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Challenges Encountered by EFL Libyan Third-Year Preparatory Students from 2022 to 2024

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التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب السنة الثالثة الإعدادية الليبيين الدارسون لغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من عام 2022 إلى عام 2024

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Abstract

The ninth grade is a critical and sensitive period for students in Libya, marking the transition from middle school to secondary school. This stage significantly impacts students, necessitating their ability to confront challenges to ensure a smooth and successful entry into secondary education. However, the educational standards in Libya are generally considered subpar, requiring urgent intervention and solutions. Students face numerous issues during the ninth-grade exams, including teaching methods that do not align with their abilities, insufficient preparation time, an unsuitable curriculum, and unqualified teachers. These factors contribute to a high failure rate. The research focuses on identifying and addressing these challenges to reduce the failure rate and enhance educational outcomes. Surveys conducted among students and teachers from both private and public schools reveal the extent of these problems and their impact on the education system, particularly concerning the middle school certificate. Data collected from English language teachers and students were analyzed, leading to recommendations for improving the teaching process. The research successfully identified the challenges affecting ninth-grade students and proposed solutions to mitigate these issues, aiming to improve the overall education quality in Libya.

Keywords: EFL, Libyan, Third-year preparatory, Students.

المخلص

يعد الصف التاسع فترة حرجة وحساسة بالنسبة للطلاب في ليبيا، حيث يمثل الانتقال من المدرسة المتوسطة إلى المدرسة الثانوية. وتؤثر هذه المرحلة بشكل كبير على الطلاب، حيث تستلزم قدرتهم على مواجهة التحديات لضمان دخول سلس وناجح إلى التعليم الثانوي. إلا أن المستويات التعليمية في ليبيا تعتبر بشكل عام دون المستوى، مما يتطلب التدخل والحلول العاجلة. يواجه الطلاب العديد من المشكلات أثناء امتحانات الصف التاسع، بما في ذلك طرق التدريس التي لا تتناسب مع قدراتهم، وعدم كفاية وقت الإعداد، والمناهج الدراسية غير المناسبة، والمعلمين غير المؤهلين. هذه العوامل تساهم في ارتفاع معدل الفشل. ويركز البحث على تحديد هذه التحديات ومعالجتها لتقليل معدل الرسوب وتعزيز النتائج التعليمية. وتكشف المسوحات التي أجريت بين الطلاب والمعلمين من المدارس الخاصة والعامة عن حجم هذه المشكلات وتأثيرها على نظام التعليم، وخاصة فيما يتعلق بالشهادة المتوسطة. وقد تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها من معلمي وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، مما أدى إلى توصيات لتحسين عملية التدريس. نجح البحث في تحديد التحديات التي تؤثر على طلاب الصف التاسع والحلول المقترحة للتخفيف من هذه المشكلات، بهدف تحسين جودة التعليم بشكل عام في ليبيا.

الكلمات الدالة: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الليبية، السنة الثالثة إعدادي، الطلاب.

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, speaking multiple languages is increasingly crucial for making genuine connections with people and understanding diverse cultures, places, and lifestyles. English, in particular, serves as the language of international communication, spoken and taught in over 118 countries. David Crystal highlights its importance, suggesting that everyone might eventually need to master two forms of English: one for national and local identity, and another for global communication. In Libya, educational institutions recognize this importance and have emphasized English language teaching (TEL) since the 1940s. Despite efforts to modernize the curriculum based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles since 2000, Libyan English teachers face significant challenges in meeting these objectives due to a lack of training, coordination, infrastructure, and student motivation (Crystal, 2003; Mustafa & Zamzam, 2019).

Research on English language teaching (ELT) in Libyan schools highlights several key challenges. Outdated curricula and teaching materials often fail to meet students' needs, while many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Libya lack adequate training, proficiency, and access to professional development. This inadequacy hinders their ability to provide effective instruction. Additionally, issues such as overcrowded classrooms, limited technological resources, and a lack of intrinsic motivation among students due to sociocultural factors and perceived irrelevance of English contribute to the overall inefficacy of the education system. Efforts to improve the situation through teacher training and curriculum reforms are ongoing but face significant systemic challenges (Mustafa & Zamzam, 2019).



Moreover, research on second language (L2) instruction for preparatory school students emphasizes the need for age-appropriate teaching methodologies. Studies suggest that interactive and engaging approaches that cater to the cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional characteristics of this age group are essential. The literature underscores the critical role of well-trained teachers whose L2 proficiency and classroom management skills significantly impact student learning outcomes. Moreover, the learning environment, including factors such as class size and access to technology, is crucial for effective L2 acquisition. Overall, research indicates that a comprehensive and tailored approach to L2 instruction is necessary to address the specific needs of preparatory school students (Crystal, 2003; Khan, 2011).

Furthermore, teaching big classrooms is a vital issue. Teachers encounter numerous challenges when teaching large classrooms, which can negatively impact their physical and mental well-being. This is sometimes due to a lack of technical skills. Despite these difficulties, it is also noted that there are benefits that enhance the teaching experience in large classes. The findings reveal that large class sizes have various effects on the teaching and learning process. A larger number of students increases academic and pedagogical challenges, leading to greater administrative and management responsibilities. Students often complain about limited opportunities to participate, while professor's express concerns about students' passive involvement. Some teachers, however, believe that having many students offers more opportunities for positive educational experiences, allowing for diverse perspectives on course topics. Additionally, a few students acknowledge that learning in large groups can be more engaging and challenging. Dealing with large groups requires coordination, administration, and training. Each teacher may develop the best strategy based on their teaching methods, the needs and abilities of the learners, and curriculum objectives. It is recommended to consider certain ideas that are beneficial for both teachers and students in large classes. In conclusion, considering the advantages of teaching large classes, it can be reasonably stated that it is not always a burden. (Salem, 2023)

However, various problems encountered by both students and teachers in the educational setting have been identified. Students face academic challenges, such as difficulties with course content and poor study skills, as well as motivational issues, including lack of engagement and goal-setting difficulties. Socioemotional challenges like stress, anxiety, and social difficulties further hinder learning. Teachers struggle with classroom management, maintaining discipline, and addressing diverse learning needs, often leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction. The research suggests that student-centered approaches, integrating social-emotional learning strategies, and fostering collaborative learning environments can enhance both academic and social skills. Comprehensive teacher support, professional development

programs, and equitable allocation of resources are identified as potential solutions to create more supportive learning environments (Akbari, 2015; Muhammad et al., 2018; Wold, 2006).

1.1. Problem of the Study

The poor learning outcomes of ninth-grade students in English pose a significant problem for the Libyan education sector. Key factors contributing to this issue include inadequate resources and infrastructure in schools, a shortage of well-qualified English teachers, and insufficient opportunities for students to practice English in daily activities. Additionally, many students lack interest in learning English, failing to see its importance for their professional and academic futures. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of English education, necessitating urgent solutions to improve the teaching and learning environment.

1.2. Aims, Questions, and Importance of the Study

The study aims to increase the success rate in English by recommending curriculum changes that align with the Libyan educational environment and student needs. It also seeks to encourage teachers to adopt modern teaching methods, making information delivery more effective. Key research questions include whether attractive and ability-based curricula can improve student performance and reduce failure rates, and the teacher's role in the success of English education. The study underscores the importance of mastering English for ninth-grade students, as it opens doors to advanced educational and professional opportunities locally and internationally. Mastery of English also enhances students' self-confidence, social, and leadership skills, contributing positively to their educational and professional futures. The research aims to identify challenges and propose solutions to improve English education for preparatory students in Libya

2. Method

This study was conducted under the College of Humanities for Girls, English Department, focusing exclusively on government preparatory schools in Zliten, Libya. The research included a selection of schools such as Al-Khansa', Manarat Al-Izz, Al-Asmari, Uqba bin Nafi', Malik bin Anas, Qabas Al-Ulum, the Proficiency Center, Nazer, and Wadi Mostaqbal. It targeted ninth-grade students pursuing their preparatory certificates during the winter semesters of the academic years 2022-2024. The study aimed to identify and understand the specific challenges faced by students at this critical stage, recognizing its significance in the broader educational context.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized document analysis, observations, and surveys to gather both quantitative data and subjective experiences. The methodology included distributing structured questionnaires with 20 questions and 2 open-ended questions for students (Appendix 1); and 3 open-ended questions for teachers (Appendix 2) to a sample of 26 pupils and 9 teachers from the selected

schools. This comprehensive approach aimed to discuss the difficulties encountered by students and teachers in learning and teaching English. The researchers used a descriptive, analytical, and quantitative methodology, sourcing data from books, journals, and online resources. Primary and secondary data were collected to identify the challenges and propose strategies for improving English education, ultimately helping students achieve higher exam scores.

3. The Findings

3.1. Results of the Close- Ended Questions

3.1.1. Teaching methods used by teachers are not corresponded to students' mixed abilities.

According to Figure (1), it could be seen that half of the participants 50% strongly agreement, while 19% of them strongly disagreement. The 15 % were neutral. This means nearly has of students see that the teachers didn't use teaching methods that could help all students to get understand the different themes.

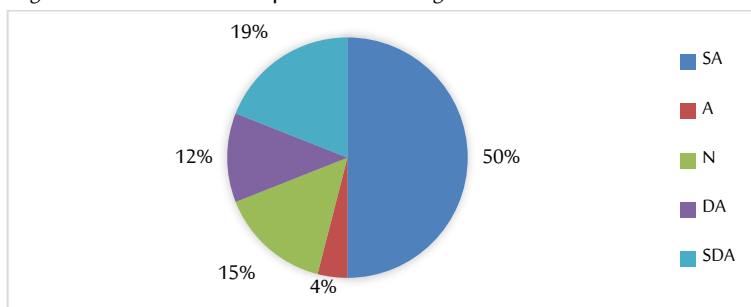


Figure 1. The percentage of item 1.

3.1.2. The allocated time was not long enough to answer the questions of the exam comfortably.

Figure (2) shows that 42% of students strongly agree with the idea that the time was not long enough to answer the exam, whereas 23 % of them disagreement with that. The 12% of participant were neutral.

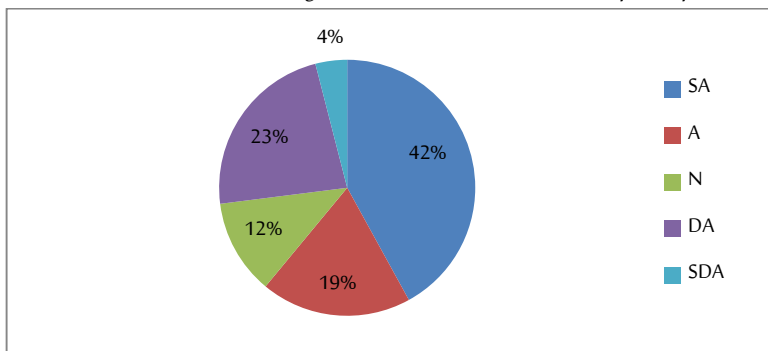


Figure 2. The percentage of item 2.

3.1.3. Taking private courses have a strong impact on the students' learning outcomes.

Figure (3) clarifies that 54% were strongly agreement, and another 39% agreement as well. However, 8% were neutral. This item of questionnaire shows that the unavailable teacher has a negative impact on the education process.

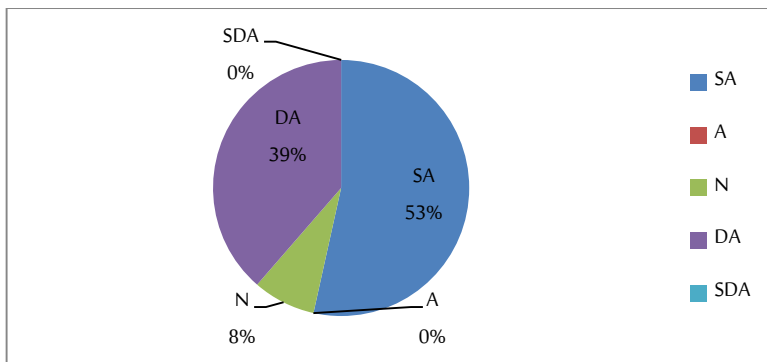


Figure 3. The percentage of item 3.

3.1.4. The unavailable teachers have a negative effect on the student's performance.

Figure (4) shows the percentages of answers are 58% strongly agree, 15% agree, 11% neutral, 4% disagree, and 23% strongly disagree.

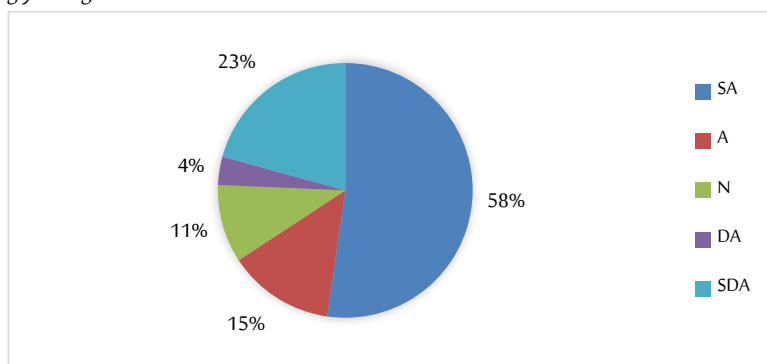


Figure 4. The percentage of item 4.

3.1.5. Education process still depend on traditional strategies.

The fifth item is "Education process still depend on traditional strategies." According to Figure (5) 54% agree with that, but 23% disagreement. Neutral students present 8% only.

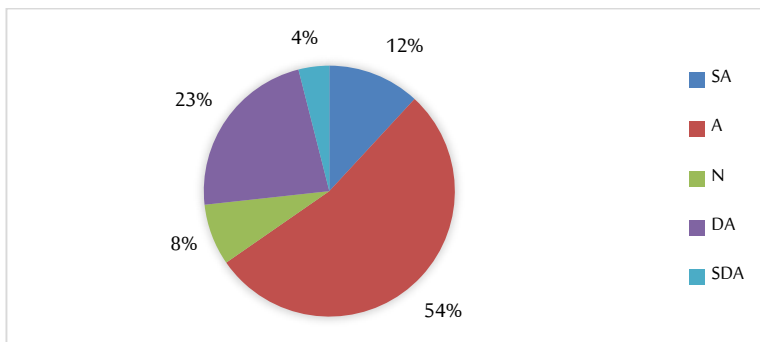


Figure 5. The percentage of item 5.

3.1.6. The curriculum syllabus was constructed in a such way that higher than students' abilities.

In this point nearly half of the participants 46% strongly agreement, on the other hand, 12% were strongly disagreement, while 42% were neutral as shown in Figure (6).

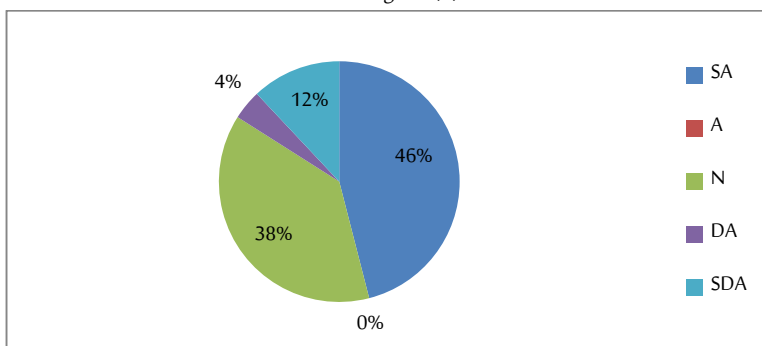


Figure 6. The percentage of item 6.

3.1.7. Lacking of teacher - training and development of profession skills are one of the significant challenges faced by teachers.

Figure (7) shows that 46% of students agree with the idea that the unwell qualified teachers is one of the problems faced by them, whereas 12% of them disagreement with that.

3.1.8. Students may have an anxiety of learning a new language which can end up with a weakness in this language.

In Figure (8) shows that 38% of students strongly agreement with this point, but 19.2% strongly disagreement and 28% were neutral.

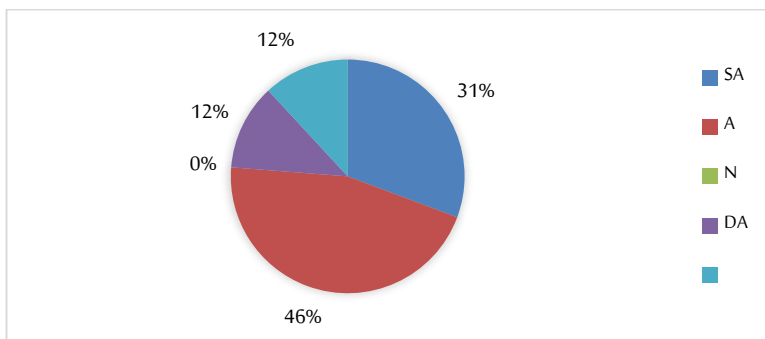


Figure 7. The percentage of item 7.

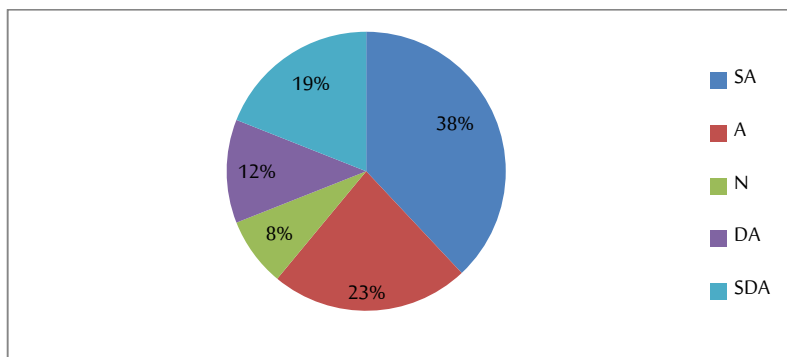


Figure 8. The percentage of item 8.

3.1.9. The course material was appropriate for the course time period.

This point represents and discusses the relationship between course material and the course time period. As shown in Figure (9) 42% of students strongly agrees with the fact that the course was appropriate with time allocated for it, but 23% were strongly disagreement and 23% were neutral.

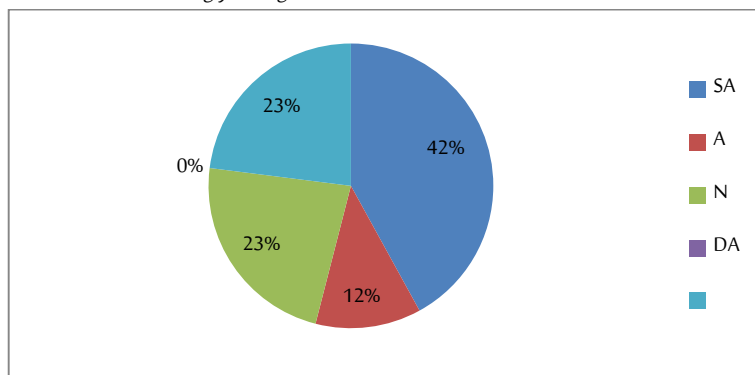


Figure 9. The percentage of item 9.

3.1.10. The course design is attractive and motivates me to read it.

The tenth item reveals on the importance of the attractive and motivated design of course material. As shown in Figure (10) 50 % of participants strongly see that the material was not attractive for them to read, while 19% of them found it attractive, the 8% were neutral.

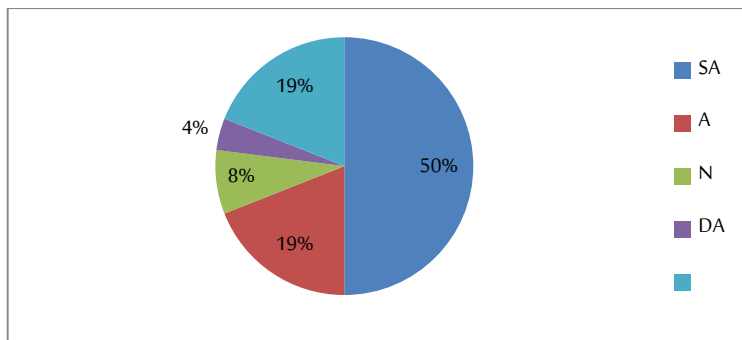


Figure 10. The percentage of item 10.

3.1.11. The teaching method encourages participation in the lesson.

This point asks if the teaching method were used by teachers encourages participation in the lesson or not, 27% of students are strongly agreement and 50% are strongly disagreement and 4% were neutral as shown in Figure (11).

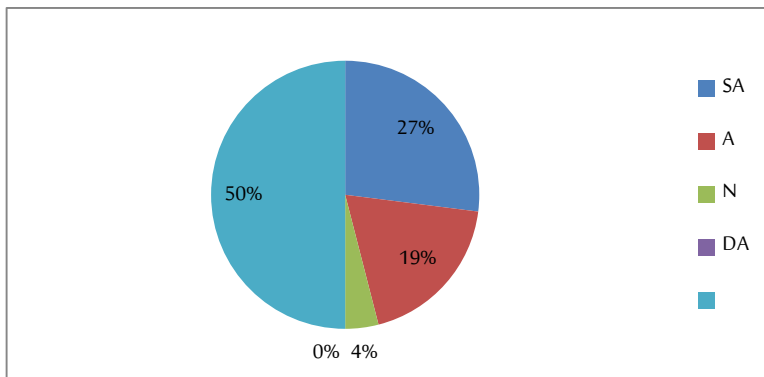


Figure 11. The percentage of item 11.

3.1.12. The method of dividing assessment scores was appropriate for the course objectives.

The twelfth point presents and discussed if the method of dividing assessment scores appropriate for the course objectives, 12% from students are strongly agreement and 23% are strongly disagreement and 15.4% were neutral (in Figure 12).

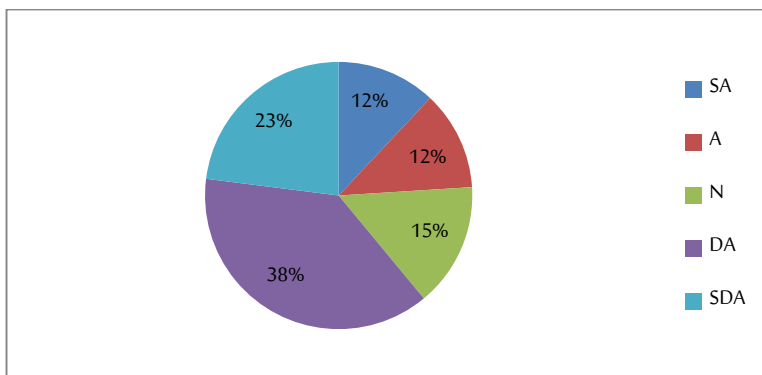


Figure 12. The percentage of item 12.

3.1.13. The teacher usually answers my questions with a comprehensive explanation that helps me to understand the content of my question.

The thirteenth item of closed ended questionnaire is "The teacher usually answers my questions with a comprehensive explanation that helps to understand the content of my question". According to Figure (13), 35% of students were strongly agreement and 27% were strongly disagreement and 31% were neutral.

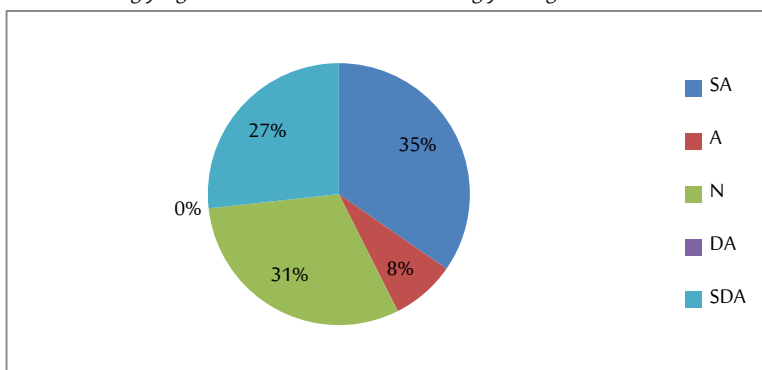


Figure 13. The percentage of item 13.

3.1.14. The teacher was proficient in the course material.

This point presents the teacher proficiency in the course material, from Figure (14) 8% from students were strongly agreement with that while 38% were strongly disagreement and 15% were neutral.

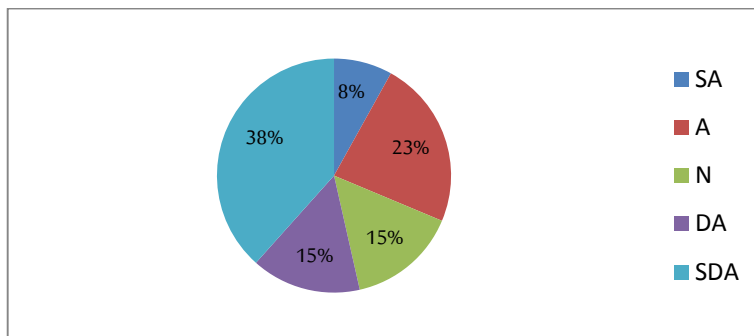


Figure 14. The percentage of item 14.

3.1.15. The characteristics of the Libyan English language curriculum comply with the environmental standards surrounding the students.

The Fifteenth point presents and discusses the characteristics of Libyan English language curriculum, if they comply with the environmental standards surrounding the students or not. 0% from students were strongly agreement whereas 50% were strongly disagreement and 15% were neutral (Figure 15).

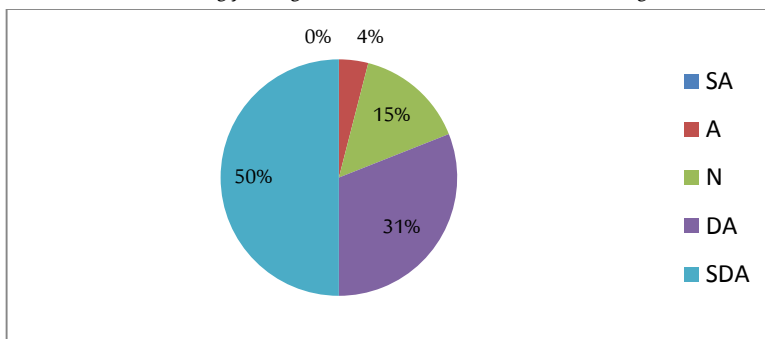


Figure 15. The percentage of item 15.

3.1.16. The teacher is the key to any educational change.

The sixteenth item of close - ended questionnaire is "The teacher is the key to any educational change". Figure (16) shows that 73% from students were strongly agreement and 0% were strongly disagreement and 15% were neutral.

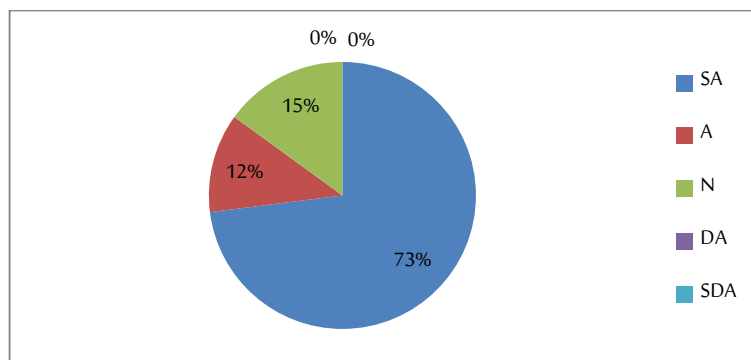


Figure 16. The percentage of item 16.

3.1.17. The school must identify the teaching and learning methods used by Libyan teachers and determine the way in which these methods are consistent with the goals and objectives of the English language curriculum.

This point presents the idea that the schools must identify the teaching and learning methods used by Libyan teachers and determine the way in which these methods are consistent with the goals and objectives of the English language curriculum. 73% from students were strongly agreement, 12% were strongly disagreement and 8% were neutral (in Figure 17).

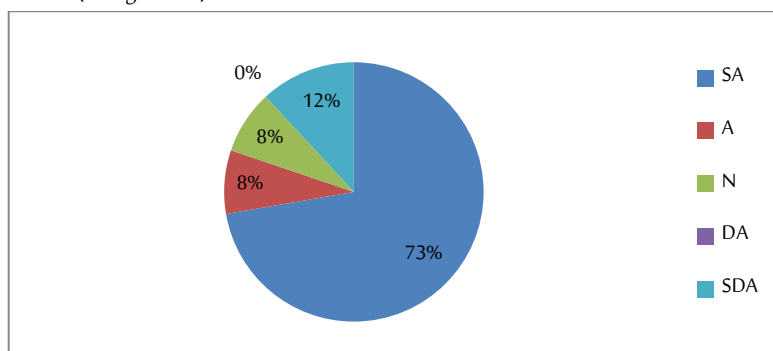


Figure 17. The percentage of item 17.

3.1.18. The state should provide clubs and practical training courses for Libyan teachers on teaching English as a second language in terms of teaching methodologies and professional competence.

This point presents and discusses the idea of "state should provide clubs and practical training courses for Libyan teachers on teaching English as a second language in terms of teaching methodologies and professional competence". As shown in Figure (18) 77% from students were strongly agreement and 4% from students were strongly disagreement and 19% were neutral.

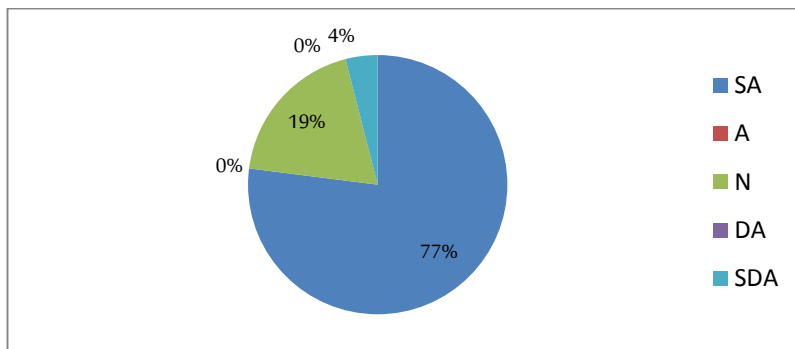


Figure 18. The percentage of item 18.

3.1.19. Choosing the right environment for studying helps the student focus and study with more precision and attention.

This item "choosing the right environment for studying helps the students focus and study with more precision and attention". Figure (19) presents, 50% from students were strongly agreement and 4% were strongly disagreement and 19.2% were neutral.

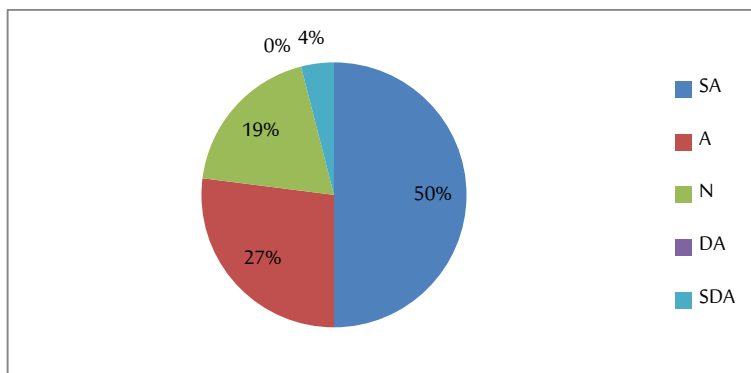


Figure 19. The percentage of item 19.

3.1.20. Eating some delicious or crunchy foods helps students reduce the level of stress and fear of a substance.

This point presents and discusses the idea that Eating some delicious or crunchy foods helps students reduce the level of stress and fear of substance. 42% of students were strongly agreement and 4% were strongly disagreement and 23% were neutral (in Figure 20).

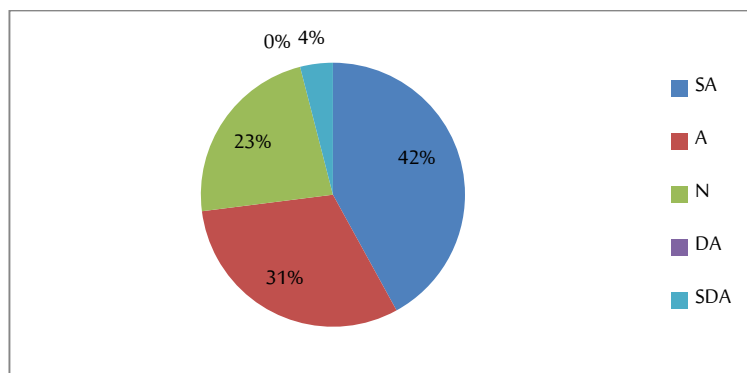


Figure 20. The percentage of item 20.

3.2. Results of Open-Ended Questions: Students' Answers

3.2.1. Challenges Faced While Studying English:

Many students reported facing significant challenges in learning English at school. Common issues included ineffective teaching methods, inadequate teacher qualifications, and insufficient classroom time. Multiple students mentioned experiencing stress, fear, and anxiety, which hindered their ability to learn. Others highlighted difficulties in understanding grammar and lessons, often resorting to rote memorization. Some students pointed out the inadequacy of traditional teaching methods and the lack of clear and detailed instruction. A few students did not face challenges, attributing their success to clear and comprehensive teaching.

3.2.2. Recommended Solutions to Overcome Challenges:

Students proposed various solutions to overcome the challenges they faced in learning English. Key recommendations included studying lessons regularly, adopting effective teaching strategies, and revising the curriculum to be more manageable and phased appropriately. Students also suggested improving teacher training to ensure that instructors are well-qualified and capable of delivering lessons effectively. Emphasizing the need for specialized English courses and providing continuous professional development for teachers were also common suggestions. Additionally, some students recommended simplifying the curriculum and ensuring teachers complete the syllabus for all educational stages.

3.3. Results of Open-Ended Questions: Teachers' Answers

3.3.1. Impact of Teaching Methods on Student Performance:

The teachers' responses to the question regarding the impact of teaching methods on student performance indicate a strong preference for modern methods over traditional ones. Teacher 1 noted that modern methods make English more interesting for students, particularly children. Teacher 2 highlighted the



effectiveness of tools like smart boards and the communicative approach in enhancing students' skills. Teacher 4 criticized the outdated traditional methods focused on memorization and suggested a shift towards understanding and application. Teacher 6 and Teacher 7 emphasized the importance of engaging and technology-based methods. Overall, the consensus among teachers is that modern teaching methods significantly improve student performance by making learning more enjoyable and interactive.

3.3.2. Causes of Student Failure in English Exams:

Teachers identified several reasons behind students' failure in English exams. Common causes include a lack of proper pronunciation and memorization skills (Teacher 1), insufficient curriculum and unqualified teachers (Teacher 2), and lack of practice and motivation (Teacher 3). Teacher 4 pointed out the insufficient time allocated for completing the curriculum and the absence of professional teachers. Teacher 6 and Teacher 7 mentioned ineffective revision strategies, poor time management, and inadequate foundational knowledge. Additionally, Teacher 8 highlighted the lack of proper listening skill development due to the absence of language labs. The responses suggest a multifaceted problem requiring systemic changes in teaching methods, curriculum, and resource allocation to improve student outcomes.

3.3.3. Suggestions for Improving Student Levels and the Educational Process

Teachers offered various suggestions to enhance the educational process and improve student performance. Teacher 1 recommended using strategies to enhance vocabulary and renew information. Teacher 2 and Teacher 7 suggested curriculum changes, more classroom time, and better teacher training. Teacher 4 advocated for integrating technology to create an engaging learning environment. Teacher 5 emphasized reinforcing foundational English skills, while Teacher 6 proposed linking new topics to existing knowledge and promoting distributed practice. Teacher 9 called for increased English instruction time and better teaching aids for early grades. Collectively, these suggestions emphasize the need for comprehensive reforms in curriculum, teaching strategies, and resource provision to foster a more effective and engaging learning environment.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion is that the teaching methods that teachers used do not suit the students' abilities, that most students did not have enough time and the curriculum was not suitable for them, that the lack of teacher availability has a negative impact on the learning process, that the education process still depends on traditional strategies, and that the lack of qualification of teachers is one of the problems that students face, and the design of the attractive and motivating curriculum and materials plays an important role. Therefore, the failure rate of students was high in the ninth grade, and the students did not find solutions to the

problems. The Libyan Ministry of Education must find solutions in developing new curricula that suit the students' abilities and provide solutions to the problems so that the failure rate decreases. In the preparatory certificate in the English language subject, teaching the English language in Libya becomes successful. Now the English language is considered the language of international communication, so the Ministry of Education must take the issue into consideration in all aspects. Now the language of English is a local language and the language of human communication. This is an important issue and solutions and commitment must be taken. With it, it reduces the failure rate and makes education in Libya successful.

5. Recommendation

This study recommends the followings:

- Governments and educational institutions must invest in providing schools with the necessary resources and equipment to teach English effectively.
- Providing ongoing training and development opportunities for English language teachers to enhance their skills and qualifications.
- Creating opportunities for students to practice using English in daily activities within the school, such as language clubs, debates, and project-based learning.
- Encouraging students to see the importance of English language proficiency for their future careers and academic pursuits through career counselling and mentorship programs.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Students



Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

Alasmarya Islamic University

Faculty of Human Science

Department of English Language

Challenges faced by third preparatory Libyan students (2022 - 2024)

This questionnaire is very important in the field of teaching English language, and it helps to know the drawbacks that faced by EFL third year preparatory students. Specially, it sought to identify these challenges and what are the possible solutions for them. Hence, these researchers hope, through the answers to the following questionnaire, to make the recommendation for teachers and students' communication in order to improve teaching in the future. So, would you be kind enough to answer this brief questionnaire? Your answers will play an important role in the success of this graduation project.

The researchers will appreciate your assistance and look forward to receiving your response.

Age: 14 15..... 16

Year: Third preparatory students *You are kindly requested to choose the most suitable answer by putting tick in front of the following answers.*

Items	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1. Teaching methods used by teachers are not corresponding to students' mixed abilities.					
2. The allocated time was not long enough to answer the questions of the exam comfortably.					
3. Taking private courses have a strong impact on the students' learning outcomes.					
4. The unavailable teachers have a negative effect on the student's performance.					
5. Education process still depends on traditional strategies.					

6. The curriculum syllabus were constructed in a such way that higher than students' abilities.

7. Lacking of teacher - training and development of profession skills is one of the significant challenges faced by teachers.

8. Students may have an anxiety of learning a new language which can end up with a weakness in this language.

9. The course material was appropriate for the course time period.

10. The course design is attractive and motivates me to read it.

11 .The teaching method encourages participation in the lesson.

12. The method of dividing assessment scores was appropriate for the course objectives.

13. The teacher usually answers my questions with a comprehensive explanation that helps me to understand the content of my question.

14. The teacher was proficient in the course material.

15. The characteristics of the Libyan English language curriculum comply with the environmental standards surrounding the students

16. The teacher is the key to any educational change

17. The school must identify the teaching and learning methods used by Libyan teachers and determine the way in which these methods are consistent with the goals and objectives of the English language curriculum.

18. The state should provide clubs and practical training courses for Libyan teachers on teaching English as a second language in terms of teaching methodologies and professional competence.

19. Choosing the right environment for studying helps the student focus and study



Challenges Encountered by EFL Libyan Third-Year Preparatory Students

with more precision and attention

20. Eating some delicious or crunchy foods

helps students reduce the level of stress and

fear of a substance

Open- ended Questions:

1. Did you face any challenges while teaching /studying English in schools? What were they?

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2. What solutions do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

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Thank you...



Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Teachers



Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

Alasmarya Islamic University

Faculty of Human Science

Department of English Language

Challenges faced by third preparatory Libyan students (2022 - 2024)

This questionnaire is very important in the field of teaching English language, and it helps to know the drawbacks that faced by EFL third year preparatory students. Specially, it sought to identify these challenges and what are the possible solutions for them. Hence, these researchers hope, through the answers to the following questionnaire, to make the recommendation for teachers and students' communication in order to improve teaching in the future. So, would you be kind enough to answer this brief questionnaire? Your answers will play an important role in the success of this graduation project.

The researchers will appreciate your assistance and look forward to receiving your response.

Age:

Years of experience:

1. According to your experience, how much the teaching method can improve or delay students' performance (traditional and modern method.)?



Challenges Encountered by EFL Libyan Third-Year Preparatory Students

2. What are the main causes beyond the failure of the students in passing the English exams?

3. Do you have any further suggestions or notes to add to improve the levels of students and benefit the educational teaching process? If so, what are they?

Thank You.....