تدريس مهارة الاستماع في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس العامة : بين الأهداف المنهجية والتنفيذ

نجاة على غزالة ، يسرى على الغنيمى ـ كلية التربية طرابلس ـ جامعة طرابلس

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ملخص الدراسة :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توجيه الانتباه إلى أن هناك فجوة بين منهج اللغة الانجيزية وبين التطبيق الفعلي للمنهج في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس العامة في مدينة طرابلس فيما يخص تدريس مهارة الاستماع . ولإثبات هذه الفرضية قامت الدراسة بقياس نسبة تدريس هذه المهارة في عدد من المدارس اختيرت لتشكل عينة الدراسة. الدراسة استهدفت ايضا تحديد عدد من الصعوبات التي تواجه مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في تدريس هذه المهارة. استندت الدراسة على منهجية كمية لدراسة الظاهرة واستخدمت أداتين لجمع البيانات. الأول تمثل في استبيان موجه لمدرسي اللغة الانجليزية والثاني إجراء زيارات استهدفت مشاهدة فصول اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس التي شكلت عينة الدراسة. توصلت الدراسة الى ان المادة السمعية في منهج اللغة الإنجليزية يتم تجاهلها من طرف غالبية المدرسين بعينة الدراسة. بعض اسباب هذا التجاهل يعود الى عدم ادراج امتحان المادة السمعية في برنامج امتحانات اللغة الانجليزية في المدارس العامة . ونتيجة لهذا ظهر إهمال متعمد من طرف مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية لتدريس هذه المهارة في المدارس.

Curriculum Intentions and Implementation of Teaching the Listening Skill in EFL Classrooms in Libyan Public Schools

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1.Introduction

Abstract

The study aims to point out that there is a gap taking place between curriculum materials and implementation concerning teaching the listening skill in EFL classrooms in Libyan public schools in Tripoli. To provide evidence, the study embarked on measuring the extent of teaching the listening skill in these classrooms. The study also attempts to identify some difficulties that face classroom teachers in teaching listening. The general hypothesis is that there is serious lack of teaching and learning the listening skill. A quantitative methodology is adopted to test the hypothesis. Two data collection tools are used: a questionnaire that addressed the EFL teachers in Tripoli and classroom observation. The study reveals that the listening materials provided in the school course books are evidently ignored and skipped. Some of the reasons behind this neglect is the omission of testing the skill of listening from the EFL program in public schools. As a consequence, a wilful neglect of teaching this skill is found in these schools.

Research points out that listening occupies the largest section of language daily use. Celca- Murcia (1995) lists percentages of the use of each language skill. The listening skill takes up to 45% of daily life communication whereas speaking takes up to 30%, reading 16% and writing only 9%. According to King (2006: 210) listening is the first mile stone in first language acquisition through which the way is paved to the other language skills. Language perception precedes language production. Therefore, listening is considered the base that underlies all language skills. On similar grounds, listening ought to be basic in foreign language learning. Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) programs provide rich varieties of listening materials. The EFL program implemented in Libyan public schools (Garnet 21st Century

English for Libya) exhibits plentiful listening materials distributed throughout the units of both the course book and the workbook. Yet, the implementation of this curriculum material has been selective and biased towards particular sections, omitting important sections of the program, of which listening has been one.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The absence of teaching and learning the skill of listening is a phenomenon noticed by many who are involved in the EFL program is public schools in Libya. Through their wide experience as supervisors in the teaching practice program in public schools in Tripoli, the researchers noted the wide spread of this phenomenon in public schools in Tripoli. Although the course books used in these schools are full of listening materials, these listening sections are often skipped. Teachers are more concerned with other skills and language areas such as grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This research is triggered by this serious lack of teaching and learning the skill of listening.

1.2 Study hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that there is serious lack of teaching the listening skill in Libyan public schools in Tripoli. Teaching the listening materials provided in the course book is not included in the teachers' EFL program inside classrooms.

1.3 Aims of the study

The research aims to measure the extent to which teaching and learning the listening skill is carried out in public schools in Tripoli. The research also aims to explore the reasons that lead to this shortcoming in the EFL program in public schools.

1.4 Research questions

The research specifically addresses the following questions:

1- Do teachers of English teach the listening materials included in the English school course books used in public schools in Tripoli and how often they do that?
2- What are the difficulties that face public school teachers when
3- teaching listening?

2. Theoretical Review

In the past, listening was considered a passive skill in which learners are only receivers with no apparent linguistic effort made. By contrast, speaking was considered a challenging skill that needs more emphasis and practice. Nowadays, it is largely accepted that listening is not a passive skill. The listening process is an active one in which the receiver performs a number of micro skills that enable him or her to construct meaning from the surrounding input. Helgesen (2003) believes that listening is an active, purposeful process of making sense of what we hear. Byrne (1984) finds listening comprehension a highly complex problem-solving activity that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills. Solak (2016: 30) considers listening as "...an active and interactional process in which a listener receives speech sounds and tries to attach meaning to the spoken words. The listener tries to understand the intended message of the oral text to respond effectively to oral communication". According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1988), learners could learn best through exposure to input. If the input which learners are surrounded with is comprehensible and of suitable level that slightly exceeds the learner's ability, it would enhance and support all other language skills.

2.1 Methods for Teaching Listening

Traditional methods of language teaching gave no importance to listening. For example, the Grammar Translation Method (GMT) did not include listening because this method addressed only grammar, translation and writing (Scrivener 2011). However, in the second half of the 20th century, the Audio Lingual Method emphasized the importance of listening and gave priority to oral skills. At that time, language laboratories, tapes, and cassettes were used extensively. The aim was to achieve higher rates of language accuracy and native like pronunciation.

During the 1970s, the linguist Krashen started important research that focused on the skill of listening. Krashen (1988) developed a hypothesis called "The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis". This hypothesis gives prominence to the listening skill. Foreign language learning is similar to first language acquisition, which starts with perception. Krashen states that if learners of a foreign language are exposed to an appropriate language input that is suitable in level but slightly above the learners' levels, their opportunities to succeed

in learning the target language increases. Krashen stresses the point that the input must be comprehensible to the learner otherwise learning would be hindered.

The Total Physical Response method (TPR) followed similar trends in stressing the importance of listening. Asher (1977) stated that oral language was primary and listening comprehension should come before speech production.

Later on, communicative language teaching started to gain popularity. This approach is based on a view that language is acquired through communication more than through explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary. This approach also regards listening as the most prevailing part of daily life communication and it should occupy an important part in foreign language learning.

Nowadays, listening plays an important role in language classrooms. The technological developments in audio-visual aids created varieties of listening materials and activities. With all these developments in teaching listening, no one can imagine language classrooms that do not provide listening lessons.

2.2 The interaction between teachers and curriculum materials

Research has shown that teachers' treatment of curriculum materials takes different shapes. Some abide strictly with the curriculum materials whereas others manipulate them through skipping parts and adding others. The question is: how far are teachers allowed to omit, change, and add materials of their own? Curriculum materials are considered important tools to achieve curriculum innovation. According to Brown (2009), they are designed to support the achievement of the curriculum in classrooms. They also restrict the teacher practice inside the classroom and limit it to specified goals.

The teacher interaction with the curriculum material is a complex one. Ben-Peretz (1990) observes that teachers' interpretation of curriculum material can be classified into two types: the objective interpretation and the subjective interpretation. The objective interpretation refers to the use of the materials as specified by the curriculum designers. They are fixed and strictly implemented with no omissions or additions. The subjective interpretation of curriculum is subject to teachers' perception, experience, beliefs and context

(ibid 1990). The subjective interpretation allows for creating a curriculum based on both the work of curriculum designers and teachers.

Shawer (2010) studied how experienced teachers interpreted and used curriculum materials. She listed three types of relationships teachers had with curriculum materials: developers, makers and transmitters of curriculum. Curriculum developers are teachers who adapt, expand and supplement the curriculum whenever there is need for that. They deal with the curriculum materials as a framework for their teaching. They change, skip and add to the material. Curriculum makers start with needs analysis then they design their own curriculum materials. They perceive the curriculum provided by the educational institution only as a basis for their decisions. Curriculum transmitters strictly follow the curriculum materials with no changes. In her study, most of the participants were curriculum developers. Similar findings were observed in a study by Remillard and Bryans (2004).

2.3 Difficulties of Teaching Listening

The literature has suggested a number of challenges that make teaching listening difficult. Guo and Wills (2006) state that listening comprehension is a complex process that involves a number of factors. There are psychological and linguistic factors.

2.3.1 Linguistic Problems

Linguistic difficulties usually concern problems related to pronunciation, stress, intonation, vocabulary and grammatical structures. When listening, learners find themselves engaged in a complex process that involves discrimination between sounds, understanding vocabulary and the significance of grammatical structures. They need to interpret the stress and intonation effects. They also need to understand the pragmatic and context effects as well as meanings derived from cultural background. This complex process is challenging for both teachers and learners. These challenges need teachers who are aware and well trained to deal with these problems.

2.3.2 Non-linguistic Problems

The non-linguistic areas involve a number of factors that include psychological obstacles, teaching environment; and teacher and school attitudes.

2.3.2.1 Psychological Factors

The psychological factors as listed by Guo and Wills (2006) include students' interests, attention, emotions and attitudes. Students' motivation has a great effect on the development of language. These factors influence the ability of the student to concentrate on listening. Sometimes the attention paid to listening is distracted by the learner's anxiety about how to respond. Krashen (1988) refers to these psychological elements as the "affective filter". If the affective filter is high, it becomes full of debilitating elements such as fear, anxiety, no self-confidence, and no motivation which ultimately weakens learning. By contrast if the filter is low, there will be more self-confidence, less anxiety, motivation and eagerness for learning.

2.3.2.2. Teaching Environment

The establishment of an appropriate atmosphere for listening activities is essential for the success of these activities. Successful listening practice depends on classroom organization, appropriate size, sufficient time, adequate equipment such as labs, computers, CDs, audios, visual support and internet access. The unavailability of these facilities or the inability to use them leads to problems inside the listening class (Chaugule: 2009).

This area also includes the teaching methods and techniques. Scholars list two techniques related to teaching receptive skills: reading and listening. The first is a bottom-up technique that starts building meaning from the bottom i.e. by defining and translating each new word, focusing on pronunciation, then moving up to the meaning of individual sentences and the significance of grammatical structures and finally working out the overall meaning of the text. This technique is most common in listening and reading classrooms. However Scrivener (2011) argues that although the bottom-up technique is common, students get bored of dealing with words and grammar. They often end up with losing interest and stop following up with the overall meaning. The second technique is a top-down technique that begins from top i.e. working out the gist and the overall meaning moving down to work out the individual meanings of word which could be inferred from context. In this approach, learners are expected to depend on what they already know and build on it.

2.3.2.3 Teacher and School Attitude

The attitude of the teachers towards the importance of teaching listening plays a great role in developing this skill. Teachers who believe that this skill is basic to all other skills will work hard to make listening part of their English classes. One of the reasons that negatively affect teaching listening is the fact that schools and teachers pay more attention to other skills such as reading, speaking and writing as well as other language areas such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Teachers' attitude towards curriculum materials has been extensively researched. It has been considered crucial in achieving success of curriculum implementation in the classroom. Hargreaves (1989) claims that changes in the curriculum will not take place if there is no change in the teacher. Carless (1999a) finds that that teachers' attitudes are based on their own experiences as learners, their professional training, their teaching experiences, their interaction with colleagues, and the cultural values of the society in which they live. Research has also shown that attitudes are very often resistant to change. Waugh and Punch (1987) argued changing attitudes become more difficult if the material is incompatible with teachers' existing attitudes. Nisbet and Collins (1978:3) supported this argument by claiming that "at the point of implementation, it is not easy to change educational principles and methods which are well entrenched and sanctified by tradition". However, some studies such as Peacock (2001) show that gradual change of attitudes can take place through training programs such as TESL programs.

2.3.2.4 Testing Listening

Schools, teachers and students adopt the topics that are commonly included in the high stake exams. The high stake exams are exams that are conducted on the national level. High stake exams exert a considerable impact on what is taking place in the classroom. Andrews (2004) states that tests have an effect on teaching and learning. They can be positive tools or negative tools as well. Turner (2000) strongly confirms that testing ought to help bring about beneficial outcomes in teaching and learning.

One of the main characteristics of a good exam is validity. For an exam to be successful, it must be valid. The validity of an exam is the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. Measuring external knowledge

outside the curriculum as well as omitting essential parts of it lead to invalid exams. The exam should contain a representative sample of the curriculum material. It should reflect the objectives of the curriculum.

Teaching listening is a part of any EFL program. It should be included in any examination program. Excluding this essential part leads to negative effects. It is often noted that teachers and learners emphasize the content of high stake exams, excluding any other material that is not usually covered by these exams. If testing the listening skill is omitted, teachers and students will be reluctant to study the listening materials.

2.4 Previous studies

Studies conducted in the Libyan context did not concern the listening skill in particular. These studies concerned the difficulties that teachers face in teaching EFL in general. For example (Giaber 2014, Dalala 2019, Mohsen 2014, and Pathan et al (2016) point out the need for more qualified teachers, the use of recent teaching methods that involve learners more and limit the teacher authoritative role in class, provision of language equipment, professional development, lack of coordination between teachers and quality inspection. However, Altaib & Omar (2015) discussed the mismatch between the goals and content of the new English curriculum and the reality of teaching inside classrooms. Their study reveals that there is a gap between what was expected from the new curriculum and what is actually being done in classrooms. Pathan et al (2016) also refer to the overuse of the Grammar Translation Method in teaching EFL which leaves no space for teaching the skills of listening, speaking and writing.

There are numerous studies outside the Libyan context that targeted the listening skill in particular. Similar studies conducted in some developing countries revealed similar problems. Saidur (2014) conducted a study that involved both teachers and students at secondary level education in Bangladesh which revealed that both the teachers and students avoided the listening skill. The study revealed that the exam system does not include testing the listening skill. The student participants of the study had some psychological problems such as shyness which hindered their concentration on listening. This study also revealed that the cases in which listening was undertaken, there was focus on one teaching technique: bottom-up techniques

where students concentrated on finding the meaning of individual words rather than the whole text meaning. The school under investigation also lacked appropriate listening and language facilities. Eltaib (2011) investigated the difficulties of teaching listening to large classes in Sudanese universities. The findings found evidence that large classes negatively affect the listening classroom. It also revealed that that the strategies used for teaching listening were not effective. Hamouda (2013) aimed at identifying the listening difficulties that Saudi students face in their EFL listening classrooms. The study revealed that linguistic difficulties affected those students. They suffered from insufficient vocabulary, pronunciation problems. They also showed great amounts of anxiety and lack of concentration. Yilmaz & Yavus (2015) conducted a study to a primary school in Istanbul to investigate the effect of learners' psychology in learning the listening skill. The findings showed that the students have problems based on some psychological factors. There was a high level of anxiety. The study also revealed that there is an overall lack of practising listening.

3.Methodology

This research is based on a quantitative methodology which is often used for exploratory and measurement purposes. In this research it is used to measure the frequency of teaching listening inside Tripoli public schools. It employs two data collection instruments: a questionnaire and classroom observation. The use of more than one tool for gathering information can lead to more authentic findings.

3.1 Study instruments

In order to provide answers to the research questions, the study made use of two data collection tools. The first tool is the classroom observation which is followed by the questionnaire as a second tool.

3.1.1 Classroom observation

Classroom observation is a quantitative method that is widely used for measuring particular classroom practices and recording their frequency. It is a good tool that enables researchers to study the educational activities inside classrooms and provide evidence from a natural setting. One of the uses of classroom observation is to evaluate programs and measure degrees of implementation. The feedback from observations can be used to improve

teaching. Several studies, such as that of Stallings (1973) Farrel (2007), Allright (1988), have found that teachers could positively change their attitude and behaviors after receiving appropriate feedback and suggestions for improvement.

The purpose of classroom observation in this study is to check whether teaching listening is included in EFL classrooms and measure the frequency of these classes. Observation took place over a period of three school semesters: Fall 2018, Spring 2019 and Fall 2019. 24 teachers belonging to different secondary schools were observed. 8 teachers were assigned for observation each semester. The observation was held during the Teaching Practice Program that the Faculty of Education-Tripoli implements each semester. The period of observation was 40 days for each semester. It is believed that this period is sufficient for the teachers to cover one whole unit of the course book including all the different lessons. English lessons are 5 periods weekly. Each period is 35-40 minutes. During this period, the observers should be able to check whether teaching the different listening sections provided in the target unit were covered.

The observation sought to follow up with the practice of 8 teachers for each semester. In order that the observation yields authentic information, the participants were followed up through three different mediums. If one medium was short for giving sufficient information, the other two will cover up this shortage.

First, observation was conducted by the researchers through attending classroom lessons for each one of the participants. Each participant was visited for a number of times. The duration of the observation period ranged from 20 minutes to the full time of the class (40 minutes). The focal points of observation are made in a checklist. The checklist is divided into two parts. The first part checks whether listening is given and included in the lesson plan of the teacher. Based on the information given in this part, the observers move to the second part of observation which seeks information about the quality of the lesson and the competence of the students as well as the teacher. If there are no listening lessons given, there will be no need for the second part of the checklist.

Second, observation was also conducted by the trainee teachers, students of the Faculty of Education – Tripoli, who are taking a teaching practice course in the school under investigation. These trainee teachers provide rich and more authentic information about what happens inside public classrooms. The requirements of the Teaching Practice Course dictates that trainees spend approximately a period of 40 days attending lessons as well as giving lessons. They have more direct contact with classroom teachers and more familiar with them.

Third, examining students' course books, workbooks and notebooks has also been conducted for the purpose of looking for written materials that provide evidence of students' attempts to perform the listening exercises. This step enables the researchers to get a better image of the classroom practice concerning teaching listening

3.1.2 The Questionnaire

The aim of the study is to measure the existence and frequency of the listening lessons in EFL classrooms. The best tool for such aim is a questionnaire. To be able to come up with generalizations about the study hypothesis, a questionnaire that addresses English secondary school teachers was designed and distributed as soft copies as well as hard copies. The questionnaire was reviewed by two professors and pretested before administration. The questionnaire was not intended to be a long one for two reasons. The first is that it is supported by another tool of gathering data. The second is for a common knowledge that participants usually decline the request of filling long questionnaires. The items are adequate to provide answers to the study questions.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part comprises 6 questions that enquire about the participants' experience, whether they teach listening, and opinions and attitudes about the listening skill. The second part comprises 10 statements that investigate the difficulties that challenge teachers in their attempts to teach listening. These statements are based on findings of similar previous research mentioned above in section 2.

3.2 Study population

The participants of the questionnaire study were 60 secondary school teachers, who were chosen randomly from different schools in Tripoli. They

were holders of bachelor degree. They were female teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education as full time teachers of English. Their teaching experiences were varied from 1 to over 15 years of teaching English. The participants of the observation were 24 teachers chosen from the schools that host the teaching practice program conducted by the Faculty of Education – Tripoli.

3.3 School course books

The EFL program adopted by the Ministry of Education in Libya is the last Garnet version "21st Century English for Libya, 2019" designed for elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. A course book of 8 units supported by a workbook is designed for each year. The books include a variety of materials that cover the four language skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking. These skills are supported by a variety of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation activities. The listening skill material occupies an important part in each unit. Each unit can have up to 5 listening activities in addition to the listening activities provided in the workbook. Garnet has designed a web site that provides a variety of services to the users. Teachers can download the material, teaching aids and the CDs. A teacher guidebook is also available to the teachers who teach English. It seems that there is no problem with the provision of listening materials and necessary tools as far as Garnet is concerned. However, public schools provide the course books only. Any other materials such as CDs and other listening equipment are generally left to the teachers to access on his or her own.

4. Data analysis

This section presents analysis of the data that has been gathered by the questionnaire and the classroom observation. The analysis is presented as numbers and percentages. It begins with the questionnaire analysis followed by classroom observation.

4.1Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire results are divided into two parts. The first concerns data about the participants' experiences and attitudes towards teaching listening. The second explores the difficulties that the participants encounter when teaching listening.

Results of Part 1

1- Teaching experience	1-5 years		6-10 years		11-15 years		Over 15 years	
	N0	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
	22	36.6%	12	20%	8	13.3%	18	30%

2-Do you include the course book listening materials as part of your teaching English inside your classroom?	Yes		No	
	No	%	No	%
	22	36.6%	38	63.3%

3-Do you agree that the teachers of English teach the listening skill regularly?	Yes		No	
	No	%	No	%
	8	13.3%	52	86.6%

4-In your opinion, which skill has the first priority in teaching English?	Reading		Writing		Speaking		Listening	
	N0	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
	12	20%	4	6.6%	16	26.6%	28	46.6%

5-Do you agree that the skill of listening is the least considered and taught among other language skills and language areas.	Yes		No	
	No	%	No	%
	38	63.3%	20	33.3%

6-Do you agree that teaching listening is a complex and demanding task?	Yes		No	
	No	%	No	%
	42	70%	18	30%

The first part of the questionnaire results show that the participants whose experiences range between 1-5 years form the largest percentage (36.6%) which means that a new teacher generation is gradually replacing the older ones. The results clearly show that more than half of the participants (63.3%) do not teach listening while (36.6%) claim they do, but (86.6) deny that listening is taught regularly. However, (46.6%) of the participants believe that the skill of listening is the most important of all other skills. In spite of the high percentage of positive attitude towards teaching listening, it is found that (63.3%) of the participants believe that it is the least considered skill in the

EFL program in public schools. 70% of the participants find that teaching listening is a complex and demanding task.

Results of Part 2

It is difficult to teach listening because:	Agree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%
1- Electricity supplies are not available	44	73.3	16	26.6
2- Classroom size is too large.	36	60%	24	40%
3- There is no sufficient time for teaching listening.	48	80%	12	20%
4- There are no suitable equipment available.	58	96.6%	2	3.3%
5- English teachers do not consider teaching listening important.	42	70%	18	30%
6- The students are reluctant to follow the listening lessons.	23	38.3%	37	61.6%
7- Students find listening classes too difficult for them to follow.	34	56.6%	26	43.3%
8- Students show levels of anxiety and tension when they have listening tasks.	38	63.3%	22	36.6%
9- Students are not trained for listening in the previous school years.	56	93.3%	4	6.6%
10- The school and the Ministry of Education do not include testing the listening skill.	60	100%	0	0%

The second part of the questionnaire is devoted to identifying the difficulties that challenge teachers in their attempts to teach listening. Electricity shortage is one of the main problems which is agreed upon by 73.3% of the participants. 80% of the participants believe that the English lesson periods in school are insufficient; the point that leads many teachers to sacrifice the listening skill. Lack of equipment received agreement of 80% and the large size of classroom also received the agreement of 60%. However, the most leading factor that causes omitting teaching the listening skill is that it is not included in the testing program of both the school exams and state exams. It received agreement by 100% of the participants. The second leading factor that makes teaching listening difficult is that it is not taught in previous years i.e. ignoring teaching listening begins at early stages in the English teaching

program, a fact which needs further investigation in another study. These two factors lead to a general impression that teaching listening is not important, a questionnaire item that is agreed upon by 70% of the participants.

Because of this neglect that takes place in previous school stages, students find difficulty with following these lessons, a statement that is agreed upon by 56.6% of the participants. The learners also exhibit anxiety during these classes, a questionnaire item that received agreement by 63.3% . However, in spite of this, the students are not reluctant to learn listening when these lessons are given. 61.6% of the participants disagree about the statement that students are reluctant to learn listening.

4.2 Classroom observation analysis

This section presents analysis of the data that was obtained from classroom observation. The results are divided into two parts. The first lists the percentage of teaching listening in the 24 classrooms that were subject to observation. The second part concerns obtaining data about the quality of teaching listening in those classrooms where listening was part of the teacher's English lessons.

Results of Part 1

Percentages calculated out of 24 participants

Listening lesson included in the teacher's lesson plan	□yes (2 , 8.3%)	□ No (22, 91.6%)
Listening lesson given during class	□yes (5, 20.8%)	□No (19 , 79.1%)
Written answers for the exercises based on listening in the students' course book , work book , note book	□yes (5, 20.8%)	□No (19 , 79.1%)

The results of the first part of observation have shown that 5 classes (20.8%) of the 24 classrooms observed included teaching the listening sections provided in the observed part of the curriculum while (79.1 %) of the participants did not. However, not all the listening sections in the unit were taught. Concerning lesson plans, only two teachers (8.3%) have planned for their listening lessons and included that in their lesson plan notebooks. (91.6%) did not. Checking the students' books and note books for written answers for the listening tasks shows that they are rare. It is also noticed that

students draw a cross out line over the listening sections with remarks such as ‘not important’ written beside the listening sections.

The second part of the observation was intended to check the quality of teaching listening if it was part of the teachers’ schedule, and measuring students’ competence as well as teachers’ competence. However, it turned out that a very small number of the participants did teach listening. Only 5 participants attempted covering parts of the materials dedicated for listening. The following section sheds light on the nature of these practices inside the classroom.

Results of Part 2

Percentages calculated out of 5 participants

Appropriateness of time	□yes (2 participants)		□No (3 participants)	
Teaching techniques	□Bottom-up technique (5)		□Top-down technique(0)	
Teacher feedback	□yes (1)		□No (4)	
Equipment used	□Mobile phone / Speakers (3)	□Data show and laptop / speakers (2)	□Smart board (0)	□Listening Lab (0)
Level of student participation	□high	□average	□under average (2)	□low (3)
Students vocabulary knowledge	□high	□average	□under average (3)	□low (3)
Students sound discrimination abilities	□high	□average	□under average (2)	□low (3)
Students grammar knowledge	□high	□average	□under average (1)	□low (4)
Teachers competence	□high (4)	□average (1)	□under average	□low

The results show that the listening lesson time is not enough. If it is considered at all, it is only given a small part of the class. The teachers followed the bottom-up techniques which focuses on explaining the new words and sentence meanings. Teachers have no time to give feedback and when they do so, they mainly depend on giving model answers provided by the teacher’s

guide book. The teachers depend on their own means to give the listening lessons. They make use of their own equipment such as mobile phones and computers. One teacher brought her own data show and laptop, another could get access to the school data show which is usually difficult to obtain. The teachers download the listening materials themselves from the publisher's site on the internet. The schools do not provide any support to these lessons. The level of participation is mostly low or under average. It is clear that the students are not used to the listening lessons. Observing the students' responses have shown that they find difficulty to deal with the words. They ask about simple words which they should be familiar with at the secondary stage. For example, they ask about words such as the verbs *want, need, speak, meet, learn, study* and the nouns *parents, summer, week, hour* (Secondary 1, unit 1, lesson 3: p 12). Sometimes they know the word, but they fail to distinguish it during listening. This shows that they have difficulty with sound discrimination. They do not recognize words such as *hair, daughter, mark, yours* (Secondary 1, course book, lesson 3 B: p 54). However, they can recognize them as written forms. These difficulties make the students insist on following the tape transcript provided at the back of the course book. Although it could be useful to follow this technique, however, the listening exercise turns into a reading task rather than a listening task. Students have difficulties with grammar. Their responses show that they fail to recognize the meanings affected by grammar. For example, when they answer questions, they don't use the right tense, plural forms, and the appropriate use of pronouns.

When it comes to the competence of the teachers, it is noted that good teachers take the risk of teaching listening. They understand the importance of listening in language acquisition. That is why they make serious efforts to teach listening.

5. Discussion

The results of both the classroom observation and the questionnaire provide answers to the study questions. The following sections provide details of these answers.

5.1 Question 1

Do teachers of English teach the listening materials included in the English school course books used in public schools in Tripoli and how often they do that?

The results show an evidence that the listening skill does not occupy the position it should have in the EFL program. This shortcoming is the result of a mismatch between the goal and content of the curriculum prescribed for teaching EFL in public schools and what is really going on in these schools. The listening lessons are generally skipped. Teachers ignore the listening lesson and directly move to the next sections, or they give explicit instructions for the students to leave out the listening section. Furthermore, the evidence for excluding the listening skill is obtained from the participants' lesson plan notebooks and students' course and workbooks. These documents have shown no traces for teaching listening.

It could be argued that teachers are allowed to manipulate the curriculum materials, but how far are they allowed to do so? Studies show that teachers are allowed to manipulate the curriculum. They can skip, add change the material according to their students needs. Shawer's study (2010) explained how teachers interact with the curriculum in different ways. There is the curriculum developer who adapts and expand the curriculum. There is the curriculum maker who designs curriculums based on their students needs. There is the curriculum transmitter who strictly follow the curriculum materials with no changes. The question is where do the teachers under investigation fit? Which type are they? They do not fit under any of these types. It is because they systematically skip an essential skill that is considered by many scholars as the base to all other skills. The issue is not about skipping one exercise or two, but deliberately leaving out particular sections that represent one whole skill. Certainly, this is not a desirable practice.

5.2 Question 2

What are the difficulties that face public school teachers when teaching listening?

Based on the study background presented in Chapter 2, the researchers listed a number of difficulties that commonly face teachers when teaching listening. These difficulties were listed in the questionnaire for approval or disapproval

by the participants. The details of the findings concerning this part of the research is presented in the following sections.

5.2.1 Difficulties concerning classroom environment

The results show that most of the elements of an effective classroom environment for listening practice is almost non-existent. The first of these elements is the large size of classrooms. Teaching a foreign language requires monitoring each individual in class and giving each individual an appropriate chance to participate. Large numbers make this task difficult. The second concerns the time given for English classes. Most of the participants (76.4%) believe that the time allocated for English classes is not enough for covering all skills and language areas. The third concerns the language equipment necessary for teaching and learning a foreign language. All participants state that there are no facilities for teaching listening. No language laboratories, no CD players, no data shows and no CDs for the material given in the course book are provided and most importantly no electricity. The matter is left for each individual teacher to deal with. Some of the teachers bring their own equipment and depend on their own efforts to get access to these material and CDs in the Internet. Of course not all teachers are expected to do this. The fourth concerns anxiety in the EFL classroom. A considerable amount of anxiety that students suffer from when doing listening tasks. This is stated by the agreement of (64.7) of the teacher participants. This is partly because students are not trained for listening tasks in their previous years, a statement which was agreed upon by (94%) of the participants. This means that ignoring teaching listening is a phenomenon that is not restricted to particular levels, but starts early in the EFL program. Although students show anxiety, and the level of participation in class is low, however, they seem to welcome the listening lessons as the results show. It seems that the listening lessons provide meaning to foreign language learning. It presents another dimension for learning a foreign language that does not necessarily deal with memorizing some definitions or doing grammar exercises. Actually this result agrees with other previous studies e.g. Hasan & Hoon (2012) whose research found that the participants of their study enjoyed listening to podcasts and this raised their interest in learning English.

5.2.2 Difficulties concerning students' language problems

The results show that there are difficulties with different language abilities. Sound discrimination was one. Students' vocabulary list is far below average and they seem to have difficulty in recognizing the forms as heard, but not as written. They fail to recognize the grammatical morphemes such as plural and past morphemes. One of the suggested reasons for these difficulties concerns the difficulty of the listening materials. **5**6.6% of the participants agree that the materials are difficult whereas 43.3% disagree. However, through observing students' responses to the listening tasks, it is clear that the students are not used to listening lessons. There is lack of listening practice in early stages. However, there is another important factor discussed in the literature. It concerns the complexity of teaching and learning listening. Byrne (1984) finds listening comprehension a highly complex problem-solving activity that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills. When listening, learners find themselves engaged in a complex process that involves discrimination between sounds, understanding vocabulary and the significance of grammatical structures. They need to interpret the stress and intonation effects. They also need to understand the pragmatic and context effects as well as meanings derived from cultural background. 70% of the questionnaire participants agree that teaching and learning listening is a complex task for both teachers and learners. However, these difficulties do not entail that this skill be left out. On the contrary, a basic skill such as listening should be planned carefully and more importantly it should begin early in the EFL program.

5.2.3 Difficulties concerning school and teacher attitudes

The attitude of the teachers towards teaching listening seems to be relatively positive. 70% of them believe in the importance of teaching listening. 46.6% believe that listening has first priority in the EFL program. However, there is a conflict between teachers' beliefs and their actual practice in the classroom as the observational study shows. Moreover, there is discrepancy between what they claim they do and what their colleagues do. 36.6% say they teach listening, but 86.6% believe their colleagues do not. 63.3% believe that listening is the least considered in EL program. This conflict leads to the conclusion that there is a problem with teaching listening in public schools. It could be true that their

attitudes are positive but the means for bridging these attitudes with reality are not available. Neither the schools nor the inspection bureau and the Ministry of Education seem to follow up what goes on inside the classrooms concerning teaching listening. If they did have direct contact with the teachers providing support and guidance, the results would be different.

5.2.4 Difficulties concerning testing listening

The fact that the Ministry of Education does not include testing the listening skill in the state examination has badly affected the EFL program. This fact was mentioned in many previous studies such as Saidur (2014). Lack of motivation for teaching and learning listening is attributed to this important factor. When teachers and learners know that passing listening tests is not required, they will inevitably drop it from their English program. Normally teachers and students focus on topics that are included in the exams. If public schools, teachers, and students know that promotion to higher education levels is dependent on passing listening exams, they will deal with all the difficulties mentioned above differently. Schools will be compelled to provide time, equipment and necessary materials. Therefore the role of higher authorities can exert great changes in the EFL program in public schools.

5.2.5 Teacher qualification and professional development

Most of the Libyan EFL secondary school teachers are holders of bachelor degree. Some of these teachers are graduates of faculties of education where they are trained to teach EFL. Some are graduates of faculties of humanities and arts. The latter group's study program does not include courses that specialize in teaching EFL. Therefore, a considerable number of teachers lack knowledge and training for teaching English. They need to be introduced to methods and strategies for teaching EFL. They also need to practice teaching before starting their career as teachers. The study participants under observation exhibited this lack of knowledge. Most of them depend on the Grammar Translation Method with heavy dependence on using their native tongue (Arabic). As concerning those few teachers who included teaching listening in their classrooms, they depend only on the bottom–up technique. Although, as mentioned earlier, teachers who teach listening are good teachers who have high qualifications for teaching, however, these good teachers need further training and development. Moreover, those teachers

who are holders of bachelor of Education do not make use of all the knowledge they acquired while they were students. There is a gap between what they had studied and what they do in class. What is generally noticed by the researchers throughout their visits to the schools before and during this study is that teachers do not receive further training for teaching the skills of English. All training ends by the end of the study years in collages. No doubt, teachers need continuous training for the different parts of teaching EFL. One of these is teaching listening.

6- Conclusion

This study has been triggered by a general observation that teaching the listening skill is overlooked by the teachers in the secondary public school sector. The aim was to measure teaching this skill and find out the difficulties that cause this malfunction. The study adopted a quantitative methodology. An observational study and a questionnaire were both used. The participants were secondary school teachers from different schools in Tripoli.

6.1 Findings

The results of both the questionnaire and classroom observation revealed that there is obvious lack of teaching the listening skill. This disadvantage does not seem to be the responsibility of the teacher alone, but also the school, Inspection Bureau and the Ministry of Education are responsible too. The schools are not equipped to perform this basic part of the curriculum material. The choice for teaching listening is left to the teacher. Few teachers, based on their own equipment and personal efforts, undertake this challenging task with no support from the school altogether. Moreover, this essential part of the EFL program in these schools is dropped from the testing program on the school level as well as the state level. This omission has negatively affected teaching this skill. This negative national attitude has developed a general feeling held by the teachers and the learners that this skill is not as important as the other language skills. The findings also showed that teaching listening is a demanding task that requires constant training. Teachers need professional development courses and workshops that keep them updated and acquainted with the recent developments in the field.

6.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that an evaluation of the EFL program be performed to pinpoint the weaknesses and shortages in this program. Change is effected and facilitated by top authorities in the educational field. Change of attitude should begin at the top. This will subsequently lead to change on lower levels. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education with coordination with the Inspection Bureau to supervise the implementation of the EFL curriculum program. Teachers need support, equipment, training as well as guidance and supervision. It is also recommended that faculties of education play a leading role in the professional development of teachers. The teaching practice program, which these faculties conduct, has enabled the faculty supervisors to observe the implementation of the EFL program in the schools and detect shortcomings in the program. Faculties of education should not restrict their role to observation only, but exceed them to provide suggestions, treatment, and workshops that help remedy the difficulties that teachers face.

6.3 Recommendations for further studies

This study has come up with an important finding that highlights the absence of teaching listening not only in the area under investigation, but also in other early stages in the EFL program in public schools. Therefore, the study recommends another study be made to investigate teaching listening in the elementary and preparatory stages. This skill must be developed as early as possible otherwise

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