

An Evaluation to the English for Libya ' Textbook Series at Libyan Primary Schools: An Evaluative Study

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Abstract:

This study mainly aims at evaluating ' English for Libya', English language-learning (ELL) textbook series currently taught at mainstream Libyan primary schools. This involves: (1) identifying— from senior and expert language teachers' perspectives— to what extent the textbook series (primary one to six) conform with the national ELL standards issued by MOE in 2003; (2) exploring the advantages and weaknesses of the series as well as the real problems encountered by primary teachers while teaching it; (3) providing some suggestions and guidelines that should help with improving textbooks delivery in the future. To reach these aims, this evaluative study employed: (a) a standards questionnaire administered – both face-to-face and online - to some expert English language teachers (n=55); (b) focus groups (both face-to-face and online) to enable both pre-service (n=50) and in-service (n=300) EFL primary teachers to discuss freely many issues related to the series (i.e. mainly about strengths and weaknesses) as well as the teaching/learning problems encountered in classrooms; and (c) a selective content analysis assisted by computer as a confirmatory procedure for triangulation purposes – to understand and cross-check participants' accounts based on reviewing all textbooks, and thus provide more accurate and comprehensive results. Findings indicate variability in the achievement of the proposed standards in reality, and present many strengths and weaknesses of textbooks as well as problems related to teaching the series. Finally, based on results, some guidelines for improvement (i.e. improvement framework) are proposed.

Keywords: English for Libya 'series, standard-based evaluation, evaluation research, English Language Learning (ELL), Libyan Primary Schools, Textbook Content Analysis, Course Evaluation.

دراسة منهجية لتقييم سلسلة كتب اللغة الانجليزية بالمرحلة الابتدائية

الليبية: دراسة تقويمية

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ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي إلى تقييم سلسلة الكتب المدرسية "الإنجليزية بليبيا"، التي يتم تدريسها حاليًا في المدارس الابتدائية الليبية السائدة. ويتضمن ذلك: (١) تحديد - من وجهة نظر معلمي اللغة الكبار والخبراء - إلى أي مدى تتوافق سلسلة الكتب المدرسية (من المرحلة الابتدائية إلى السادسة) مع معايير تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية الصادرة عن وزارة التربية والتعليم في عام ٢٠٠٣ ؛ (٢) التعرف على مزايا السلسلة ونقاط ضعفها والمشكلات الحقيقية التي يواجهها معلمي المرحلة الابتدائية أثناء تدريسها. (٣) تقديم بعض الاقتراحات والإرشادات التي من شأنها أن تساعد في تحسين تعليم الكتب المدرسية في المستقبل. للوصول إلى هذه الأهداف ، استخدمت هذه الدراسة التقييمية: استبيان المعايير الذي تم إجراؤه إلى بعض معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الخبراء (العدد = ٥٥) المجموعة الضابطة؛ والمجموعة التجريبية (عدد = ٥٠) من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المرحلة الابتدائية لمناقشة العديد من القضايا المتعلقة بالسلسلة حول نقاط القوة والضعف بالإضافة إلى مشاكل التدريس والتعلم التي نواجهها داخل الفصول الدراسية ؛ و تحليل محتوى انتقائي كإجراء تأكدي لفهم ومراجعة حسابات المشاركين بناءً على مراجعة جميع الكتب المدرسية ، وبالتالي تقديم نتائج أكثر دقة وشمولية. وتشير النتائج إلى تباين في تحقيق المعايير المقترحة في الواقع، وتعرض العديد من نقاط القوة والضعف في الكتب المدرسية بالإضافة إلى المشكلات المتعلقة بتدريس السلسلة. وأخيرًا، بناءً على النتائج، تم اقتراح بعض الإرشادات للتحسين.

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1.1 Introduction & Literature Review

For teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), it is drastically important to select the effective medium or means (e.g. materials, textbooks and teaching aids) through which adequate linguistic content can be conveyed to learners. Despite arguments against the use of textbooks alone because they do not admit the winds of change from research and classroom feedback (Sheldon, 1988), or because they encourage stereotyping and include inherent social, cultural, pedagogic and linguistic biases (Allwright, 1982; Carrell & Korwitz, 1994), Hutchinson and Torres (1994: p317) argue for textbooks as 'the most convenient means of providing the structure' required by the teaching-learning system, especially during periods of change. Further, Richards (2001) and Kirkgöz (2009) argue that language textbooks are so critical within English non-speaking communities, mainly because they provide standardised instruction, appropriate linguistic input and effective language models.

More specifically, textbooks are an essential component of a foreign language curriculum, especially in eastern and Arab cultures where they create a clear structure and a visible framework to follow (see also Ur, 1996; Khodabakhshi, 2014), and thus direct the whole teaching-learning process (e.g. by explaining the ELT methods/techniques to be used, and teachers' and learners' roles). In these contexts, they act as an embodiment of the aims and methods of the particular teaching/learning situation, and thus provide learners with a sense of security and independence. Subsequently, since no textbook is ever perfect, efforts are needed to continuously evaluate them in terms of validity, suitability, and novelty. Such an evaluation, especially by teachers, is always needed to meet both teachers' and learners' needs, and thus, maximise learning potentials, and teachers'

reflection and awareness of their teaching (Cunningsworth, 1984; Sheldon, 1988; Hutchinson & Torres, 199).

Due to vast social, cultural, technological, and ethnographic changes going on, the need to examine textbooks in the practical field (e.g. schools) has become very compulsory and pressing. It is required to identify, for example, particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use (Cunningsworth, 1995), and check if any revisions, amendments, and/or changes are needed to improve the situation. Hence, as Richards (2001) indicate, if textbooks used in a programme are judged to have shortcomings or negative consequences, remedial action should be taken (e.g. providing appropriate guidance and support for teachers in how to use them properly).

This practice is particularly vital as far as EFL learning is concerned (Sheldon, 1988). Wang (1998) conducted a study to evaluate an English textbook called, 'A New English Course' used by university English majors in China, using both micro and macro perspectives. The paper concludes that even though materials evaluation is a complex issue, it does help us to: (1) learn more about teaching and learning; (2) select good teaching materials; and (3) adapt the unsatisfactory ones.

According to Franke-Wikberg and Lundgren (1980, p148), the course evaluation process aims to: (1) describe what actually happens in that which seems to happen; (2) tell why precisely this happens; and (3) to state the possibilities for something else to happen. Moreover, it can take many forms, such as checklist, framework or evaluation sheet (Dougill, 1987; Wang, 1998), provided that the highest degree of objectivity is realized.

For course/syllabus evaluation purposes, some previous studies employed many methods, which included: (1) selective content analysis (e.g. Wang, 1994); electronic surveys (e.g. Moss & Hendry, 2002); (2) interviews (e.g. Edström, 2008); (3) an objective criteria-based computer-aided evaluation system (Wang, Yang & Wen, 2009); document analysis and classroom

observations (Huê, 2010); and evaluative checklists (e.g. Ma, 2003; Jahangard, 2007; Abdelwahab, 2013).

Moreover, *standards-based evaluation* has become a preferred practice in education that should be used when obtaining a comprehensive picture of teaching and learning is the target (Porter, et al., 2001). In particular, it is drastically important to provide policy makers with valid empirical evidence that is justified with some criteria (Milanowski, et al., 2004). In this regard, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) describe course evaluation as a standard-based matching process which should be done as much objectively as possible by starting with defining some criteria. When teachers design standards-based curriculum and assessment, language learning becomes intentional and more purposeful than in most other curricula (NSPP, 2003).

Moreover, aims and standards of the language-learning programme act as a criterion to be used for evaluating textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1995). In this regard, Wang, Yang and Wen (2009) conducted a study to obtain some objective criteria for English textbook evaluation through computer-aided corpus. By analysis of evaluation theory, and based on data from 3 rounds of survey using Delphi Method, they obtained 70 evaluation criteria set out of 127 checklist items.

To ease the textbook evaluation process and to cope with global orientation, there has been a noticeable tendency in Egypt - towards the beginning of the 21st century - to base course instruction on some already specified standards. This was clearly represented in the learning standards document issued in 2003, and which included ELL standards for all school grades and stages – from primary-one to secondary-three (NSPP, 2003). It is a handbook issued by Egyptian Ministry of Education (MOE) where ELL standards were grouped under four domains that reflected the overarching areas in which learners need to develop competence and proficiency in EFL (see Appendix 1). Each domain consists of standards, which state more specifically, what learners should know and be able to do as a result of instruction. Each standard is

composed of some clear indicators, which should identify exactly to what extent that particular standard has been realized. Thus, indicators work as narrow expectations of pupils' performance, and are a reflection of what learners should do in the classroom to show their progress towards meeting a particular standard (Appendix 1).

More recently, this has also become evident in the currently used English language teaching (ELT) methodology called 'Standards-Based Communicative Language Teaching' (see, for example, Bates-Treloar, 2013). This is useful, especially as far as course evaluation is concerned, mainly due to existence of some clear and tangible indicators that should lead to optimum teaching-learning performance. Besides, these standards would establish a common ground or a stable reference nationwide that teachers, learners, policy makers, course evaluators, community leaders and all stake holders can consult (Harris & Carr, 1996).

Standards are important and effective as a good language learning tool because they express clear expectations of what all students should know and be able to do. In this regard, Huê (2010) conducted a case study to evaluate an English textbook taught at a secondary school in Vietnam in terms of whether it complies with the objectives and standards prescribed by MOE, and to what extent it is suitable for students, teachers (especially in terms of methodology and content), and the target context. The study concludes with suggesting ways of improving the textbook.

The evaluation of EFL courses, especially at the primary stage, within English non-speaking communities was carried out by some studies (e.g. Ma, 2003; Allen, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2009; Khodabakhshi, 2014; Tsagari & Sifakis, 2014). In particular, Ma (2003) conducted an evaluation of the elementary English textbooks of the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum. She used the ACTFL checklist as well as the Association of Language Testers in Europe as the framework to generate a set of textbook selecting criteria. Findings indicated an unequal distribution of the five Cs-- Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and

Communities, and that the textbooks emphasized communication design.

Allen (2008) attempted to identify the ELT problems at primary schools in Tanzania by analysing the obstacles in the way of effective pupil-centred teaching and learning of English, and presented some recommendations. In the same vein, Kırkgöz (2009).

conducted an evaluative study to 3 English textbooks within the Turkish context, and offered some useful suggestions for future revision and design of textbooks for young learners of English. In the Iranian EFL context, Khodabakhshi (2014) examined the advantages and disadvantages of 'Skyline', an English textbook series, and concluded some recommendations for improving it. Similarly, Tsagari and Sifakis (2014) attempted to evaluate EFL course book materials by considering their structure and effectiveness through survey questionnaires administered to teachers working in Greek state primary schools (4th and 5th grades) and via in-depth interviews with the book authors. Findings indicate that materials production can be a predominantly top-down process, in which policy makers, materials authors and teachers can draw independent pathways to developing and implementing the final product, i.e. the course book.

Although previous studies highlighted the importance of course evaluation – especially within foreign language-learning contexts, none of them attempted to employ the national language learning standards issued by MOE as assessment criteria to inform an ongoing textbook assessment process. Besides, none of them employed online groups on social media, which involve thousands of language teachers, for data collection purposes (e.g. online interviews or focus groups) to obtain deep and detailed contextual accounts. Besides, no attempts so far have been made to evaluate or improve the Libyan series for English for Libya'.

The education system is the backbone of any country. Education is an endless process and it is the first step towards change and development. The strength of the educational system in any

country is based on the arrangements, which must be made to suit society's specific needs, and the labour market. As such, any government in the world tries their best to update the curriculum to the requirements of their own society and the worlds' standards. Undoubtedly, Libya, like any government in the world, also focused on improving its educational system. Historically speaking, the Libyan educational system has underwent a number of fundamental changes many times concerning the teaching curriculum at different levels of education in general, and English curriculum specifically (Elabbar, 2011). These processes of change, which was imposed by the Ministry of Education in Libya, was a reaction towards dealing with the problematic situations in teaching English because of the dissatisfaction with the old teaching methods and to enhance the quality of English Language teaching (Orafi, 2008). These changes were also required due to the increasing demand for competent English users in the Libyan educational community to master all the language skills.

The history of teaching English as a foreign language in the Libyan education system, and the language teaching practices including the methods adopted in the Libyan classroom are focused on to understand the role that CLT plays in the current Libyan context. Highlighting the potentials and problems that face students, teachers, administrators, etc. with the implementation of CLT in Libya can help overcome the difficulties they face and achieve the goals of this approach.

The previous Libyan education in Libya

After the Libyan independence in 1951 from Italy under UN Trusteeship, greater attention was given to education by the new government (the United Kingdom of Libya) under king Idris leadership. This is when schools began to be built in big towns and cities, Koranic schools reactivated, and education became more accessible for people seeking knowledge (Deeb & Deeb, 1982). Article 14 of the 1969 Libyan constitution declaration states "Education is a right and duty for all Libyans. It is compulsory until the end of preparatory schools or what is also called 'basic education.'" After this declaration, education was not only

accessible for essentially male students, as it was before the 1960's, but for both male and female students in Libya (Zarrouh et al., 2001), in which education in Libya is made free for everyone for all stages starting from primary school to university level (Krayem, 2013).

Due to this change, and despite the culture, religious beliefs, and poverty, there was an increase in the number of students joining schools over time. For example, the percentages for female students in basic education (primary and preparatory) jumped from 11% in the 1960's up to 48% in the 1990's. Recently, the numbers of both genders is almost equal not only in preparatory levels of education but also in higher levels of education (Otman & Karlberg, 2007, p. 127). For instance, the first university in Libya was established in Benghazi in 1955, where the number of enrolled students was about 13,418 for the academic year 1975/76. In 2004, the number rose to more than 200,000, and an extra 70,000 students were registered in the higher technical and vocational sector (Clark, 2004).

According to figures as of 2010 (CIA, 2013) education in Libya continues to be high, with 95.6% of males and 82.7% of females over the age of fifteen are literate and study in the Libyan schools.

Libya is considered a highly conservative Islamic society and this had an impact on education (Deeb & Deeb, 1982). For a very long time the role of the student and teacher have been influenced by culture. The teacher is the source of knowledge and the sole authority in the classroom and therefore, should be always respected and never be interrupted and questioned. Whereas, students are expected to sit quietly, understand and memorize the information given by the teacher (Orafi, 2008). According to Ben Hamid (2010), teaching in Libya has always been based on the traditional methods and in many schools, it is still the same.

Since 1969, when the former Libyan president, Moammar Gaddafi came to power, significant changes were evident in the Libyan education system, such as the significant increase of primary schools in the country and primary education became compulsory.

Then, in the 1970s, a new structure consisting of primary, preparatory, and vocational education was introduced (Orafi, 2008). However, the Gaddafi regime's policies and decisions as well as the education system were undertaken in an autocratic approach. Any decision or policy needed the president's approval and had to be according to his wishes or it would be changed (Elabbar, 2011). This resulted in an unstable education system in the country as it lacked the ability to produce graduates with the necessary life skills to meet the needs of the society. Most Libyan students were equipped with only knowledge with no practical training that were reflected in the long term. According to Gadour (2011), what the Libyan schools taught during this time was irrelevant to what students need in order to succeed in life, and this is why the Libyan education system was unable to produce graduates with necessary life skills, such as communicative skills and particularly foreign language skills.

The Gaddafi regime in Libya has affected the educational system in many ways especially in the way opposing political views and poor relationships between the country and the West have a great negative impact on the education process, particularly on the teaching and learning of the English language. As such, during Gaddafi's regime the English language has been taught on and off a number of times (Youssef & Bose, 2015). This is because any political issue or misunderstandings between Libya and Western countries would result in compulsive decisions without considering the outcomes. For example, in April of 1986, there was an air raid by the United States of America and the United Kingdom against Libya. Due to this attack, a decision was made by the Libyan Ministry of Education under Gaddafi's reign (i.e., No. 195/1986), in which Colonel Gaddafi demanded to cut all relations with other countries and the English language to be deleted from the curriculum (The development of education in the Great jamahiriya, 2001). This policy was ordered by the colonel as a reaction to the actions of the West that obliged to stop any form of teaching the English language or French.

Moreover, the decision forced to discontinue any form of interaction with the west, whether it was political, educational, or economical. As a consequence of deciding to stop both the English and French languages in 1986, there was a gap of seven years where no use of English was found inside or outside the classrooms, or anywhere else in Libya at that time. This 'isolation period' is in line with Gaddafi's plan to 'eliminate foreign influence' (Clark, 2013). Mohsen (2014) claimed that when language teaching was resumed again in the year 1993, many problems rose. He explained that some of these problems are low proficiency levels in English and limited personnel to interact and communicate with other organizations and governments whether privately or publically, and therefore, this lead to isolation from the rest of the world. Khalid (2017, p. 12) indicates that this decision was described as the most painful period in the history of the Libyan educational sector, as it affected the education system for many years.

After the Libyan Revolution, whereby the Gaddafi's regime was overthrown, the new government tried to improve the level education in Libya and the Libyan education system experienced change towards focusing on language learning and teaching and putting human resource development as a priority.

The Current Education System in Libya

The current educational system structure in Libya, includes four main stages. In the first stage, which is the Kindergarten stage, where parents can register their four or five year old children in pre-school for one or two years. Then, in the second stage, which is called 'Basic Education' stage, the students officially start primary school at the age of six years. There is another option given by the Libyan Ministry of Education where parents engage their children in learning at an earlier age by home schooling them at the age of five (Zarrouh, et al, 2001). The disadvantage of this option is that students must continue home schooling for at least three years before attending a public primary school. The basic education

system is for nine years and it is divided into two parts, (a) six years for primary level and (b) three years for preparatory level. According to the decision No. (95) of the Libyan education policy, since 1975, the basic education system stage was compulsory for all children until the age of 15, and they are not allowed to work before this age.

After that, in the third stage, which is called the Secondary level, students undergo secondary level education for three to four years depending on their major that they choose at secondary school. Secondary level is divided into two sections, which are the academic section and the vocational and technical (or specialized secondary education). The first section, which is the academic section, is divided into two parts, scientific and social sciences. The second type is the vocational and technical section, which was formed in the 1980's, called the "New Educational Structure," focused on technical subjects (Clark, 2004). This section consists of two units. The first unit is called the vocational unit, which consists of seven fields: a) electrical, b) mechanical, c) carpentry, d) architectural, e) weaving, f) service, and g) productive vocation. Whereas, the second unit is the technical or specialized unit which includes six fields: a) basic science, b) geometrical and industrial science, c) medical sciences, d) agricultural sciences, e) social sciences, and f) fine arts and media (Zarrouh, et al, 2001). The ages of students attending secondary school usually starts at the age of 13-15 for preparatory of middle level; and 16-18 years for high school students (Altaieb, 2013) After this stage, students can decide to continue their path in education and finish tertiary level or start looking for a job (Lagga & et al. 2004).

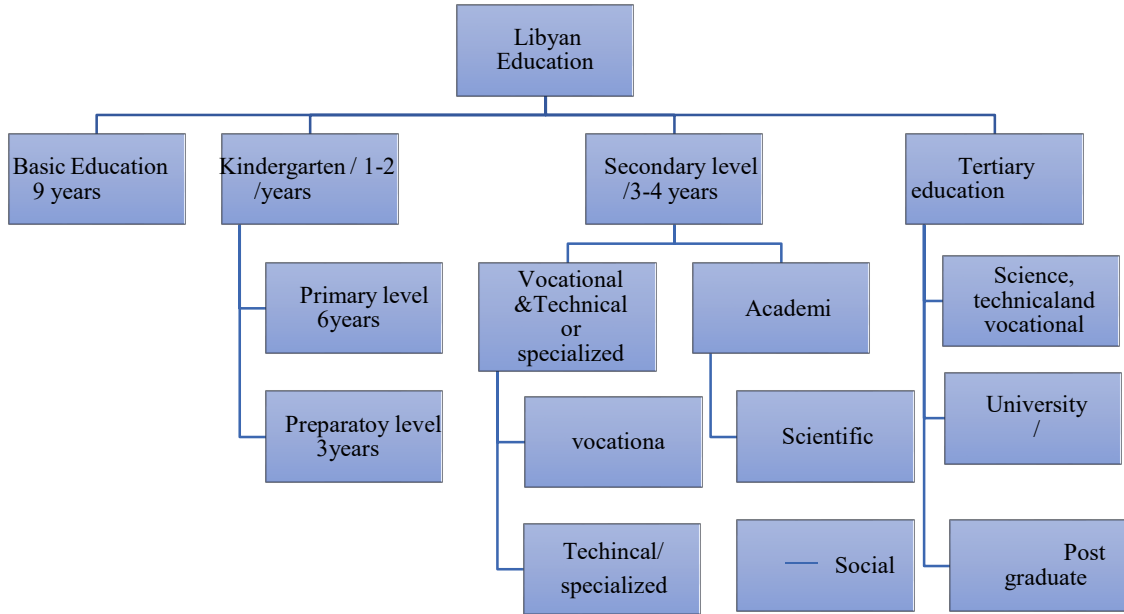


Figure1: The structure of Libyan education system

Lastly, for the fourth stage or the Tertiary Education stage, students can choose to further their studies in either science, technical and vocational institutions or in colleges or universities. For the first option (i.e., science, technical and vocational institutions) the maximum duration of study is three years whereas, the second option (i.e., colleges and universities) is from four to seven years depending on the major of their studies. Some universities also offer postgraduate education (M.A. and PhD.) such as the Academy of higher studies, Tripoli University and Benghazi University (Clark, 2004).

Some of the general objectives of education in Libya according to General Peoples' Committees of Education is to “provide students with the opportunity to choose the specialization that suit their abilities and according to society

needs”. In addition to “aid students to acquire the skills of thinking and scientific analysis to comply with science development and to accomplish a balance between theoretical information and practical application” (GPCE, 2008, p. 4-5). More specifically, education in Libya is also to “help students master the Arabic and English language to communicate with the world, being able to develop students’ sense of national identity and to be proud of the Arabic and the Islamic civilization” (GPCE, 2008, p. 5).

ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) TEXTBOOKS IN LIBYA

According to Hashim (1997), the first English language textbook series in Libya was titled Basic Reading Book written by L.W. Lockhart. The textbook was given to preparatory level and it was taught by nationalities other than Libyans, such as Egyptians and Palestinians, for four lessons per-week for the whole academic year (Orafi, 2008). Later, the textbook series, entitled New Method (1930) by Michael West, who was an English language inspector in Libya, was introduced in the 1960’s (ICA,1958). After that, the textbook was replaced by another textbook, which is called the Modern Reader (1950) by A. Johnson (Barton, 1968). This text-book was based on the Grammar translation method, which emphasized on learning vocabulary through reading. In 1965, a step to change the system of instruction of English language took place by the Libyan Ministry of Education, and a new textbook series was introduced, which was called English for Libya which was based on the direct method (Barton, 1968). However, the curriculum was criticized for focusing on memorization of isolated vocabulary, application of grammatical structures and on translating and understanding reading texts therefore, it was changed (Orafi & Borg, 2009). While in the 1970’s, a new textbook was presented called

Living English for Libya, and it was introduced to two levels preparatory, and secondary students, and it focused on reading comprehension and grammar (Orafi, 2008).

Then, two new textbook series were introduced. The first by Mustafa Gusbi was entitled English for Libya, and the second was by Mustafa Gusbi and Roland John (1974, 1980), entitled Further English for Libya. Through the use of these textbooks Libyan English teachers were required to adopt the English culture as a vehicle for teaching the English language by using Western related topics as and the schools continued to use it until 1980's. This textbook series included three books: 1) Further English for Libya (1), 2) Further English for Libya (2), and Further English for Libya (3), in which each of these textbooks was accompanied by a workbook and a teacher's handbook. This textbook series continued until the Gaddafi regime to which the Ministry of Education in Libya's decision No. 195/1986 took place to stop teaching foreign languages (Mohsen, 2014). However, this step was quite controversial and was not approved by many educationist. For example, Otman and Karlberg (2007, p. 110) stated that "changing the school curricula in 1980's, favoring other subjects over the English language, and then omitting it was a fundamental and disastrous mistake." This is because the decision made by the Libyan Ministry of Education in the 1980's to stop teaching foreign languages affected the whole educational system and many issues kept rising. For example, students' low proficiency levels, a decrease of the number of professionals in the English language field, English language teachers forced to teach subjects other than their majors, and the isolation from the outside world (Mohsen, 2014).

In the academic year of 1993/1994, the teaching of English as a foreign language was resumed and continued to use the English for Libya textbook series, but during the first year the

same book was used for all levels of education. This was due to the Libyan Ministry of Education's intention to catch up with the number of years the English language teaching stopped as the students were all at the same level of English language proficiency at that time. Then, another version of the textbook series, English for Libya, published by Garnet Education Company, was introduced in the academic year 2000/2001 for primary and secondary levels. After that, in the academic year 2005/2006, the third level primary were given another text-book, which was under the same name, and also published by Garnet Education publication, but was only used for one year. Then, in 2006/2007, this particular textbook series was presented only to 5th and 6th primary level students (Orafi, 2008). This deprived once again third year students from studying the English language again and therefore, it extended the English language-learning gap.

The new English language program in Libya aimed to develop the four major skills for language proficiency, but because the national syllabus was based on the traditional teaching methods, it did not achieve this goal (Mohamed, 1987). Mohsen (2014), stated that there was a need to change and improve the whole process of the Libyan English as a foreign language teaching following the CLT approach, which was believed to be able to achieve communicative competence. Thus, new textbook series were introduced which "emphasizes the need for changing the traditional role of teacher from a specialist and a sole source of knowledge into an assistant and a director to create the scene for the student and the active learner and even train students on the skills of thinking and analysis, installation, conclusion and practice" (Lagga et al., 2004, p. 28). In 2000, the new series of English for Libya which was written by Garnet publishing from the UK and representatives of the National Education and Research Centre of Libya (Orafi, 2008) was introduced.

According to Macfarlane (2000), this text-book is designed to develop the grammatical system and increase vocabulary and master the four language skills. All Libyan public and private schools inside and outside of Libya (i.e., Libyan international schools) currently use it. It consists of two main books: 1) a student book and 2) a workbook. Teachers are given an additional book that will guide them through the units and activities, and it also offers answers to the questions in the textbook. The student book includes eight units, in which each one has a different theme. Within the unit, the four major skills are placed in separate sections or lessons. Moreover, grammar and vocabulary are also included in separate sections. Even though the skills are sectioned by lessons, they are intertwined and are meant to be taught together.

TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES IN THE LIBYAN EFL CLASSROOM

Historically speaking, English language education first began in Libya in the 1940's after the World War II. The first attempt to provide formal English instruction for primary level was in 1955, but it was quickly cancelled because there was shortage of teachers (Hashim, 1997). The English language had been taught to students from the age of 10 until the secondary level, but in 1973, it was moved back to students aged 13 (Khalid, 2017). In the 1980's English language was accessible for secondary students and higher but then soon afterwards the Ministry of Education abandoned it for all levels. In the late 1990's the English language was resumed and gradually presented to other levels of education, in which until the fifth grade of primary level was included (Elabbar, 2011). In the current English language system, which was implemented from the academic year 2000/2001 until now, the Libyan Ministry of Education requires students to usually

take four English lessons per-week, and each one is forty to forty-five minutes long depending on the sequence of the lesson in the learning schedule. The first three lessons are generally forty-five minutes long and the lessons after breakfast session are forty minutes long (Macfarlane & Harrison, 2008).

Throughout the years, many methods have been used in teaching English as a foreign language in Libya, starting from the traditional methods, such as Grammar-translation method (GTM), the Audio-lingual method, the communicative approach and up to mixing the methods to reach the goal of learning. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) focuses on grammatical rules and patterns and the goal of this method is to be able to read the literature of the target language. This is accomplished by learning the grammar rules of the language by the help of translating sentences and texts from the target language to the mother tongue and vice versa (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The reading and writing skills are also focused on, but no attention is given to neither the speaking nor the listening skills. Accuracy and grammar forms in GTM are emphasized and the mother tongue is the medium of instruction (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Ben Hamid (2010) pointed out that Grammar translation method (GTM) has been used by teachers in the Libyan English language classrooms starting from the first English textbooks and it is still used today. The class is teacher-centered and is based on translation into the mother tongue and the focus is teaching grammar rules whereas, communicative activities or materials are seldom used other than the whiteboard or blackboard. However, the focus on grammar rules has neglected vocabulary teaching and learning in the Libyan secondary school system, and thus reflects on the difficulties faced by students in communication skills (Ben Hamid, 2010). Along with Ben Hamid, other Libyan researchers (see Esmail & et al,

2015; Kustati, 2011; Abduljalil, 2009; Orafi & Borg, 2009,; Orafi, 2013) indicated that grammar based teaching or grammar based examinations are main problems in the education system, as they do not serve the goal of communicative competence.

Research Problem

for English' for Libya is a quite new English language series that MOE prescribed for the primary stage in Libya. Since its implementation, there have been many persistent issues and problems raised by supervisors, teachers, and sometimes pupils. Literature review indicates that no research studies at all were conducted with the purpose of evaluating it. This seems surprising once we consider the various concerns and problematic issues that these new textbooks have raised nationwide.

Sudden decision, as many in-service English language teachers and inspectors complained, did not allow for a gradual substitution of 'Hand in Hand', the former series, with this new one.

Normally, at the first year when changing a series takes effect, the new series is first taught to primary-one pupils only, and then proceeds with them in the years to follow till they finish their primary education. This way, the old series stays with those senior pupils who have already started it till they finish school, while the new series gradually goes up with those who have already started studying it in primary one, until it is fully replaced. Unfortunately, this sudden change – as many primary teachers of English reported in the pilot study – had many negative outcomes (e.g. causing confusion to both teachers and pupils; not allowing in-service teachers to receive orientation and training in teaching the new series; and raising many socio-cultural problems).

Therefore, in August, 2014, a group of English language teachers affiliated with an Libyan teachers' coalition had an official meeting with the MOE English language teaching consultant to suggest some improvements and modifications to be made to the series.

Moreover, a preliminary review of textbooks conducted by the researcher revealed that the series does not adequately reflect the real Egyptian culture. For example, there is a wide gap between the advanced content of the textbooks on one hand, and the poor conditions of many deprived local communities in Libya, especially in rural areas. This does not help with making language learning more meaningful and relevant. In this regard, some in-service teachers suggested that this series should have been designed to advanced pupils at language schools in Cairo and other big cities in Libya. Thus, the actual local context and the specific national culture are not highly considered by (or reflected in) this series.

Further, from a curriculum design perspective, in order for any language course or syllabus to be strong and effective, it should meet some criteria (see Stevick, 1971; Allen, 2008), the most important of which are: (1) sustaining learners' motivation; (2) relevance to pupils' language needs; (3) completeness (i.e. including all the language necessary for the stated course aims); (4) authenticity (i.e. being realistic and authentic, both linguistically and culturally); (5) satisfaction (i.e. learners should feel that they have benefited from the lesson); (6) immediacy (i.e. pupils feel that they can use the studied material straight away).

This research study aims at accomplishing a set of objectives:

1. Obtaining and phrasing a working list of standards of ELL at the primary stage based on official documents issued by Libyan MOE;

2. Checking those standards against what goes on in reality by requesting expert and senior primary English-language teachers to state the extent to which each of them applies at schools;
3. Evaluating the new English' 'for Libya series textbooks in terms of advantages, disadvantages and problems encountered in the field;
4. Providing some suggestions and guidelines (i.e. improvement framework) into how to improve teaching/learning the series at Egyptian primary schools.

Research Questions

Subsequently, the study attempts answering the following questions

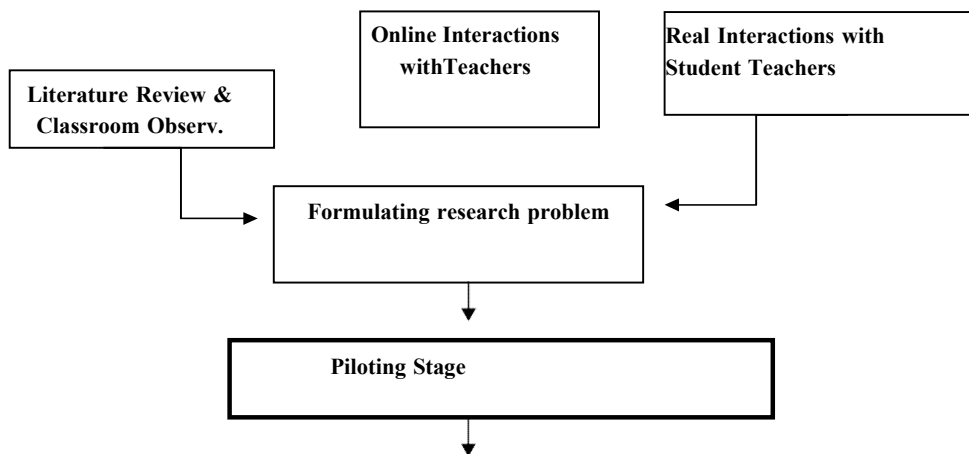
1. To what extent does the English for Libya' series comply with the primary-stage ELL standards defined by the Libyan MOE?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the English for Libya' series, and the common problems encountered while teaching/learning these textbooks?
3. Based on obtained data, which suggestions and guidelines - including aspects of improvement - to conclude so as to sustain an optimum language-learning environment while teaching this series?

2. Methodology

This is an evaluative study that belongs to the wide area of 'evaluation research', which Cohen et al. (2007: pp42-47) make a

case of as a completely different enterprise where the researcher intends to solve a specific problem, and eventually present solutions/decisions to policy makers. More specifically, *evaluation research* seeks findings that focus on the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of innovations (e.g. new courses) as well of their overall ‘outcome’. This information is, in turn, used to consider how such interventions might be modified, enhanced or even eliminated in the effort to provide a better service, fulfil a particular need or meet a specific challenge (Silver, 2004). Thus, evaluation research can act as a baseline on which decision-making can be done with the purpose of educational reformation, which might include the improvement of course delivery and the tools used in the teaching-learning process.

The main goal of the employed **Standards Questionnaire** was to assess the degree to which the main ELL standards suggested by Egyptian MOE, Curriculum & Learning Outcomes Committee (NSPP, 2003) – as indicated above – apply to reality. Thus, the questionnaire was designed simply by including indicators (corresponding to underlying standards and domains) as items. For each item (indicator), participants were asked to state – on a 5-point Likert scale – to what extent they would agree or disagree that it was evident or applicable in the new series within ELL contexts at the primary schools they were dealing with (see Appendix 1).



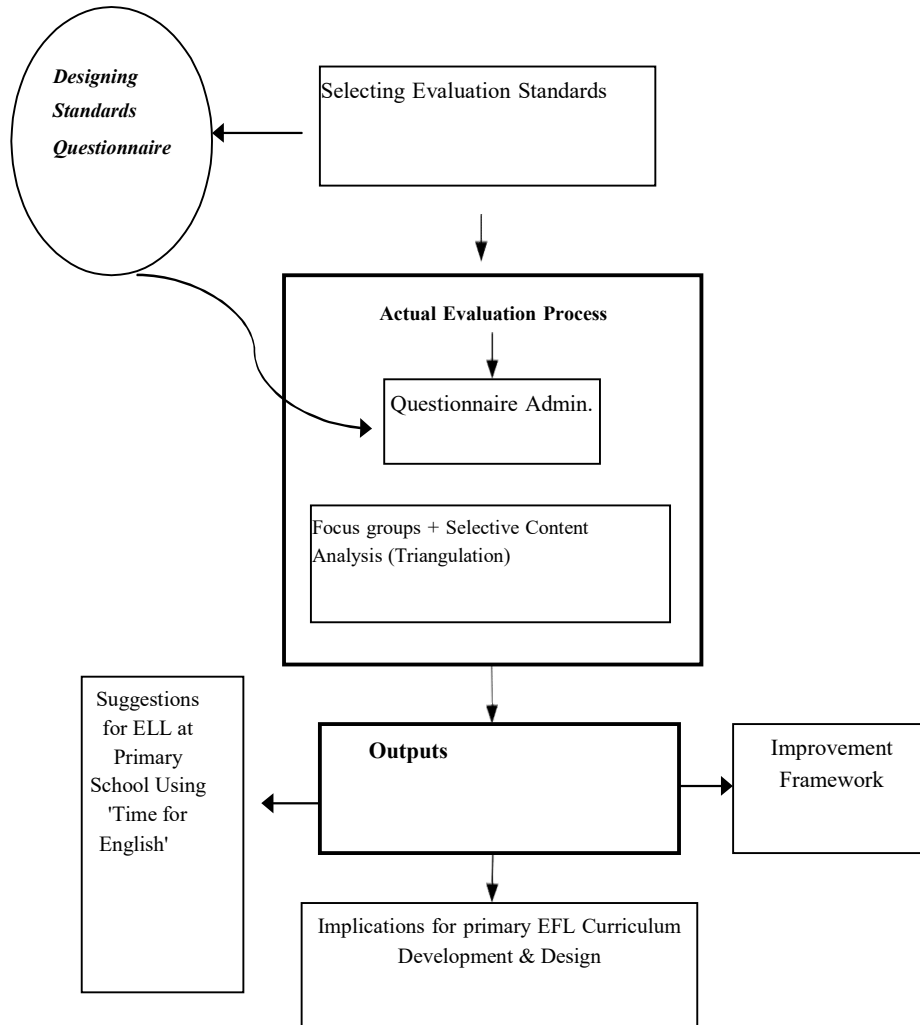


Figure 1: Evaluation Research Framework

Focus groups as a qualitative research method is group interview that relies on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher yielding a collective rather than an individual view (Morgan, 1988: p9). Thus, a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes

towards a product, service, concept and/or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. It is from these interactions of the group that the data emerges (Cohen, et al., 2007).

There were two main reasons for choosing this type of interview: (1) the need to focus on specific themes/issues which would naturally emerge while participants openly and informally discussed together the process of teaching the new series; (2) allowing for a relaxed interactive atmosphere in which participants could easily share ideas and provide useful input while talking together and with the interviewer.

All the data based on these contributions were collected and analysed qualitatively so that themes could freely emerge to fit under three main categories: advantages of the series, disadvantages, and real problems and/or experiences encountered by teachers.

Table 1: Data about Participants in Focus Groups

<i>Category</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Number</i>
Pre-service Primary English teachers (EFL Student Teacher at Primary Education section, AUCOE)	Face-to-face mode or direct interactions	5 groups (each consisting of 10) = 50 participants
In-service English Language Teachers at Primary Schools	Online mode (interactions) through Facebook pages	Around 400 participants from all over the country

A computer-assisted selective content analysis technique was conducted while reviewing the textbooks of the new series. A detailed review of all six textbooks was a daunting task; therefore, it was useful to employ a qualitatively selective form of content analysis to choose specific representative instances and relevant samples to review (Silverman, 2005). Moreover, content analysis can be used if the purpose is to audit or review textbook contents against some specified standards (Cohen, et al. 2007). Hence, for

triangulation purposes, selective content analysis was conducted simultaneously while analyzing focus group data. More specifically, the researcher employed content analysis assisted by computer software - which facilitated coding and annotating text as well as searching for specific words/phrases - to reinforce and double-check (i.e. conduct cross- checks against) participants' ideas and viewpoints. Therefore, the choice of the minor techniques to use for conducting this selective content analysis process (e.g. drawing comparisons, developing and testing hypotheses, generating themes and categories, identifying frequencies, finding relevance, and synthesizing and reporting data) (see also Ezzy, 2002) relied mainly on the emerging objectives and needs that the focus-group data analysis process continuously raised. These included:

1. Reviewing course outline and objectives;
2. Understanding sequence and organization of units;
3. Verifying the language-learning problems reported by participants;
4. Checking contents of textbooks for understanding some socio-cultural issues;
5. Identifying the nature and weight of the 'Phonic Time' section in early grades;
6. Reviewing the new 'Reading Time' section in the 5th and 6th grades' textbooks.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis Results

The main goal of the questionnaire was to identify (through expert teachers at the primary stage) to what extent the new English for Libya' series comply with the EFL learning standards at the primary stage, and thus answer the 1st research question. To ensure reliability and internal consistency of each set of indicators composing each standard, and of each set of standards composing each domain, *Cronbach's Alpha* was used, and the following results were obtained: DOMAIN ONE=0.85 (Standard1=0.81 - Standard2=0.79 - Standard3=0.78);

DOMAIN TWO=0.87 (Standard1=0.83 - Standard2=0.68 - Standard3=0.67 - Standard4=0.89);

DOMAIN THREE=0.90 (Standard1=0.72 - Standard2=0.90 - Standard3=0.82 - Standard4=0.85);

DOMAIN FOUR=0.75 (Standard1=0.69 - Standard2=0.78 - Standard3=0.86).

After calculating the mean of all those domains, the reliability index of the whole questionnaire was found to be 0.84, which is considered a very satisfactory value.

Throughout using SPSS for ranking all indicators representing those standards based on participants' viewpoints on the survey questionnaire, the following results were obtained:

For the main domains underlying the standards and indicators, results show that *Domain 3: LEARNING TO LEARN ENGLISH* had the highest means (3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.58). This means that, based on participants' ratings of all standards and their indicators, *Domain 3* was the one that applied most to the series (see Appendix 1). It was followed by *Domain 1: LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH* with the next highest means (3.68 with standard deviation of 0.55). Then, came *Domain 2: LEARNING LANGUAGE SYSTEM* (3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.56); and finally, *Domain 4: LEARNING VALUES* (3.64 with a standard deviation of 0.55).

For the standards, based on means, the standards were ranked as follows (see Table 2 below):

Table 2: Evaluation Standards Ordered by Means

2 below):

Table 2: Evaluation Standards Ordered

Evaluation Standard

Standard 2 (Domain 2): Pupils use their knowledge of the phone system to interpret and communicate messages to others.

Standard 3 (Domain 1): Learners express facts, opinions and emotions in English.

Standard 1 (Domain 3): Learners exhibit positive attitudes towards

Evaluation Standard

Standard 1 (Domain 4): Pupils work cooperatively with to achieve common learning goals and help others in the process of learning.

Standard 3 (Domain 3): Learners develop and use cognitive strategies, which facilitate language learning.

Standard 2 (Domain 4): Pupils interact politely with others, taking into account the cultural norms of both Egyptian and English speaking society.

Standard 2 (Domain 3): Learners develop and use cognitive strategies to aid them in their language learning.

Standard 3 (Domain 4): Pupils use English to reinforce their values relating to good citizenship.

Standard 4 (Domain 2): Pupils progressively become readers who are able to construct meaning from increasingly complex messages.

Standard 3 (Domain 2): Pupils use their knowledge of the phonological system to interpret and communicate messages to others.

Thus, based on participants' ratings, 'Domain 3: LEARNING TO LEARN ENGLISH' came on top as the most applicable domain within Libyan schools. This might be attributed to the current concern over giving young learners more opportunities to learn how to learn; memorization of small linguistic pieces, grammatical points and isolated words has become an obsolete practice. Conversely, 'Domain 4: LEARNING VALUES' came at the bottom, and this indicates very poor national consideration of many social values and cultural issues at primary schools in Egypt. It seems that still there is a weak link between teaching/learning English and the process of reinforcing many values, especially those relating to good citizenship. Also, it seems that ELL has not yet achieved some desired cultural values, such as polite social interaction, collaborative work, and understanding of different and varying cultural norms of both Egypt and English-speaking communities. The standard with the highest means was 'Standard 2 (Domain 2): Pupils use their knowledge of the phonological system to interpret and communicate messages to others'.

This indicates both learners' concern with phonological knowledge in the English language to produce accurate utterances and teachers' focus on (and worry over) phonological aspects.

This was followed by '*Standard 3 (Domain 1): Learners express facts, opinions and emotions in English.*' Although Domain 1 itself came third in the list, this particular standard came as the 2nd standard in the list. Generally, self-expression in English is a very important skill that needs to be developed in learners as early as possible. Therefore, this high rank is significant as it indicates that the new series considers it very well.

Then came '*Standard 1 (Domain 3)*' which is related to language learning motivation. If students already have positive attitudes towards English and show some enthusiasm while learning it, then it will be easy to adjust the course content in a way that stimulates them to learn and interact in English. This requires revisiting the teaching/learning methods currently used.

Finally, it is important to draw attention to the fact that '*Standard 1 (Domain 2): Learners are aware of the differences between Arabic & English language systems*' came at the bottom. This means that learners are not aware of the differences between the two language systems; thus, the series needs to establish a clear focus on this aspect.

3.1 Focus-Groups & Content Analysis Results

Results of the focus groups (both face-to-face and online), triangulated with the content analysis results, indicate the existence of many issues with teaching and learning the English for Libya' series in reality. These issues can be classified into: advantages, disadvantages and problems, and aspects of improvement and/or change. Therefore, this section answers the 2nd research question on advantages, disadvantages and encountered problems.

For the advantages/strengths and disadvantages/weaknesses reported by participants in the focus groups, the ideas and issues raised were classified under 6 categories (see Table).

3 below): (1) Socio-cultural issues; (2) Teacher training; (3) Layout & Sequence; (4) Teaching/Learning methods and techniques; (5) Literacy and main language skills; and

Technology, aids and facilities.

Table 3: Summary of Data Obtained from Focus Groups

Aspect	Advantages & Strengths	Disadvantages & Weaknesses
Socio-cultural Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, the series attempts spreading brotherhood, mutual respect and cooperation among society members. • The series generally acquaints pupils with positive learning habits, such as: leadership, cooperation, turn-taking, and organisation. • The series includes many new activities, which help pupils to depend on themselves, exploit their potentials and energy, and develop a sense of responsibility. • The series exposes pupils to different cultures (i.e. expanding the child's comfort zone), and thus enables them to understand their own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some topics, words and phrases are not culturally appropriate to learners. For example, some words/phrases are not appropriate because they are: (1) too difficult (e.g. 'pickles' in year 4); (2) closely connected with the English context only (e.g. cherry and cherry pie); (3) or so informal/colloquial (e.g. 'yum!' which means delicious). • The whole series has many vocabulary-related issues which interfere with acquiring standard English (e.g. many words are purely American and colloquial); • There are many cultural issues that make the series incompatible with the national Egyptian context. • Sometimes the series is not adequate to pupils' ages and developmental stage (e.g. a big amount of difficult words is introduced to learners). • Contextual factors and conditions (e.g. urban vs. rural environments) are not highly considered. • It is hard to implement this series in many low-income and rural areas because of poor equipment and weak facilities. • The primary curriculum - in general - does not draw on learners' realistic hobbies, tendencies and attitudes. • Some topics in the primary-six course (e.g. 'History of Ice-cream' and 'History of New York') are not consistent with the Egyptian socio-cultural context. • Some children already have negative attitudes towards the English language in general, and 'Time for English' in particular. Those learners are hard to involve and satisfy during the English class.

Aspect	Advantages & Strengths	Disadvantages & Weaknesses
<i>Teacher Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some training (very limited) was made to familiarise primary English teachers with the new series.• Teachers might be able to understand what they will do if they review the teacher's guide and other supporting materials.• Novice teachers do not have any problems in teaching Time for English if they follow the steps in the teacher's book.• Audio materials can help teachers with modelling pronunciation properly.• Teachers receive help in teaching the new series through organized lesson plans, and interesting activities and games.• Review units, as well as test samples there act as very useful guides for teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary teachers did not receive enough training on teaching this new series.• Some in-service teachers prefer teaching another series called: Family & Friends'.• Teachers are not trained well in teaching this new series, especially as far as the new teaching methodologies required for the series delivery are concerned.

*An Evaluation to the English for Libya ' Textbook Series at Libyan Primary Schools:
An Evaluative Study*

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مجلة وادي النيل للدراسات والبحوث الإنسانية والاجتماعية والتربوية (مجلة علمية محكمة)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is an integrative series with a logical & consistent sequence. ● Content organisation is good; each unit is built around a theme (e.g. food, music, clothes, etc.) to provide a real context to language learning and practice; each page presents a single language function in order to keep the focus clear. The 'Word Time' section presents a group of consistent words connected with the same theme or topic. These words are exploited well in the following section, 'Practice Time' for presenting the grammar of the unit. ● Topics are attractive and interesting to learners. ● There are revision lists that provide pupils with a chance to review what they have learned to gain confidence, and enable parents to follow their kids' progress. ● Book design is simple, clear and attractive in a way that motivates learners, and help them to master different language items. ● Materials are presented in a logical sequence that helps children to understand, remember and digest. ● At the end of Student's Book, there is a word dictionary that helps pupils to review new vocabulary. ● At the beginning of each course in the series, there is a review of previously-learned items/aspects so that learners can build upon them. ● After every THREE UNITS, there is a general REVISION unit, along with some pages dedicated for drawing and colouring (especially at early levels); some participants prefer having this revision or REVIEW after each lesson. ● Since the course is learner-centred, pupils are involved in each lesson (regardless of its type): In a READING lesson, a shared-reading technique is employed; and in a CONVERSATION lesson, Ss are required to act out the dialogue; in a PHONIC lesson, Ss mimic the audio or video clip to produce accurate utterances. ● The existence of 'Phonics Time' in each unit helps Ss with producing accurate pronunciation of words and phrases. ● Consistency between some lessons in the primary-5 course is very useful for meaningful language learning. ● The primary-five course includes many exercises that consolidate the main 4 language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing). ● In the primary-six course, writing letters to others as a functional aspect of language is very useful. ● In primary-five course, there are good grammar and vocabulary; it also includes different activities for carrying out each lesson. ● The primary-six course includes a lot of situations²⁰ and functional language that are valid for language practice in everyday life. ● The short units help pupils to progress rapidly, and thus build their confidence and motivation. After 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The series places much cognitive loads on learners. ● For the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, pupils study two books instead of the one comprehensive textbook they used to study in the previous 3 years, which included everything. This change would distract and confuse pupils. ● There are many serious phonological mistakes, especially as far as diphthongs are concerned. ● Many parts/activities of the course are beyond pupils' understanding (e.g. primary-three course requires pupils to learn a huge amount of words. In one of the lessons, there is a conversation that requires pupils to learn days of the week, question words, and how to make suggestions all at once). ● The new series is shocking for both teachers and learners, due to the sudden change of the old series with no gradual introduction. ● The series does not include a punctuation question that assesses pupils' accurate language usage. ● Primary-five course includes much listening. ● Exam specifications need improvement because the testing system of the series is not compatible with the learners' mentality. ● Assessment of primary-one Ss is done only orally, with no written tasks/tests at all; thus, testing procedures do not balance between oral performance and written performance. ● Some words, especially in primary-four, are not consistently categorised/classified. For example, the word 'jacket' should be placed under 'clothes' not 'key'. ● There are some abstract words which are too difficult. ● Activities and tasks included in the series are not always consistent with the exam paper. ● Pupils sometimes study complete words (e.g. arm) before studying letters composing them (r & m). ● In terms of GRAMMAR, the primary-5 course, for example, focuses on ONE tense only: the present simple. ● Model tests or exercises that train pupils on the final exam. ● Songs and chants are not there in every unit. ● For primary-three course, there are no tools that should help parents to understand the lessons well, and hence communicate them properly to their kids. ● There are no ideal practical applications for the PHONIC TIME, especially for primary-three. ● For the primary-two course, there is no review at the beginning of the book to help pupils to remember previously-studied language items, and build on them. ● For the primary-four course, pupils are newly introduced to two separate books; this might cause confusion to learners. ● In the primary-five course, each lesson is independent; it is treated as a separate entity, and thus lessons are inconsistent and not gradually introduced to learners. ● In the primary-six course, class time is not always sufficient to carry out all activities and tasks in each lesson. ● Also, in the primary-six course, grammar is not
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Aspect	Advantages & Strengths	Disadvantages &
Literacy & Main Language Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It lays solid foundations for the development of literacy skills in the English language. • There is a balanced focus on the main four language skills. • The new section, 'Phonic Time', is interesting; it helps with developing pupils' pronunciation skills. • It familiarises pupils with the English language – both orally and in writing - in a stress-free and fun- loaded atmosphere. • New vocabulary is presented through many techniques (e.g. real objects, modelling, visual stimuli, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes the learners, who literacy skills to • Reading skills early stages.
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching/learning aids employed are varied (e.g. CD's, drawings, cards, books, etc.) to cope with learners' individual differences. • The series employs many appropriate and effective visual aids to convey meaning and consolidate understanding. • Illustrations and pictures are always there side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools that would hel learning songs language mig motivation. • Due to time li not prepare si

In addition, participants in the focus groups reported some problems and difficulties associated with teaching/learning the new series. These are:

- Some pre-service and in-service teachers do not follow Teacher's Guide, and thus teach in a traditional boring way. In spite of the carefully planned steps there, some student teachers do not follow them; they just write new language items on the board with children repeating them, without using any visual aids to attract attention.
- Many novice teachers do not employ (or benefit from) classroom interactions for developing the English language;
- Classrooms lack audio facilities for children to listen to models (e.g. interesting stories and conversations) made by native speakers;
- Pupils' individual needs – especially in rural and deprived communities – are not highly considered by the series;
- Formal tests are not always consistent with the delivered content; in most cases, there is a wide gap between what pupils study in the textbooks and what the items they are required to answer in the tests/exams;
- Listening materials are not always available for

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teachers and pupils, and therefore, adequate training in listening comprehension is not always provided;

- Hard copies of the teacher's guide are not always available; some teachers do not prefer or use soft copies;
- Time for English focuses mainly on pronunciation, and gives little deal in communicative situations; CONVERSATIONS are too short and are related to certain places and situations that pupils are not familiar with.
- The excessive use of Arabic during the English class acts as a real problem with teaching this series. Many teachers and supervisors still insist on translating every word into Arabic. This would not help with establishing an effective language learning environment.

Further, in terms of suitability, many in-service teachers (n=95) reported the convenience of the new series with the target pupils at the primary stage. However, some of them (n=30) reported many cultural problems, and other issues associated with time, training and aids. For example, one of them argued:

The curriculum is suitable, but it should be related to the Libyan environment in our villages, cities and deserted areas...There should be various teaching aids to be used by the teacher during the lesson...The curriculum is long and needs much time...six units a term. I suggest 6 units a school year...This enables the teacher to teach perfectly and also give the pupils the time to practise what they learn; English teachers should be specialists (FOE graduates), and should attend courses of training once or twice a year to refresh information and get acquainted with modern instructional techniques and strategies...There should be a CD to help the pupils to listen to correct pronunciation...I also suggest that the English subject should be in ONE book, including reading and activity.

Some teachers reported that with time, teachers would get used to the new series as they could do with the previous ones. The main issue, as one of them reported below, lies in two important facts: (1) the large numbers of learners in classrooms, which is a

persistent, long-standing problem at Egyptian schools, which would negatively influence.

instruction, no matter how modern and innovative the employed teaching-learning methods might be; (2) when Egyptian teachers get used to do something in a specific way for a quite long time, it would be hard to change that. Many teachers do not exert the needed effort to reach more learners (especially low achievers), and depend on memorisation. They do not focus on modelling pupils' pronunciation or devote some time to allow for more elaboration and practice. In this regard, an in-service teacher commented:

On the other extreme, some few teachers (n=5) were against teaching the 'Time for English' series altogether. They stated many socio-cultural, linguistic and curriculum design-related reasons, such as: (1) being socio-culturally inadequate to the Egyptian context; (2) including advanced and too difficult language; (3) being too demanding and exhausting to both teachers and learners; and (4) imposing much cognitive load on learners. In this regard, a teacher stated:

I think English for Libya is not suitable for our children; it is complex and has difficult words for learners. The book needs to be revised so as to be more suitable. There are many books which will be more useful; for me, I recommend 'Go Up' as a wonderful series.

Other teachers suggest many ways to improve the situation. This includes: (1) encouraging pupils to interact with English in classroom, and avoid using Arabic during the English class as much as possible; (2) Using ELL sources (e.g. cartoons, films, videos, and programmes), as this would be very essential for language acquisition; (3) using active learning strategies and video resources to make learning more interesting and fun; (4) carrying out continuous in-service teacher training by educational specialists in TEFL. Thus, one of those teachers commented:

These results are consistent with the results of many other evaluative studies conducted in many different educational contexts (e.g. Ma, 2003; Allen, 2008; Kirkgöz, 2009;

Khodabakhshi, 2014; Tsagari & Sifakis, 2014). For example, Ma (2003) found out an unequal distribution of the five Cs-- Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities, and that the textbooks emphasized communication design.

Allen (2008) identified some ELT problems at primary schools in Tanzania by analysing the obstacles hindering effective pupil-centred ELT and ELL presenting some recommendations. In Iran, Khodabakhshi (2014) examined the advantages and disadvantages of the 'Skyline' series, and concluded some recommendations for improving it. Similarly, Tsagari and Sifakis (2014) indicated that materials production can be a predominantly top-down process, in which policy makers, materials authors and teachers can draw independent pathways to developing and implementing course books.

Conclusion

Based on the data above, the series needs *some improvement* in many ways (see Figure 2 below). Therefore, this section answers the 3rd question on suggested improvement plan. First of all, the *for English for Libya* series needs to be revised culturally, since some English names have not been changed into Libyan names. There are some kinds of fruits such as cherry and words such as pies and cookies need to be changed to suit the Egyptian culture, especially in villages. Adaptation already made on some cultural aspects needs to be reviewed

Second, it is strongly suggested that teaching of some lessons or sections (e.g. listening lessons) should be done in technology labs or resources halls so that children have more chances to listen to native speakers.

Third, it is important is to change school schedules to increase the number of weekly English periods (lessons) – starting from primary 4 – so that children may have 5 periods a week.

Otherwise, content should be reduced so that pupils feel more focused and relaxed during the English class.

Fourth, workshops and seminars are needed to allow teachers to present models of their teaching to encourage competition among teachers to achieve creative teaching of English. In addition, they should train teachers on innovative and interactive methods of teaching grammar and linguistics. Also, training programmes/sessions should be made to train primary English teachers on many aspects and skills, especially on how to teach the 'Phonics Time' lessons.

Fifth, testing and examination techniques need to be revised so as to become consistent with the series, especially in terms of goals, outcomes and contents. Thus, new specifications are needed to make testing items more effective for assessing different language aspects and skills (i.e. phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Sixth, curriculum and course designers and authors should review other series preferred by some participants, such as 'Family and Friends', 'Go Up' and 'Macmillan'. There is a pressing need to know the points/aspects that distinguish those particular courses, and modify and improve 'Time for English' accordingly.

Seventh, the primary-one course should be made easier (e.g. by reducing the amount of new vocabulary) to guarantee gradual exposure to the English language.

Eighth, more authentic materials that reflect actual language use by native speakers need to be included in the textbook series. Pupils need to be involved in a realistic language-learning process that highlight English as used in everyday life. However, much care is needed while selecting material so as not to include much slang and local accents.

Recommendations & Suggestions of Further Research

Based on those results, some recommendations were made:

1. Curriculum and course design processes at the

primary stage should be based on a survey of pupils' real language learning needs, keeping in mind environmental and contextual factors;

2. Language course evaluation should be employed as a continuous, dynamic process to get immediate feedback;

3. English Language courses need always to be revised and updated; a link should be always made with online technologies and outside environment;

4. More active learning strategies are needed for teaching English at the primary stage;

5. Evaluation checklists should be administered to English language teachers on a regular basis to assess the studied courses;

6. Observation notes and reflective diaries should be used by English teachers for reflective teaching purposes; teachers then can share their accounts with each other to build a common ground (knowledge base) that would inform their language teaching practices.

7. Training English language teachers on how to use standards-based evaluation so as to improve their teaching performance and their students' English language skills.

Also, based on those results, some research topics were suggested:

- 1- Investigation into reflective teaching practices in English language learning contexts at the primary stage;
- 2- Evaluating effectiveness of some active learning strategies on primary pupils' acquisition of English vocabulary;
- 3- Employing Action Research for solving some socio-cultural issues that would interfere with pupils' language learning at the primary stage;

- 4- Effect of reciprocal teaching and info-graphics on developing students' reading comprehension skills at the primary and preparatory stages;
- 5- Using inversed classroom for improving primary pupils' communicative competencies in English;
- 6- Employing self-evaluation techniques/strategies with primary English language teachers to improve their teaching performance;
- 7- Employing a curriculum-enactment perspective to enable English language teachers to evaluate the taught English courses in terms of suitability of content, relevance, validity, etc.
- 8- Assessing effect of using standards-based language learning on pupils' written communication.

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