

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English has become a global language and it dominates in many fields, including education, business, media, politics and entertainment. Many non-native speakers have adopted English as a foreign language (EFL) and second language (ESL). Some non-native speakers use it as an official language, while others use it in education and as a lingua franca. The prominent status of learning English cannot be ignored in this increasingly interconnected and globalized world. Due to the importance of English as a global language, English language acquisition has become a primary concern, and subsequently, teaching and learning English are part of education systems worldwide.

The process of teaching and learning English has a crucial role in acquiring this foreign/second language. The reading comprehension skill “is a very important channel for getting the required exposure to the target language. It helps foreign/second language learners to understand the intricacies and nuances of the target language” (Mustafa and Zamzam, 2013). Nasser and Ra'ed (2011) explained that reading comprehension does not stand as a single skill, but it is a combination of many skills, whereby the reader interacts with the words and text for content and pleasure. Through reading, students learn writing, vocabulary, speaking, spelling, grammar and other aspects. Regardless of the importance of the reading comprehension skill, some foreign/second language

learners reportedly have negative attitudes towards it and sometimes consider it tough, challenging and problematic (Mustafa and Zamzam, 2013).

Consequently, the journey towards an appropriate reading program and curriculum has been among the objectives continuously at the centre of attention and interest for educators in Libya and throughout the world, despite several research efforts (Innajih, 2007; Mustafa and Zamzam, 2013; Elmadwi, 2014) over the years to promote the teaching of this skill. Thus, with regards to reading comprehension, English remains a challenge for both learners and teachers. Therefore, there is a growing need to propose suitable instructional methods to facilitate reading comprehension.

1.2 English Language in Libya

In Libya, English is studied as a foreign language (EFL), and reading comprehension has the highest priority in preparatory education. In addition, there is more awareness of the importance of English as a foreign language. Therefore, reading competence has prompted many local schools to concentrate on efforts to enhance instructional programs through extra-curricular activities and pre-requisite courses as a means of providing extra practice hours (Shihiba, 2011). Such effort is ongoing with the aim to improve this major language skill.

Teaching English in Libya is heavily dependent on the grammar-translation method (Warayet, 2011; Tabulawa, 2003). One explanation for this is that because English is taught as a foreign language, little or no attention is geared toward enhancing students' English communicative ability (Riazi and Rahimi, 2005; Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Various studies have been conducted in recent years that highlight Libyan students' problems with preferring communicative activities over old methods, especially at the preparatory and secondary education levels (Tabulawa, 2003). According to Tabulawa (2003), researchers indicate that Libyan students strongly prefer communicative activities, but their instructors are not aware of this preference.

Tabulawa (2003) stated that studies show a recent change in attitudes towards English as a foreign language. Language learners in the Libyan context have come to realize that traditional methods of language instruction, such as the Grammar-translation method and teacher-centred approach are ineffective. They have revisited the pedagogical implications of methods that are a combination of both teacher- and learner-centred activities. For Shihiba (2011), new communicative approaches in the Libyan context towards English may produce better learning results. With such communicative approaches, learners are expected to take on active roles to participate in class activities and contribute in various communication and interactions during English classes. In this way, learners have the possibility to enhance their English language knowledge and take steps to achieve English proficiency (Shihiba, 2011).

The necessity for new methods of teaching English to Libyan students has increased; "Libyan students believe that learning English using traditional methods such as GTM does not fulfil their needs in learning the language" (Orafi and Borg, 2009, p. 244). Noora (2008) noted that with the invention of the internet and other technological advancements, learners of English seem to prefer using communicatively-structured types of instruction. Students ought to know how to understand meaning from reading

comprehension texts by using appropriate strategies rather than spend time attempting to make sense of isolated words and rules. In general, research findings indicate that learners of English can benefit from a combination of effective reading instruction elements, namely reading strategy instruction and communicative language learning (Zoghi et al., 2010).

1.3 Background of the Study

This section briefly presents the Libyan education system with key educational culture features. The English language teaching background in Libya clearly shows the various challenges with teaching English in Libya. The next section also presents the reasons for employing communicative language teaching rather than the grammar translation system. This curriculum depicts the significant shift in English learning and teaching in Libya.

TABLE 1.1 New Educational Structure in Libya

Level	Description
Kindergarten	Two years - enrolls children at four and five years old
Basic Education	Lasts for nine years – from age 6-15 years old. It starts with grade one and continues to grade nine, (6 years at the primary level and 3 years at the preparatory level)
Secondary (Intermediate) Education and Training	Lasts for three to four years- enrolls the group of 16-19 years old. Secondary schools in Libya are divided into the following six main divisions: Basic Sciences (focuses on disciplines of mathematics and physics), Engineering Sciences (studies sciences of engineering and construction) Life Sciences (focuses on disciplines of chemistry and biology), Social Sciences (studies social sciences and humanities), Economic Sciences (includes the study of administration, accounting, economics and banking sciences), and Arts and Media.

University Education	Includes universities, higher institutions, and higher technical and vocational centers.
Advanced Studies	Includes masters and PhD (Doctorate) degrees.

1.3.1 The Education System in Libya since The 1990s

As Table 1.1 illustrates, the New Libyan Educational Structure with 5 education levels was proposed in order to cover and support all learners of different age groups. However, with this New Educational Structure, students reportedly encountered many problems in learning English at all five levels of education from 1986 to the mid-1990s, while foreign language teachers including English teachers were banned from schools and universities. According to Elabber (2011, p.34), the ban was due to political forces that deeply influenced the education system at that time. Consequently, teachers of English were made redundant or had to teach other subjects such as history and geography.

Elabber (2011) pointed out that “some of those teachers practiced a programme called in Arabic ‘Tagger Maser’ in Libya, which means change of direction or specialty to teach other subjects in elementary, preparatory and secondary school. Therefore, some of those teachers preferred to stay where they were and not return to their original specialty” (Elabber, 2011, p.11). As a result, Libyan students had no exposure to the English language and teachers were not updated with innovative teaching methods such as the communicative learning approach. According to Najeeb and Eldokali (2011) and Grada (2014) this gap in English language learning in Libya made a considerable dent

in the English language levels among Libyan students. The next section presents a discussion about the basic education in Libya.

1.3.2 Basic Education in Libya (Primary and Preparatory)

Basic education is considered the educational foundation of all children between the ages of six and fifteen. According to the education policy in Libya, all Libyan children, male and female, aged six to fifteen are required to enrol in basic education and are not allowed to be involved in any kind of employment. Basic education aims to provide the minimum range of knowledge and concepts, and to create a suitable setting for children to acquire the skills and ideas that will help them take responsibility for themselves when they grow up. The first nine years of education (six years of primary school and three years of preparatory school) are compulsory for all students aged six to fifteen. The primary education target demonstrates that students at this stage must learn standard Arabic and improve their linguistic ability.

In addition, the English language was introduced at level three (students aged 9) to expose students to English at an early age. This education stage is divided into four-year and two-year periods with assessments at the end of the fourth and sixth grades. Students also study Arabic language, Koranic studies, Jamahiriya society, mathematics, sciences, history, geography, arts, music and physical education. The preparatory stage is from age twelve for three years. During this period, students study Arabic language, Koranic studies, English language, history, geography, sociology, mathematics, and sciences.

At this point, English language teachers use the 'English for Libya' textbook series.

They mainly apply the grammar translation method with focus on basic, English grammar rules, such as forming questions and using the present tense. The preparatory level is the second stage of basic education, which culminates in a general examination administered by the regional education office. The examination leads to a general, basic education certificate (Ministry of Education 2004). Students who fail to complete the full nine years of basic education have the opportunity to enrol in one to three-year long vocational programs.

According to Suwaed (2011), “English is taught as a compulsory subject in all grades. She discussed that students in all grades of basic education need to pass the corresponding English exams before they move to the next grade. Aldabbus (2008) also stated that the teaching methods in Libyan basic education schools are problematic. She explains it is a mechanical learning process aimed solely at passing exams and moving onto the next stage; focus is on memorization and repetition, and students are both unmotivated and reluctant to participate. Nonetheless, based on the abovementioned arguments, English has a crucial role in the Libyan education system, as it is a compulsory subject to be passed at each education level.

1.4 Characteristics of Libyan Education Culture

It is common knowledge that the sociocultural factors present in a society affect the education system of that society (Tudor, 2001). According to Orafi (2008) and Salama (2014) the sociocultural elements that prevail in a particular context affect the educational process of a society. Students and teachers enter the classroom with particular beliefs and expectations regarding their duties in class, including what and

how to teach. Hence, it is necessary to examine the sociocultural elements present in Libyan society, for example the role of teachers in Libyan schools, in order to comprehend the impacts of the Libyan sociocultural behaviour in the context of this study.

Teachers are often viewed as the sole authority in a classroom, so they are not to be questioned or interrupted. The perception of teachers in Libya requires them to appear knowledgeable, meaning that something like the inability to answer students' questions or exhibiting uncertainty in any aspect of English would be viewed as a shortcoming of the teachers (Orafi, 2008, Altiaeb, 2013). According to Grada (2014), the pressure of constantly having to provide exact answers may have forced teachers to concentrate on gaining knowledge on the target language instead of enhancing their teaching skills. Besides, this pressure may avert teachers from applying other teaching techniques, which would leave them with a sense of insecurity. Hence, teachers generally avoid ambiguous questions the students pose while sticking to old methods. Moreover, it is also believed that teachers tend to completely discourage questions altogether.

Students in Libya usually presume that in the classroom they must sit quietly and memorize the lessons the teachers convey. Interrupting or arguing with teachers is taken as being rude and impolite. Students should sit at the front of the class and raise their hands for permission to ask questions (Aldabbus, 2008). Participation in class normally only occurs when the teachers call on a particular student. Therefore, such student presumptions may hinder their participation in class even in activities that require them to take part actively. Besides, there is always the segregation of males and females in

Libyan culture, even within families. As a result, men and women develop without close relationships to each other (Atieab, 2013). Therefore, working with the opposite sex in class may be considered a violation of sociocultural norms. This is the case even in mixed male-female schools, where males prefer only to interact amongst themselves, as do the females.

The common perception is that learning is an individual struggle rather than a collective and dynamic process. This is an indication that the teacher is seen as the main authority in the teaching and learning process, whereas students are simply meant to receive the lessons entirely. Students strive to achieve on exams, as those who do well are highly esteemed by Libyan society. Families with children who do well on exams may tend to openly display joy. As for teachers, they are mainly expected to prepare students to pass exams successfully. If students fail to succeed in this regard, the teachers are held accountable. This pressure thus forces teachers to focus on teaching only what will be tested on exams and disregard the rest.

In short, the social, cultural, and religious factors present in Libyan society greatly affect what goes on in Libyan classrooms. These factors dictate the roles of teachers and students in classrooms and indicate the kinds of behaviour that are acceptable or otherwise. Furthermore, they influence the lessons and how they are learnt. Some of these issues will be discussed in more detail along with the data gathered for the present study.

1.5 Teaching English in Libyan Preparatory Schools

The English language carries a significant status in Libya, where it is the only obligatory foreign language taught in public schools and higher institutions. The new textbooks—especially those designed for preparatory and secondary schools—are more difficult, leaving not only pupils but also English language teachers struggling to cope with the English content (Shihiba, 2011). This is due to the students' low achievement standards. However, existing English teachers are not sufficiently qualified to teach higher levels of the new syllabi. This view is also expressed by the Libyan Minister for Higher Education (Porter and Yergin 2006; Alhmali 2007; Orafi and Borg 2009).

Regarding staff, nearly all language teachers at preparatory and secondary schools are Libyan citizens with a Bachelor's degree (BA) in English from one of the English language institutions in Libya. Although the Libyan government entirely supports and finances the education system at all levels, Libyan educationalists voice serious concerns regarding the quality of the education provided (Asker 2011; Alhamali 2007; Ghanem 2006, Grada, 2014). According to Alhamali (2007, p.78), "the educational programmes suffer from limited curricula, a lack of qualified teachers, and a strong tendency to learn by rote rather than by reasoning, a characteristic of Arab education in general." The overall picture is a system in which the quality of teaching and training provided for teachers is of low standard and does not meet the teaching demands of the current curricula at preparatory, middle and high schools.

The result is new preparatory, middle and high school curricula that are beyond teachers' knowledge proficiency (Shihiba, 2011). It is found that common teacher

practices in preparatory and secondary schools include the use of traditional methods. The aim is to enable learners to read and translate literature written in the target language, and to further learners' general intellectual development by learning grammar rules and applying the rules by translating sentences between the target and native language (Fatma, 2014).

Normally, a lesson begins with the teacher writing some new words on the board and saying them out loud for the students to hear the pronunciation. The teacher then asks the students to repeat to make sure they attain the correct pronunciation. All local studies (Saleh, 2002; Alhmali, 2007; Orafi, 2008; Shihiba; 2011; Altiab, 2013; Salma, 2014) point out that Arabic dominates classroom interactions in which new word meanings are explained. In order to help memorize English word meanings, students usually write the Arabic translation next to each new word. After ensuring the students understand the words and pronounce them correctly, the teacher chooses a passage to read out. The students have to listen to the passage very carefully, and the teacher then selects a few students to read the passage again. The teacher listens for incorrect pronunciation and corrects mistakes along the way (Orafi, 2008, Fatma, 2014). Teachers also do comprehension checks to ensure the students know the meaning of each word.

Next, a typical lesson concentrates on grammar. The teacher writes the grammatical structures on the board and provides explicit explanations along with examples. The students pay attention to the lesson while noting every example the teacher gives. Upon grammar lesson completion, the students are tested on subject comprehension. As with other subjects in Libya, the primary purpose of teaching English is to help students pass

exams and move on to the next stage. As a teacher of young learners in Libya, the learning process entails the formation of mechanical habits (Fatima, 2014). Basically, the teaching process solely involves asking questions, selecting students to answer the questions, and showing examples on the board while having students emulate and repeat chorally.

Several Libyan teachers still doubt the value contributed by communicative activities, as they are of the opinion that the process of learning any foreign language begins with vocabulary and grammar rules, which differs from acquiring a first language (Orafi, 2008). They believe that students must receive copious amounts of vocabulary and grammar rules to memorize before introducing various activities that put the language to use (Al Buseifi, 2003, Salma, 2014). In-class implementation reflects the belief that grammar translation and audio-lingual methods—which are known as traditional methods of teaching—are favoured (Orafi 2008).

1.6 New Trends of English as a Foreign Language in Libya

Due to the rapid worldwide changes and globalization as well as the importance of English as a dominant global language, English learning and teaching are in great demand. There is an increasing need to interact with foreign countries that share common interests, thus learning and mastering an international language as a medium or link has become a prerequisite in today's world. English is regarded as the main language facilitating international communications. As Crystal (2000) argued, English is effective because it is spoken by nearly a quarter of the world's population. English language use is necessary in facilitating communication with the outside world;

therefore, learning English in Libya has become an everyday life necessity (Awad, 2012).

In order to facilitate the English acquisition process, Libyan curriculum developers proposed a new English curriculum in 2000 for the preparatory and secondary educational levels. The main objective of this new curriculum was to raise the English teaching and learning standards. This syllabus includes English textbooks that come in a series entitled "English for Libya." The aim of this new syllabus was to considerably and remarkably modify Libya's system of learning English. It was an attempt to improve the entire English language education system through substantially changing teaching methods and curriculum materials, and adhering to recent language teaching and learning theories (Orafi, 2008, Salma, 2014).

In this curriculum innovation era, Libyan English language teachers were required to modify their previous methods of teaching and learning along with their opinions and beliefs underpinning their jobs. With the new method, teachers carried a minor role in project organization and design. They were merely expected to apply the strategies and guidelines of the educational policy makers, curriculum designers, and change agents (Orafi, 2008, Grada, 2014).

Although the new version of the curriculum is based on interactive and communicative approaches, teaching personnel still exhibit great resistance to it (Altieab, 2013). The curriculum recommends that both teachers and students use English as much as possible in the classroom (Orafi, 2008). To introduce and highlight the benefits and efficacies of

the proposed curriculum, Libyan English Language teachers sat for briefing classes for almost one week. Inspectors of the Libyan English language held these sessions directly under the supervision of English language educators from the publishing company. These briefing sessions were conducted in order to prepare teachers to convey the curriculum and update their teaching methods. However, no research has been considered to evaluate the extent to which teachers followed the curriculum. In recognising that teachers have a significant role in the success or failure of educational innovations (Fullan, 2001; Carless, 2003; Wedell, 2003), this study was conducted to examine teachers' application of the English syllabus in preparatory schools in Libya, and especially in reading comprehension classes. This study also investigates whether the implementation of the communicative learning approach helps English language students master the language and achieve self-confidence through reading skills.

1.7 Libyan English Language Learners and Reading Comprehension

Learning a second or foreign language is a challenging task that requires considerable effort. Thus, there is always a need to modify and look beyond the different methods through continuous research to make the learning process more practical and enjoyable. In this case, the teaching methods and approaches implemented by foreign language teachers, the materials selected for teaching and learning language skills, and the various motivational and learning strategies are fundamental to the success or failure of foreign language teaching and learning.

The Libyan education system encounters many challenges in preparing a suitable environment and appropriate resources and materials for effective teaching and learning

of English as a foreign language. Although the government and education system have made several efforts to provide all the resources required for an effective teaching and learning process, it is reported that implementations at the school level often leads to failure for various reasons. One reason is teachers' failure to implement the changes incorporated in the innovated English syllabus (Orafi, 2008), another is their lack of CLT comprehension and their low level of language proficiency. Libyan schools have effective teaching materials and great investments have been made in the production of textbooks that follow the communicative approach. The problem is that many teachers prefer to use familiar methods from their own learning days, something that is difficult to change (Inozu, 2011).

This is reportedly a result of unsatisfactory and poor teaching of English as a foreign language, particularly at the school level. Poor teaching thus affects the performance of English learners who opt for university education but have weak English language proficiency. Libyan students who take English as a compulsory course are anecdotally reported to regard reading comprehension as the most problematic and boring activity. Such view leads them to develop a negative attitude towards learning English in general (Mustafa and Zamzam, 2013).

Some Libyan students have such strong negative attitudes towards reading, to the extent that they believe reading comprehension skills should not be taught at all in their courses (Mustafa and Zamzam, 2013). This negative attitude is often the main cause of failure to master foreign language skills. Besides the significance of selecting proper texts for teaching English reading skills, the methods that teachers implement to teach materials

and deliver knowledge are also very important. In foreign language teaching, the quality of instruction is the most important factor for successful learning (Al Moghani, 2003). The teaching approaches employed in the classroom can have a significant impact on motivation, and this is an area that needs further exploration in the Libyan context. Most English teachers rely on the grammar translation method to teach reading comprehension. However, English language students reportedly find it boring and inappropriate; therefore, they lose interest and motivation to learn English (Orafi, 2008).

According to Orafi (2008), the two stages of teaching reading comprehension in the Libyan context are: 1) teach new words in the passage by translating them into Arabic, and 2) teach the grammatical structures included in the text. With the grammar translation method, teachers have the dominant role in class, and consequently, students have a passive role in the language learning process. Changing the teaching methods as well as curriculum innovation is "beyond merely introducing and implementing such innovations, as it involves cultural changes from teachers, classrooms, and schools" (Shakedi, 2006, p. 719). Recently, Libyan English language teachers have attempted to employ new approaches in the teaching curriculum; however, their preconceptions about the traditional teaching system with a cultural background and faith in its efficiency prevent teachers from applying the communicative method appropriately (Shihiba, 2011). The current study was carried out in the hopes of offering some insight and noteworthy messages to syllabus developers, policy makers, and educators in the Libyan educational context. The parties concerned ought to consider students' needs in learning English and find the best solutions to prepare an appropriate curriculum. The assumption in this study is that scrutinizing teachers' actions in the midst of applying

innovative approaches, and looking at how their beliefs and other contextual factors define their actions, will offer important insight into the process of equipping teachers with the most recent and useful communicative methods for teaching the English language.

1.8 Problem Statement

The teacher-student relationship is beyond question at a given educational context and is mainly influenced by the social and cultural norms of the surrounding society. The introduction of a new communicative-learner-centred English language curriculum in Libyan secondary and preparatory schools in 2000 mandated a shift in English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' instructional approach from teacher-centred to learner-centred (Saleh, 2002; Orafi and Borg, 2009). In the Libyan sociocultural context, adapting communicative language teaching (western educational structure in a non-western setting) is believed to be challenging (Orafi, 2008). This is mainly due to the differences between the values and principles of the newly adapted method in this new era, and the prevailing sociocultural and religious principles and norms of non-Western society (the Libyan context). English language teachers who strongly rely on, and have intense faith in the efficiency and appropriateness of old, traditional teaching methods exhibit great resistance against, and confrontation with the communicative language teaching approach. This implies that teachers are required to adapt, change significantly and implement new teaching practices (Saleh, 2002; Ali, 2008; Orafi and Borg, 2009, Fatma, 2014). The current study investigates teachers' views to the implementation of CLT in teaching reading comprehension in the preparatory school.

The new English textbooks include various communication activities and learning tasks primarily designed to be done through pair and group work, role play, problem solving and language games. Appropriate implementation of these activities involves students' true engagement and active participation as well as teachers' adoption of the facilitator role (Phillips et al, 2008). However, several years after this curriculum was first introduced, personal observation and local research reveal that most Libyan preparatory school teachers still adopt teacher-centred instructional approaches (Saleh, 2002; Ahmad, 2004; Dalala, 2006; Alhmali, 2007; Ali, 2008; Orafi & Borg, 2009). Regardless of the orientations provided, Libyan teachers reportedly lack knowledge and understanding of new classroom methods and the performance expected of them (Shihiba, 2011).

In Libyan society and according to Libya's sociocultural context, teachers are considered the main source of knowledge and controllers of the teaching-learning process. Consequently, teachers solely bear the responsibility of knowledge transfer to students (Fatma, 2014; Salma, 2014). Sharing this responsibility with students is considered a mistake, as their ranks as teachers will be devaluated in their students' eyes (Orafi, 2008; Altieab, 2013). Moreover, the school administration and other teachers would regard such teacher as irresponsible and unqualified to teach foreign languages. As an EFL Libyan teacher in Libyan context, the researcher was interested in looking at what actually happens inside the classroom. The researcher felt that teachers' voices need to be heard, and that an investigation of teachers' voices and difficulties which influence teachers' implementation of CLT in teaching reading comprehension is needed.

Grada (2014) discussed that teachers should have a strong personality in their teaching and learning process. This particular point is claimed to be what makes teachers feel unconvinced to use the learner-centred approach. The challenge can also be due to English language teachers' lack of knowledge and preparation for the innovative teaching framework, along with their misunderstanding in employing the new approaches. Such teacher confrontation and opposition are apparently caused by the fact that applying the suggested modifications necessitates a shift in their ideologies, methodologies and principles about teaching and learning (Shihiba, 2011). Since teachers' instructional approaches are commonly structured by their preconceptions of teaching and learning, non-western English language teachers react negatively to an innovative curriculum. This leads to substantial modification of their classroom instruction methods, which requires significant, sudden transitions from a traditional teacher-centred approach to communicative teacher-learner methods (Alnoh, 2009; Shihiba, 2011; Salma, 2104).

In addition, traditional teachers hold prejudice and a strong faith in their traditional methods; hence, their misunderstanding or misinterpretation of novelties can substantially affect how they employ such innovations in the educational context. Consequently, helping teachers enhance their knowledge and understanding of the innovative curriculum and communicative approaches, preparing them professionally with suitable training and offering them proper support and supervision should be considered closely before introducing innovation to the education system (Shihiba, 2011). Teachers and students are bound to a sociocultural framework, and the principles of that setting influence their opinions and prospects. In other words, the cultural and

social behaviour around impacts the relationship between teachers and students who live with the same sociocultural norms. Teachers and students bring their beliefs, ideologies and expectations of their roles in the learning process to the classrooms, thus shaping one of the difficulties that hinder a teacher from adapting to a new role (Orafi, 2009).

Libyan students mostly believe they are only required to sit down quietly in the classroom and commit the lessons conveyed by their teachers to memory. It is considered impolite and disrespectful for students to interrupt the teacher or express opposing opinions in class. Therefore, students attempt to keep calm and quiet in order to conform to their expected roles and to show respect to their teachers (Orafi, 2009). This assumption about teacher and student roles is the reason why some students avoid participating in classroom activities when their active role and dynamic involvement are needed.

As discussed earlier, teachers are considered the principal knowledge source in class, and their main role is to transfer information to students. English language teachers in Libya are usually the sole authority in class and consequently, students should not argue, interrupt or oppose their teachers. Furthermore, considering teachers as authority figures in class sometimes results in negative behaviour, such as students avoiding participation in class activities and consequently losing interest in learning the language. Although English language teachers in Libya attempt to implement innovative communicative approaches in their teaching strategies, they believe they lack knowledge about the new methods. They also feel they are biased and have positive

views of traditional methods, which in turn leads to their failure to motivate students to learn English (Shihiba, 2011).

As a result, the current study is aimed at identifying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) implementation in teaching reading comprehension at the Libyan preparatory level. CLT implementation is investigated in terms of (1) teachers' views of CLT in teaching reading comprehension. (2) the difficulties that Libyan English teachers might face during classroom instruction, (3) CLT activities and how Libyan teachers implement them during class reading sessions, and (4) the significant differences between teachers' teaching experience and the difficulties they face in teaching reading comprehension. In addition, these difficulties might not only be related to teachers' ability to use new methods but might also result from their faith in practising their traditional role. This is to state that English language teachers are required to develop and update their teaching skills.

This study investigates the implementation, difficulties and teachers' views of CLT implementation by Libyan English language teachers in preparatory schools for reading comprehension. Although several studies address this matter at the secondary and university levels, this study is an attempt to expand the findings to the preparatory level and find solutions to the difficulties that Libyan teachers face in applying CLT. After many years of CLT adaptation, this study investigates to what extent English language teachers in Libyan preparatory schools actually use and implement this method, especially in reading comprehension. This study was designed to identify the activities that teachers implement in CLT approach and the difficulties that Libyan English

language teachers may face in applying CLT in reading comprehension. Moreover, the study seeks to find out teachers' views of teaching reading comprehension using the CLT approach.

1.9 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1.9.1 To find out teachers' views of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in teaching reading comprehension.
- 1.9.2 To identify the difficulties that Libyan teachers face in implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) to teach reading comprehension.
- 1.9.3 To identify the activities that Libyan teachers employ in communicative Language teaching (CLT) and the implications of CLT in teaching the reading comprehension skill.
- 1.9.4 To examine the significant differences between lengths of teaching experience and the difficulties Libyan teachers face in implementing CLT to teach reading comprehension.

1.10 Research questions

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

- i. What are teachers' views of communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in teaching reading comprehension?
- ii. What are the major difficulties that Libyan teachers encounter in implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) to teach reading comprehension?

- iii. What types of activities do Libyan teachers apply in communicative language teaching (CLT) and how do they implement them to teach reading in class?
- iv. Are there any significant differences between lengths of teaching experience and the difficulties Libyan teachers face in implementing CLT to teach reading comprehension?

1.11 Hypotheses of the Study

Based on question 1.9.4, the study is aimed to test the following hypotheses:

H0: There are no significant differences between teaching experience ratings and the difficulties that Libyan teachers face in implementing CLT to teach reading comprehension

H1: There is a significant difference between teaching experience rating and the difficulties that Libyan teachers face in implementing CLT to teach reading comprehension.

1.12 Significance of the Study

Reading is one of the most prominent language skills and has long been the focus of attention for foreign language experts, researchers, pedagogues, scholars, teachers and teacher-trainers. Reading prepares EFL learners to exposure to the target language, which is essential in a foreign language teaching and learning context like Libya. Teaching reading comprehension through CLT has been adapted in the Libyan curriculum. However, in some foreign language teaching and learning contexts like

Libya, teaching English using CLT poses various difficulties for learners, especially in the case of the reading comprehension skill.

The researcher formed an interest to observe what actually happens inside classrooms and to understand by listening to the difficulties and problems that teachers faced while teaching with the CLT method in class. The researcher felt that teachers' voices were not being heard and it is necessary to investigate teachers' views and difficulties that influence CLT implementation. Such investigation should offer insight and useful messages for policy makers, curriculum developers and teacher educators.

Although teachers tried to implement CLT and related activities to English, they still expressed having difficulties. They seemed to believe in traditional teaching approaches like the grammar translation method due to students' low proficiency levels. The reason for difficulties may also be teachers' lack of knowledge of implementing innovative approaches such as CLT (Shihiba, 2011). The study provides a clear picture of how teachers implement CLT activities and how many adverse forces and conditions, both internal and external, might constrain these activities for teachers who teach reading comprehension. The study also reveals that the differences in teaching experience significantly affect students and cause difficulties with CLT implementation. Libyan teachers appeared to have adequate knowledge and clear views of the effectiveness of CLT as a teaching method, but they still lack practice and implementation

1.13 Definition of Terms

1.13.1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as an interactive process through which the reader uses code, context analysis, prior knowledge, vocabulary, and language along with executive control strategies to understand text. Reading is defined as a lively process in which readers shift between information and sources, elaborate meanings and strategies, observe their comprehension and utilize the social context to reflect their responses (Walker, 2000).

In addition, Alfassi (2004) defined reading as a vital activity for sufficient functioning and for obtaining information in an existing society that requires a combination of memory and meaning instruction. Reading is a complex activity including looking and thinking for example. It also refers to the use of prior knowledge, vocabulary, and language in order to construct and understand the meaning of the text. Reading comprehension refers to the processes through which the reader forms meaning from the symbols presented on the page. Through reading, Libyan teachers encourage their students to understand the meaning of vocabulary, to read with accurate pronunciation and to construct sentences with correct grammar.

1.13.2 Communicative Approach

The communicative approach in language learning is employed to learn a second or foreign language with emphasis on the improvement in communicative ability (Richard, 1997). The idea is that new words are not presented in isolation but in the context of a

complete sentence and in a meaningful situation (Senel, 2002, p. 122). Many applied linguists regard CLT as one of the most effective approaches to ELT. The central characteristic of Communicative Language Teaching is that "almost everything that is done, is done with communicative intent" (Rao, 2002, p. 87). It "develops the four language skills that make up the relationship with communication" (Richards and Rodgers, 1994, p. 66).

1.13.3 Communicative Language Teaching

According to a study by Richard and Rodger (2001), "the communicative language teaching method is considered the best approach among other methods. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures." This definition is relevant to the current study, which examines the varied principles of CLT that help with classroom teaching. Meanwhile, Richards (2006, p. 2) stated that "communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom."

1.13.4 Preparatory School

In Libya, the preparatory school is the second level of education. Students spend three years of study, from grade one to three from the age of 13 to 15.

1.14 Summary

In this chapter the researcher presents an overview to the educational system in Libya including the key characteristics of its educational culture, basic education in Libya, and provides a background about English language teaching in Libya. This thesis consists seven chapters as follows. Chapter one introduced the idea of the research and explained the rationale for conducting it in the Libyan context with regards to teaching English in Libyan preparatory schools and the Libyan education system in general. The chapter also outlined the study aims and research question. Chapter two offers a detailed description of the study context. It explains the structure of the education system in Libya as well as the English methods used at Libyan preparatory schools. Chapter two findings from recent research on teaching English and also offers a brief account of reading comprehension at Libyan schools. Chapter three offers a detailed description of the methodology employed to answer the research questions and procedures used in the current study. Chapters Four and Five explain the investigation approach and data collection instruments employed in this study. They also address the process of Chapter Six presents the data, and explains and describing and organizing the data. in detail. Chapter seven provides a summary of the main analyses the study findings findings in relation to the research questions, notes the study limitations, outlines the research contributions and suggestions for further research, and discusses the educational implications of this study.