core and peripheral. The core beliefs are forming the roots, and they are difficult to change, while peripheral beliefs are environmental.

On the other hand, Rokeach (1968) divided beliefs into five categories. The first beliefs that formed by the influence of oneself and society. These beliefs are hard to change and are related to inner-core beliefs. They are related to self-identity, and any effects on these beliefs can cause individual instability. Secondly, beliefs are impervious to external factors and cannot be affected by society's judgment. Thirdly, beliefs are formed during education. Family, society, or religion are other factors shaping these beliefs. Fourth, beliefs are formed through books or media. The last type of beliefs is personal as they relate to someone's favour or taste. (Discussed in Mansour, 2009) [6] (p. 27).

Beliefs could be formal as they were formed from education, school, or university. Or they could be informally derived from daily life and society. Abdullah (2019) [7] (p. 152) presented the link between teachers' beliefs, teachers' beliefs sources and the belief system. As illustrated in the following figure:

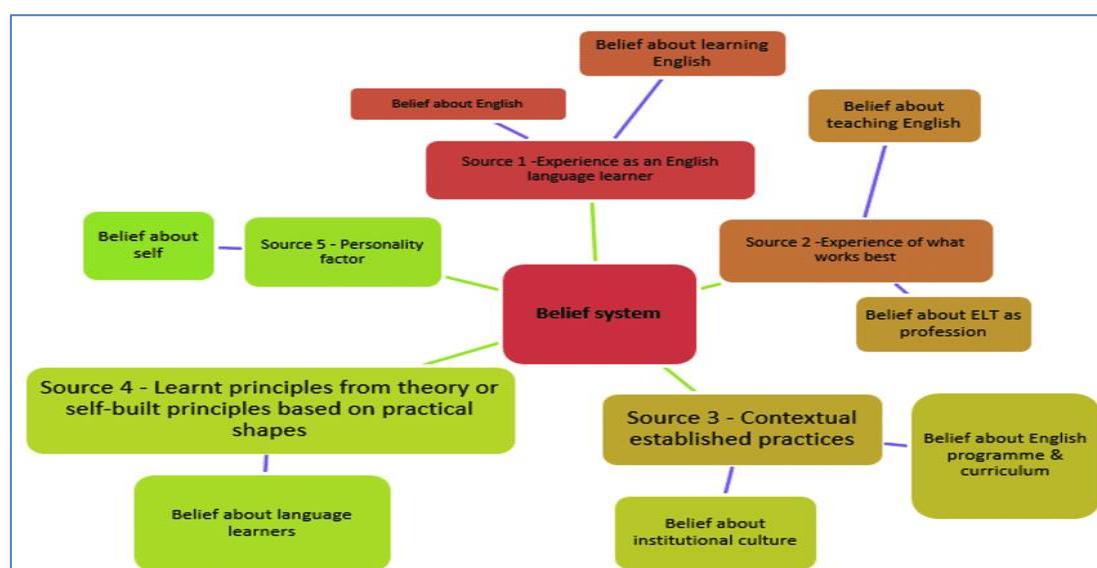


Figure 1: The link between teachers' beliefs, sources of teachers' beliefs, and belief system (Abdullah, 2019) [7] (p. 152).

As shown in the figure, the five categories of beliefs are divided into eight categories. Beliefs about English and learning are derived from the first source, which is learning beliefs. The second source, which is the experience of what works best, influences beliefs about teaching English and ELT (English Language Teaching) as a profession. Then, there is a third source: established practices in the context. They form teachers' beliefs about English programs and curriculum and institutional culture. Next, the fourth one presents beliefs that come from learning principles from theory or self-built principles based on practical shapes that inspire

beliefs about language learners. Finally, there is the self-belief, which is derived from the fifth source, the personality factor.

Changing in Teachers' Beliefs

Changes in beliefs can be at a cognitive and behavioral level. The behavioral level is connected to teachers' classroom practices, while the cognitive level is connected to teaching and learning beliefs. Cabaroglu (2000) [8] (p. 393) discussed the flexibility of teachers' beliefs change. She suggested some categories about the change of beliefs, which are: teachers' awareness of changing invalid beliefs. Teachers change the existing beliefs with the new information by renaming and relabeling them.

Further, teachers connect their existing beliefs to new knowledge inputs. Beliefs are reorganized depending on their importance. However, beliefs could be connected together. Richard & et al (2001) [9] (p.47) discussed Freeman's (1989) aspects of changing beliefs; changing beliefs can be changing in awareness, changing occurs over time, which cannot be immediate or complete. Changing may come to a closure, and others are open-ended.

Teachers' beliefs and teaching practice

Several studies investigated the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice in the classroom, as Mansnour (2009) [6] (p. 31) stated that "beliefs become personal pedagogies or theories to guide teachers' practices." Teachers' roles in the classroom are directed by their beliefs. He claimed that "as the teachers become more aware of their beliefs, they are more inclined to implement the practice in their classroom." On the other hand, Fives & Grill (2014) [10] (p.80) argued that there are "internal and external factors" behind "the potential relationship between beliefs and practice". They stated that the lack of self-awareness and self-reflection are factors that allow teachers to use teaching practices that do not align with their beliefs. They assumed the external factors could be pupils' attitudes or levels, classroom context, and curriculum standards.

According to Alabdulkareem (2016) [11] (p.233), teaching practices "are a translation of one's educational philosophy", including teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs play a big role in the teaching process, in how the pupils learn, and how the knowledge is presented. The teachers are the decision-makers in the class, which affects their teaching roles, the subject, and the teaching method. Caldhead (1996) [12] agreed and proposed that teaching is related to teachers' beliefs in transforming knowledge from teachers to pupils. The teaching process could be different for other teachers. It could be guiding the pupils' learning. Teaching depends on the teachers' experience. Some teachers' beliefs emphasize the importance of learner-centered methods, while others focus on class order and discipline. On the other hand, Mo (2020) [13] concluded at the back of the book that "the tension between beliefs and practices is created by the curricular dimension" as "language policies, insufficient equipment or materials, inadequate time, pupils' low proficiency, lack of teachers' training."

According to the previous studies, teaching experiences, learning experiences, society, and professional development affect the teachers' beliefs. Teachers have formed their beliefs during their lives from their learning process and how they learned the language. The previous studies presented research on EFL teachers' beliefs in many countries. However, there is a lack of recorded research about the Libyan teachers' beliefs in teaching English as a foreign language.

Methodology

The research Design

Mixed methods were used to explore teachers' beliefs about English as a foreign language. Observations, interviews, and the questionnaire were used to collect data descriptively and analytically. Using various data methods raises the reliability and validity of the research. A mixed-method approach adds a solid foundation to create an integrated approach for complex problems (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018) [14]. The mixed method approach was suitable for the research because of raising the credibility, giving a deep understanding of the problem, helping research development, initiating new questions and studies, and enabling future research (Hesse-Bibber, 2010) [15] (p. 3:6).

Describing the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice was by the descriptive approach, while the analytical approach was used to gain a better understanding of the compatibility between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice in the classrooms.

Participants

The sample was EFL teachers. They were chosen randomly from the three primary public schools in Zliten. The schools are Almarkazia Primary School, Ibn-Khaldon Primary School, and Albaza Primary School. The teachers' ages and experience were varied. They had their bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Education or the Faculty of Humanities, English Department. The research was conducted during the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year in Zliten.

Data collection

Triangulation was used to collect data. It is a multi-method research designed to enhance validity and to study the research problem deeply. Using the three methods (questionnaire, observations, and interviews).

A questionnaire (appendix 1) was used to assess the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices in the classroom. The questionnaire utilized questions for collecting quantitative data. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is collecting personal information about the teachers, their experience, and their education. The second part was adapted from the old measurement of DAP (Developmental Assessment Profile), and the teacher questionnaire (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, and Hernandez, 1991) cited in (Kim, 2005) [16] (P. 87). The questionnaire was made for this research, as English in Libya is considered to be a foreign language. The teachers rank their answers the most to least important. The third part is adapted from Liao (2007) [17]. The original questions were written in Chinese. Teachers in this part chose one point from a five-point Likert scale.

After the questionnaire, there will be observations and semi-structured interviews to collect more information and obtain further clarification on the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice in the classroom. The outcome of the questionnaire and other instruments was compared to measure the validity.

The second instrument was the observation. The observation was variable for different levels with various teachers. The observation aimed to examine the consistency and inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice. The observation was a structured observation as it focused on specific points. Teachers were not informed why they were observed to avoid changing the teachers' attitude and their teaching practice. Not knowing the criteria increased the validity. While reliability was measured by comparing the information from some observations. The COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching)

observation schema (appendix 2) was used in the observation. It was adapted from (Allen, Frohlich, and Spada, 1984).

Choosing classes randomly for the observation was to ensure validity. While to ensure reliability, another observation was made of the same classes with the same teachers. Subsequently, the results were compared.

Semi-structured interviews were the last research method. A sample of the interviews was chosen randomly from the three schools (Almarkazia Primary School, Ibn-khaldon Primary School, and Albaza Primary School). The interviews were face-to-face. The interview's questions (appendix 3) collected data about teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

Data analysis

This section presents Descriptive and analytical analyses and discusses the data gathered from the three research methods (questionnaire, observations, and semi-structured interview).

-Questionnaire (appendix 1): the EFL teachers of the three primary schools in Zliten were given questionnaires to identify the teaching and learning teachers' beliefs. The questionnaire took about 10 minutes. The following table presents the number of teachers in the three schools.

Table 1: The number of participant teachers

School	Number of teachers	Percentages
1-Albaza School	6	27.2%
2-Almarkazia School	10	45.4%
3-Ibn-Khaldon School	6	27.2%

As shown in Table 1, 10 teachers were from Almarkazia School with 45.4%, 6 teachers were from Albaza School (27.2%), and 6 teachers were from Ibn-Khaldon School (27.2%). Figure 2 illustrates that:

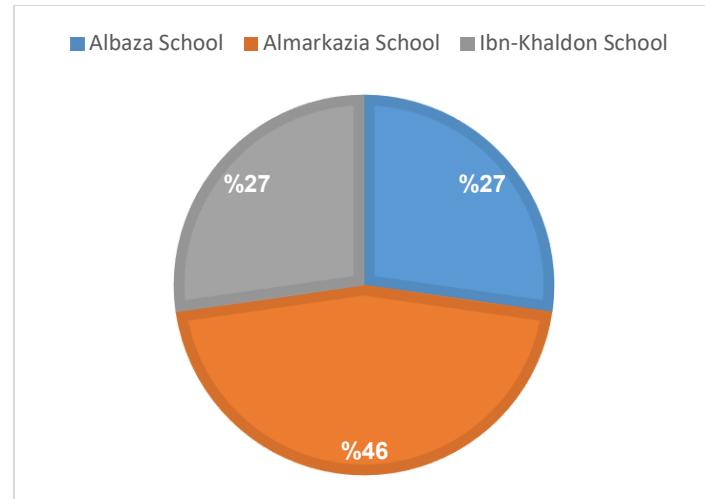


Figure 2: EFL teachers Percentage.

Part one of the questionnaire collected data about the teachers' education status, as shown in the following Table 2 and Figure 3

Table 2: the educational status of participant teachers.

Education level	Number	Percentage
High School Diploma	2	9%
Bachelor Degree	19	86%

Master Degree	1	4.5%
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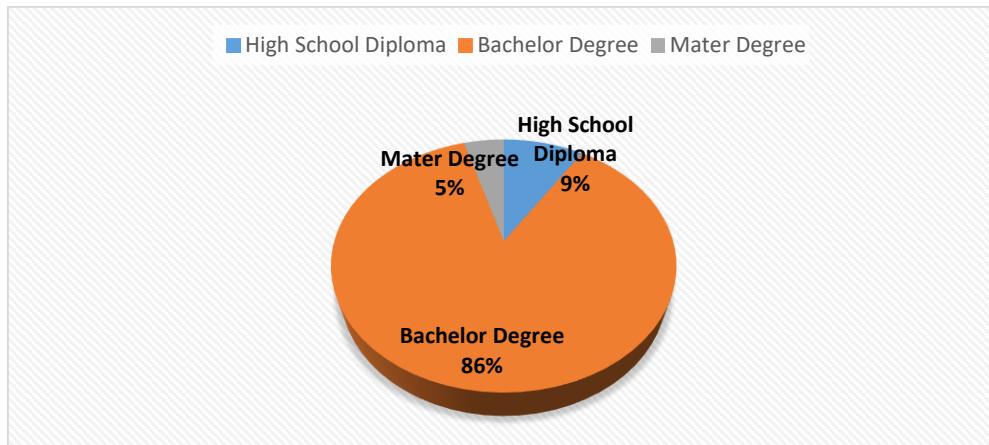


Figure 3: Teacher educational level.

86% of teachers have a bachelor's degree, 9% of teachers have a high school diploma, and only 4.5% with Master's Degree.

The following table presents the data on the EFL teachers' teaching experience at the three schools. The majority of teachers have experience of fewer than ten years. Table 3

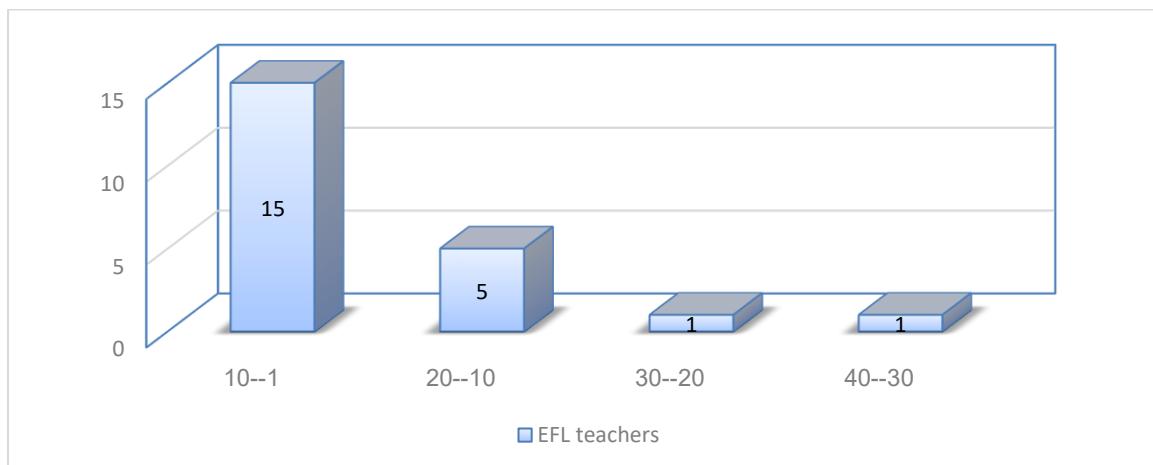


Figure 4: Teaching Experience of EFL teachers in the three schools

The questionnaire items were divided into two themes to be analysed. The first ten items in the questionnaire are about teachers' beliefs about teaching English and classroom management. The other 20 items are about teachers' beliefs about learning English.

The teachers' response to the items about teaching English and classroom management was different, as it is illustrated in the following table.

Table 3: data analysis of the questionnaire, part 2

Item	scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Evaluating pupils' progress and achievement tests are:	Frequency	8	10	4	0	0
	percentage	36.3%	45.4%	18%	0%	0%
	Frequency	3	5	14	0	0

2. It is ____ for activities to be responsive to individual pupil's interests.	percentage	13.6%	22.7%	63.6%	0%	0%
3. It is ____ that each curriculum area be taught as separate subjects at separate times	Frequency	3	1	11	6	1
	percentage	13.6%	4.5%	50%	27.2%	4.5%
4. It is ____ for pupils to work individually at desks or tables most of the time.	Frequency	4	1	6	8	3
	percentage	18%	4.5%	27.2%	36.3%	13.6%
5. Workbooks are ____ in my classroom.	Frequency	4	5	13	0	1
	percentage	18%	22.7%	59%	0%	4.5%
6. It is ____ for the teacher to talk to the whole group.	Frequency	9	6	6	0	1
	percentage	40.9%	27.2%	27.2%	0%	4.5%
7. It is ____ for the teacher to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions, asking questions, and facilitating pupils' involvement with materials, activities, and peers.	Frequency	16	4	2	0	0
	percentage	72.2%	18%	9%	0%	0%
8. It is ____ for teachers to use treats, stickers, and/or stars to get pupils to do activities that they don't really want to do	Frequency	2	15	5	0	0
	percentage	9%	68%	22.7%	0%	0%
9. It is ____ for teachers to do not use punishments and/or reprimands when pupils aren't participating.	Frequency	2	2	6	6	6
	percentage	9%	9%	27.2%	27.2%	27.2%
10. It is ____ to plan activities that are not primarily just for fun without connection to program goals.	Frequency	2	3	11	3	3
	percentage	9%	13.6%	50%	13.6%	13.6%

Learning English beliefs: The following table presents the collected data from the questionnaire part three, which were about learners' beliefs and learning beliefs. The questionnaire was given to the same teachers after a month to test reliability.

Table 4: Data analyses of the questionnaire, part 3

Item	scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Pupils should be given opportunities to move around in the English classroom.	Frequency	0	14	3	5	0
	percentage	0%	63.6%	13.6%	22.7%	0%
2. Pupils are willing to build up a close relationship with their English teacher.	Frequency	1	10	9	1	1
	percentage	4.5%	45.4%	40.9%	4.5%	4.5%
3. If parents care about their pupils' English performance,	Frequency	11	9	2	0	0
	percentage	50%	40.9%	9%	0%	0%

these pupils will perform better.						
4. It is important for primary school pupils to learn English listening and speaking skills	Frequency	14	6	1	1	0
	percentage	63.6%	27.2%	4.5%	4.5%	0%
5. Paper-and-pencil tests should still be widely used in the English classroom.	Frequency	6	12	3	1	0
	percentage	27.2%	54.5%	13.6%	4.5%	0%
6. Every child learns English with different learning styles in the classroom.	Frequency	8	3	8	2	1
	percentage	36.3%	13.6%	36.3%	9%	4.5%
7. If beginning pupils are permitted to make errors in English pronunciation without the teacher's correction, it will be more difficult to correct them later on.	Frequency	11	8	2	1	0
	percentage	50%	36.3%	9%	4.5%	0%
8. Pupils do not need to memorize what they learn in English class.	Frequency	6	1	1	10	4
	percentage	27.2%	4.5%	4.5%	45.4%	18%
9. Pupils can learn English faster than adults do.	Frequency	15	1	4	1	1
	percentage	68%	4.5%	18%	4.5%	4.5%
10. The most important element in English is vocabulary.	Frequency	9	5	8	0	0
	percentage	40.9%	22.7%	36.3%	0%	0%
11. Interesting classes can speed up pupils' English learning process.	Frequency	11	9	1	1	0
	percentage	50%	40.9%	4.5%	4.5%	0%
12. Pupils can learn English better if they fully understand the content of the lesson.	Frequency	15	4	2	0	0
	percentage	68%	18%	9%	0%	0%
13. Singing and role-playing are appropriate English learning activities.	Frequency	8	8	4	1	1
	percentage	36.3%	36.3%	18%	4.5%	4.5%
14. Pupils learn English through interactions with other people.	Frequency	10	9	3	0	0
	percentage	45.4%	40.9%	13.6%	0%	0%
15. Pupils learn English better when they are using English to do activities.	Frequency	12	3	6	1	0
	percentage	54.5%	13.6%	27.2%	4.5%	0%
16. The most important element in English is pronunciation.	Frequency	1	1	8	6	5
	percentage	4.5%	4.5%	36.3%	27.2%	22.7%
	Frequency	7	1	7	1	6

17. It is not necessary to learn English spelling and grammar in the early stage.	percentage	31.8%	4.5%	31.8%	4.5%	27.2%
18. The most important element in learning English is oral conversation.	Frequency	4	13	3	2	0
	percentage	18%	59%	13.6%	9%	0%
19. Teachers use games into English instruction can facilitate learning.	Frequency	1	9	9	2	1
	percentage	4.5%	40.9%	40.9%	9%	4.5%
20. Teachers use multimedia equipment (e.g., audio and video tapes) in English classes.	Frequency	16	4	2	0	0
	percentage	72.7%	18%	9%	0%	0%

The items of the questionnaire were rearranged to avoid unreliable data by remembering their answers. Other researchers have checked the relation between the research topic and the questionnaire items by comparing the data from the questionnaire with the data collected from the observation and interviews. The procedure increased the validity of the research.

Observation

Half of the teachers in each school were observed and interviewed after the observations. The observations were in the teachers' classes with their students during the lessons for 45 minutes. The COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching). Observations were used to collect data during the observations. Observing the teachers' practices in the classroom was the main focus of the observation.

The observation's main purpose was to observe the teachers' practices in their classes then compare the data collected from the questionnaire. The observer was not involved in the classrooms. The observer only watched the lessons and took notes. The main focuses of the observations were the use of English, the use of the mother tongue language, and the interaction in the classrooms. As noticed from the observations, teachers used traditional methods. The teacher's talking time was high. Students were only receptive and passive. The following Table 5 presents the data collected from the observations.

Table 5: (observation analysis)

focus	Items	Number of teachers	Percentage
language	1 st language (Arabic)	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
	Target language TL	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
Interaction	T<>Ss	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
	Group	6 teachers out of 11.	54%
	Individual	7 teachers out of 11.	63.6%
Content control	Teacher/ Text	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
	Teacher/ Text/pupils	0 teachers out of 11.	0%
The amount of talking time	Teacher	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
	Pupils	0 teachers out of 11.	0%

Correction	Correct	11 teachers out of 11.	100%
	No correction	0 teachers out of 11.	0%

For testing the validity of the observation, teachers were not informed about the observation criteria. To test reliability, another observer observed some of the same classes. Then the data collected was compared.

Semi-structured interview

To gain a deeper understanding, interviews with the teachers were conducted after the observations. The interviews focused on the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices in their classes. According to the teachers' response to the questionnaire's items, teachers prefer teaching communicatively, varying interaction patterns, and increasing students' talking time. Teachers, as noticed from the interviews, were highly interested in teaching English by using communicative methods. Although the data collected from the observations showed a limited use of English in the classrooms.

Teaching English beliefs questions in the interviews were focused on four areas, which are teachers' roles, teaching methods, interaction patterns, and error correction.

1-Teaching method: Teachers claimed that the best method to teach English communicatively is by using the communicative approach and students' exposure to authentic materials as songs and videos.

2-Interaction patterns: From the analysis of the interviews with participants, teachers believed that the interaction patterns enhance the learning process. Some of the teachers preferred using group work to encourage shy students to participate. Other teachers preferred using pairing interaction to keep discipline.

3-Teachers roles: According to the interviews, teachers claimed that the teacher roles are changeable depending on the level of the students, the type of activity, and the stage of the lesson. Some of the teachers believed they were the source of the knowledge. Others believed their roles would be an encourager, helper, facilitator, friend, and even a parent, especially for primary students.

4-Error correction: Error correction is used in English classes as a part of learning. The types of error correction are direct correction, pair correction, and self-correction. Teachers believed that teachers should not correct students for all the mistakes. 3 teachers believed that teachers have to correct students immediately for a better learning outcome. The majority of teachers believed that raising students' self-confidence by not correcting the students' mistakes all the time.

Learning English beliefs in the interview were categorized into two categories which are learning environment beliefs and motivation beliefs.

1- Learning environment: Having fun and enjoyable classes can enhance learning, as the teachers stated in the interviews.

2- Motivation: Teachers believe that motivation raises the learning process as students are encouraged to learn new vocabulary and practice the language. Motivation enhances the process of learning.

Discussion

In this part, there is a discussion about the connection between the research questions and the data collected and analysed in the data analysis part. The first question is (what are the beliefs of Libyan EFL teachers at the primary schools in Zliten?), as it was stated before, beliefs are

shaped during the learning experience and teaching experience. Teachers' beliefs about English language teachers in Zliten were collected by using a questionnaire and interviews. Both methods were used to identify the beliefs about teaching English and the beliefs about learning English. Teaching English beliefs have several focuses as teaching effectively, teachers' roles, error correction, and interaction patterns.

The collected data stated that the teachers believe in using personalized and contextualized activities for effective learning with the language in the classroom. A similar result was collected from the interviews. Teachers believe a communicative approach is the appropriate teaching method in teaching English, as a communicative method focuses on fluency and how students use the language. However, some teachers believe that to learn the language, students need to learn vocabulary and focus on the form.

Teachers' beliefs about the roles of the teachers in the classroom should be varied between the source of the language, director, helper, and facilitator. Although, as noticed from the observations, teachers' roles were not varied, as they were mostly the source of knowledge. Further, teachers did not utilize different interaction patterns during lessons. The interaction was from teachers to students or from students to teachers. In contrast, the data collected from the interview stated that teachers believe using various interaction patterns increases the level of learning.

To sum up, teachers' learning beliefs are formed during their learning process. They formed these beliefs from their experience of the best way to learn English. Analysed data found that teachers stated they believe the useful method to learn English is by listening and speaking English. However, about half of the participants showed that memorizing rules is the most important procedure to learn English.

The second research question is (Are these beliefs consistent with the teachers' classroom practices?). The teachers' beliefs were collected from questionnaires and interviews, while data about the teachers' practice were collected from observations. Data collected from the three research methods showed that teachers' beliefs may not always be reflected in their teaching practices in the classroom.

As mentioned in the literature review part, teaching practices are affected by teachers' beliefs. The research found that there was an inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practice. Although teachers' beliefs showed high recommendation for using the communicative approach in English class, in the observation, the communicative approach was barely used. They used the PPP (Presentation Practice Production) or the GTM (Grammar Translation Method. The teacher's talking time was really high, while the students' talking time was limited. The interaction between teacher-students and students-teacher in classes was in Arabic (mother Language). Teachers mentioned they like to use various interaction patterns, especially pair work, in their classes; however, they asked students to work individually. In short, there was a clear gap between teachers' beliefs and their teaching methods.

Comparison between the study and previous studies

The findings of this study reveal a noticeable inconsistency between the participating EFL teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. This mismatch aligns with several previous studies, such as Kaymakamoglou (2017) [18], Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) [19], Rashidi and Moghadam (2015) [20], and Lan and Lam (2020) [21], which similarly reported that teachers often fail to translate their beliefs into effective instructional behavior. The present study, therefore, supports the argument that contextual, institutional, and pedagogical constraints may limit teachers' ability to implement their beliefs in practice.

However, the results also contrast with other research, including Cohen and Fass (2001) [22] and Gadeel (2016) [23], which found consistency between teachers' beliefs and their teaching methods and attitudes. This divergence suggests that the compatibility between beliefs and practice may be influenced by factors such as teachers' experience, training, classroom conditions, or sociocultural contexts. In the case of the Libyan primary school context examined in this study, the inconsistency might be linked to challenges specific to the educational environment, limited resources, or traditional teaching expectations that restrict teachers' autonomy.

The findings also contribute to methodological discussions in the literature. Previous studies have adopted varying approaches, ranging from single-method designs (e.g., Liao 2007[17]; Rashidi & Moghadam 2015[20]; Lan & Lam 2010[21]) to more comprehensive multi-method investigations (e.g., Phipps & Borg 2009[24]; Capan 2014[25]; Erkmen 2021[26]; Karim et al. 2020[27]). By employing a triangulated methodology—questionnaire, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews—the present study strengthens the reliability of the results. This methodological approach enabled the identification of the teachers' beliefs, the examination of their actual teaching practices, and the validation of findings through interview data.

Furthermore, this study addresses a significant gap in the literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous published research has examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices among EFL primary school teachers in Zliten, Libya. Overall, the study's results emphasize the importance of supporting teachers through training, reflective practice, and improved classroom conditions to help bridge the gap between what teachers believe and what they are able to implement in practice.

Conclusion

This study examined the beliefs of EFL teachers in three primary schools in Zliten and investigated how these beliefs influenced their English teaching practices. The findings revealed a significant mismatch between what teachers believed about effective English teaching and what they actually implemented in their classrooms. Although many teachers expressed support for communicative approaches, classroom observations showed that they relied on traditional methods such as Presentation Practice Production method and the Grammar Translation Method. Teachers dominated classroom talk, limited students' opportunities to use English, and the use of Arabic during activities is allowed.

The study also highlighted that teachers' beliefs are shaped by multiple factors, including family, society, and their own educational and teaching experiences. These beliefs strongly influenced their teaching decisions, sometimes in ways that hindered communicative and student-centered learning. The findings emphasize the need for teachers to become more aware of their beliefs and how these beliefs affect their instructional choices.

Overall, the study concludes that improving English language teaching in Libyan primary schools requires helping teachers reflect on, update, and align their beliefs with modern teaching approaches. Further research is needed to explore teachers' beliefs across different contexts in order to support more effective, communicative, and learner-centered English instruction.

Compliance with Ethical Standards and Conflict of Interest Statement

This study complies with all ethical standards for research involving human participants. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Their responses were treated with full confidentiality and used solely for academic

purposes. The researcher declares that there is no conflict of interest. The researcher also states that no funding was received for conducting this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire aims to identify your beliefs and practices in English Language teaching. Please feel free to respond to the questions. Any help you provide will be highly appreciated. Please, put (tick next to the selected choice. This questionnaire will be used only for the purpose of my MA. Study

Thank you

The researcher

School name:.....

Part 1

- Please put a tick (✓) next to the right choice or write a number in the space

1. Educational status

- High School Diploma
- Bachelor Degree
- Master Degree

2. Years of teaching_____

3. Which grades have you taught?

- Grade _____ Years _____
- Grades _____ Years _____
- Grades _____ Years _____
- Grades _____ Years _____

Part 2- Rank the following beliefs according to their importance.

Put: 1 as the most important; 2 very important; 3 important 4 not that important 5 not important.

1. Evaluating pupil's progress and achievement tests are: _____	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is _____ for activities to be responsive to individual pupil's interests.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It is _____ that each curriculum area be taught as separate subjects at separate times.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is _____ for pupils to work individually at desks or tables most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Workbooks are _____ in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is _____ for the teacher to talk to the whole group.	1	2	3	4	5

7. It is _____ for the teacher to move among groups and individuals, offering suggestions, asking questions, and facilitating pupils' involvement with materials, activities, and peers.	1	2	3	4	5
8. It is _____ for teachers to use treats, stickers, and/or stars to get pupils to do activities that they don't really want to do.	1	2	3	4	5
9. It is _____ for teachers to do not punishments and/or reprimands when pupils aren't participating.	1	2	3	4	5
10. It is _____ to plan activities that are not primarily just for fun without connection to program goals.	1	2	3	4	5

Part 3

- Circle the number that most nearly represents YOUR BELIEFS about each item's importance. (1 = strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=disagree; 5 = strongly disagree)

1. Pupils should be given opportunities to move around in the English classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Pupils are willing to build up a close relationship with their English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If parents care about their pupils' English performance, these pupils will perform better.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is important to learn pupils English listening and speaking skills.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Paper-and-pencil tests should still be widely used in the English classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Every child learns English with different learning styles in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7. If beginning pupils are permitted to make errors in English pronunciation without the teacher's correction, it will be more difficult to correct them later on.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Pupils do not need to memorize what they learn in English class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Pupils can learn English faster than adults do.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The most important element in learning English is vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Interesting classes can speed up pupils' English learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Pupils can learn English better if they fully understand the content of the lesson.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Singing and role-playing are appropriate English activities.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Pupils learn English through interactions with other people.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Pupils learn English better when they are using English to do activities.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The most important element in learning English is pronunciation.	1	2	3	4	5
17. It is not necessary to learn English spelling and grammar in the early stage.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The most important element in learning English is oral conversation.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Teachers use games into English instruction can facilitate learning.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Teachers use multimedia equipment (e.g., audio and video tapes) in English classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you
The researcher

Appendix 2: The Observation Sheet /COLT- Communicative Orientation for Language Teaching Observation Scheme

Appendix 3: Interview Questions:

1. What is the best way to learn English?
2. What helps pupils to become successful in the English language?
3. Can pupils move in your class, participate as a group? Why?
4. What are your roles as a teacher in the classroom?
5. What is the best method to teach English?
6. Who should talk less in the class, the teacher or the learners?
7. Can you tell me about a lesson where you think you had a nice learning environment?
8. Do you correct your pupils all the time? What kind of correction do you use?
9. What do you think about group and pair work? Which one do you prefer? Why?
10. Should teachers focus on forms so that pupils can speak English fluently?

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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