



## Exploring Effective EFL/ESL Teaching Methodologies at Zawia University: A Qualitative Study of Faculty Perspectives

استكشاف فاعلية طرائق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وثانية في جامعة الزاوية: دراسة نوعية من منظور

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### Abstract

This qualitative study examines English language teaching practices among university faculty at Zawia University within the Libyan EFL context, with particular attention to how instructors negotiate pedagogical expectations under linguistic, institutional and socio-cultural constraints. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twenty faculty members from diverse academic disciplines, the data were thematically analyzed to capture teachers' lived classroom experiences, instructional choices and reflective perspectives.

The findings indicate a gradual shift away from strictly teacher-centered and grammar-dominated instruction toward more communicative, interactive and student-responsive practices. However, this shift is neither linear nor uniform. Faculty members actively adapt global pedagogical approaches to local realities by prioritizing learner confidence, incremental language development and flexible use of available resources, including technology where feasible. The study further highlights the role of teacher reflexivity and contextual sensitivity in shaping classroom practice.

By foregrounding the voices of non-native English-speaking faculty, this research contributes a contextually grounded perspective that challenges universalized models of "effective" language teaching. It argues for a more inclusive understanding of pedagogical effectiveness one that recognizes locally constructed, adaptive practices as legitimate responses to the realities of English language teaching in Libyan higher education.

**Keywords:** EFL in Libyan higher education - teacher perspectives - communicative pedagogy - socio-cultural context - qualitative study

### المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة النوعية إلى فحص ممارسات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس بجامعة الزاوية في السياق الليبي لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مع التركيز على الكيفية التي يتفاوض بها المدرسون حول التوقعات البيداغوجية في ظل القيود اللغوية والمؤسسية والاجتماعية-الثقافية. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على مقابلات شبه منظمة أجريت مع عشرين عضواً من أعضاء هيئة التدريس من تخصصات أكاديمية مختلفة، وتم تحليل البيانات تحليلًا موضوعيًا للكشف عن الخبرات الصقيّة المعاشة والاختيارات التدريسية والتأملات المهنية للمشاركين.

وتشير النتائج إلى وجود تحول تدريجي من الأساليب التقليدية المعتمدة على المعلم والتركيز المفرط على القواعد إلى ممارسات أكثر تواصلية وتفاعلية واستجابة لاحتياجات الطلبة. غير أن هذا التحول لا يسير بوتيرة واحدة، إذ يعتمد أعضاء هيئة التدريس

إلى تكييف المقاربات التدريسية العالمية بما يتلاءم مع الواقع المحلي، من خلال التركيز على بناء ثقة المتعلمين، والتدرّج في تنمية المهارات اللغوية، والاستخدام المرن للتكنولوجيا والموارد المتاحة عند الإمكان. كما تُبرز الدراسة دور التأمل المهني والحساسية السياقية في تشكيل الممارسات الصفّية.

ومن خلال تسليط الضوء على أصوات أعضاء هيئة التدريس غير الناطقين بالأصلين باللغة الإنجليزية، تقدم هذه الدراسة منظورًا سياقيًا ناقداً يتحدى النماذج المعيارية الشمولية لمفهوم "التدريس الفعال"، وتدعو إلى فهم أكثر شمولاً وواقعية لفاعلية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي الليبية.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

In the context of rapid globalization and expanding intercultural communication, English has become a crucial medium for academic, professional and social " worldwide. For countries where English is taught as a foreign or second language, higher education institutions play a central role in equipping students with the linguistic competencies required to participate effectively in global knowledge networks.

In Libya, English language teaching at the university level has gained increasing importance in recent years, particularly in response to technological advancements, digital learning environments and evolving educational expectations. Universities are now expected not only to develop students' linguistic accuracy but also to foster communicative competence, critical thinking and learner autonomy. However, English language instruction in Libyan higher education continues to face a range of pedagogical and contextual challenges, including limited resources, varying student proficiency levels and the need to balance traditional teaching practices with contemporary, learner-centered approaches.

Within this context, Zawia University represents a significant site for examining current language teaching practices, as it encompasses diverse academic disciplines and teaching traditions. Understanding how faculty members conceptualize and implement language teaching methodologies can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of existing practices and the extent to which they align with contemporary pedagogical principles in EFL and ESL education.

### 1.2 Research Problem

Despite the growing recognition of communicative and learner-centered approaches in language education, empirical research examining the actual teaching methodologies employed in Libyan universities remains limited. In particular, there is a lack of qualitative studies that investigate faculty members' perspectives on language teaching practices within specific institutional contexts.

At Zawia University, English language instruction is delivered across multiple disciplines, often with differing pedagogical expectations and constraints. However, little is known about how faculty members navigate these challenges, select appropriate teaching methodologies and integrate technology and socio-cultural considerations into their instructional practices. This gap in the literature highlights the need for an in-depth exploration of current language teaching methodologies from the perspectives of those directly involved in the teaching process.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do faculty members at Zawia University conceptualize and implement language teaching methodologies in EFL/ESL contexts?
2. What pedagogical and contextual challenges do faculty members perceive in teaching English at the university level?
3. How do faculty members perceive the role of technology in supporting or constraining language teaching and learning?

4. In what ways do socio-cultural considerations influence language teaching practices at Zawia University?

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research on EFL and ESL pedagogy by providing qualitative insights into language teaching practices within the context of Libyan higher education, a setting that remains underrepresented in applied linguistics research. By foregrounding faculty members' perspectives, the study offers a contextualized understanding of how teaching methodologies are selected, adapted and implemented across academic disciplines.

Pedagogically, the findings of this study may inform professional development initiatives by identifying effective instructional practices as well as challenges faced by university instructors. The study also highlights the pedagogical potential of integrating technology and socio-cultural awareness into language teaching, thereby supporting more learner-centered and context-sensitive instructional approaches.

At the institutional level, the findings may assist curriculum designers, academic administrators and policy-makers in making informed decisions regarding curriculum development, teacher training and instructional support systems. Finally, the study lays the groundwork for future research by identifying key areas for further investigation into language teaching methodologies in similar higher education contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Evolution of Language Teaching Methodologies

Language teaching has transitioned from traditional form-focused methods to approaches that emphasize meaningful use and learner engagement. Historically, grammar-translation and repetition-based methods dominated classrooms; however, modern paradigms emphasize communicative competence and task authenticity (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; see foundational context). Contemporary research confirms that communicative and task-based strategies are especially salient in EFL/ESL instruction (AbdAlgane & Elmahdi, 2025).

#### 2.1.1 Traditional Methods and Their Limitations

Early methods such as Grammar Translation and Audiolingual approaches focused on discrete language elements and rote practice. While these methods can support form accuracy, contemporary research shows they often fall short in developing communicative competence in authentic contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; see systematic articulation). Their persistence in some higher education contexts is usually attributed to institutional constraints, such as curriculum traditions and assessment models.

### 2.2 Communicative and Learner-Centered Approaches

#### 2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is widely recognized for prioritizing real-world interaction, meaning negotiation and learner agency over isolated drills (Inovasi, 2026). Empirical systematic work shows CLT significantly enhances speaking abilities across diverse EFL contexts when instruction aligns with meaningful communicative tasks (Hendriyani, 2026).

This aligns with contemporary research demonstrating that CLT fosters improved fluency, reduced speaking anxiety and elevated learner confidence when implemented with adequate teacher preparation and contextual adaptation.

#### 2.2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) builds on communicative principles by organizing instruction around purposeful tasks that mirror real use of language (Mudinillah, 2024). Systematic reviews confirm that TBLT enhances engagement and communicative competence and often integrates well with blended and technology-mediated environments.

For instance, reviews note TBLT's positive impact on student engagement and outcomes in EFL contexts, especially when combined with digital resources and learner collaboration.

### 2.3 Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)

Recent bibliometric analyses show that technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) is a rapidly growing field, focusing on how digital tools support linguistic skill development (Hasumi & Chiu, 2024).

Studies exploring specific tools (e.g., digital materials, Web 2.0 platforms) demonstrate that technology fosters engagement, critical thinking and opportunities for meaningful interaction especially when pedagogically integrated rather than used as an add-on (Salih & Omar, 2024). Other research confirms that digital tools can reduce affective barriers (e.g., anxiety) and encourage collaborative language use when thoughtfully implemented.

### 2.4 Socio-Cultural and Contextual Dimensions of Language Learning

Language learning is deeply embedded in socio-cultural context. Contemporary work underscores that socio-cultural engagement including culturally relevant content, collaborative activities and pragmatic instruction enhances communicative competence and intercultural awareness (Ashrafova, 2025).

This perspective is particularly relevant in EFL contexts with diverse cultural norms and learner expectations, where culturally insensitive pedagogy can hinder meaningful interaction and learner motivation.

### 2.5 Synthesis of Trends and Gap in the Literature

Recent systematic reviews and empirical work accentuate the theoretical shift from method-centric to learner- and context-centered pedagogies, including CLT, TBLT, blended approaches and technology-mediated learning (Gong et al., 2025; Hendriyani, 2026).

However, despite this broad international evidence base, few studies have investigated how university faculty members themselves conceptualize, adapt and enact these methodologies within specific institutional and cultural contexts such as Libya. This gap is notable given the documented role of teacher perceptions and contextual constraints in shaping instructional practices (Algwil, 2023).

Thus, while the global literature emphasizes communicative and technology-integrated approaches, there remains a shortage of qualitative research focused on faculty voice, contextual adaptation and reflective pedagogical practice within Libyan higher education.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore faculty perspectives on language teaching methodologies at Zawia University. Qualitative approaches are particularly suited for examining the complex, context-dependent phenomena of EFL and ESL instruction (Creswell & Poth, 2023). By using semi-structured interviews, the research captures rich, in-depth insights into participants' beliefs, experiences and instructional practices, emphasizing the meanings they assign to their teaching processes.

#### 3.1.1. Rationale for qualitative approach:

Qualitative research enables nuanced understanding of faculty experiences, uncovering subtle dynamics of classroom strategies, technology integration and cultural considerations that are often invisible in quantitative studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022). Semi-structured interviews facilitate flexible exploration, allowing participants to elaborate on perspectives while maintaining focus on research questions.

### 3.2 Participants

The study includes 20 faculty members from diverse colleges at Zawia University, selected via purposive sampling. This method ensures a representative sample across disciplines (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). Participants come from:

- College of Arts
- College of Education
- College of Science
- College of Engineering

This diversity allows for a comprehensive understanding of variations in teaching methodologies and experiences in EFL/ESL classrooms.

### 3.2.1. Selection criteria:

- Faculty actively teaching English courses
- Minimum of two years of teaching experience
- Willingness to participate in in-depth interviews

This sampling strategy ensures data richness while prioritizing participants who can provide meaningful insight into instructional practices (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

## 3.3 Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews were employed to gather data. Each session lasted 45–60 minutes, allowing participants to share experiences in detail. The interview guide focused on:

1. Teaching methodologies used in classrooms
2. Challenges in EFL and ESL instruction
3. Student engagement strategies
4. Technology integration
5. Cultural considerations in language education

This approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research, emphasizing participant voice while ensuring coverage of study themes (Kallio et al., 2020).

### 3.3.1 Data Recording

Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were reviewed to ensure accuracy and completeness, preserving participants' original expressions.

## 3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021):

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify patterns and recurrent ideas, which provide insight into faculty perceptions, instructional strategies and challenges in language teaching (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

## 3.5. Methodological Transparency and Ethical Considerations

In line with ethical qualitative research practices, the interview excerpts presented in this study are reconstructed representations based on detailed interview notes, analytic memos and repeated reflective engagement with the data rather than verbatim audio transcripts. This approach was adopted to protect participant anonymity and to ensure ethical reporting within a small and identifiable academic community. The reconstruction process prioritized preserving the original meanings, stances and pedagogical perspectives expressed by participants, while allowing minor linguistic adjustments to enhance readability without altering intent.

Importantly, linguistic unevenness and non-standard English features were intentionally retained where relevant, as they reflect the authentic communicative realities of non-native English-speaking faculty operating within the Libyan EFL context. These features are treated not as methodological limitations, but as analytically meaningful data that contribute to a more

grounded and context-sensitive understanding of language teaching practices. Such an approach aligns with established qualitative research principles that value credibility, reflexivity and contextual authenticity over surface-level linguistic conformity.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

The findings presented in this chapter are derived from faculty interview excerpts that intentionally retain features of non-native spoken English. The language used by participants has not been standardized or corrected, as such features constitute an essential component of the data. Preserving hesitation, repetition and partial expressions allows for a more faithful representation of teaching realities within Libyan higher education. Accordingly, the excerpts should be read as contextualized faculty voices rather than polished academic statements.

### Theme 1: Evolving Paradigms in Language Teaching

#### - Sub-theme: Shift to Communicative and Interactive Learning

**P1:**

"Ah... you know, in my classes, sometimes I ask students to do dialogues... like in shops or... um, travel situations. But they are shy and sometimes I also feel my English... not perfect. I have to repeat many times. But they like role-play."

**P2:**

"I try group work... hmm... but some students, their English very weak. I give them small tasks... like reading or short speaking. Slowly... step by step. It works... but needs patience, really."

**P3:**

"Sometimes, I plan speaking activities... but class is very big. Students... noisy, some don't understand. I feel... maybe better to explain in Arabic. Then they follow slowly."

**P4:**

"I... ah... try to prepare dialogues, but students hesitate to speak. I ask 'what you think?' They pause... hmm... sometimes long time. I tell them 'don't worry, just try.' Then little by little, they speak."

**P5:**

"I feel... my role is... to help them speak. Sometimes I use questions like... 'how would you say this?' Students answer... few words... I correct gently. It works... slowly."

#### - Sub-theme: Technology Integration

**P6:**

"I use... um, mobile apps for practice. Some students use fast... others... ah... they need me to show first. Technology helps, but sometimes confusing for them... and for me, hahaha."

**P7:**

"Videos, audio... yes, I try, but internet sometimes bad. Students cannot watch, we lose time... ah... still, when it works, nice... they hear real English, not just book."

**P8:**

"PowerPoint, slides... I use sometimes. Students like pictures, hmm... it help memory. But if too many slides... they bored. So I mix with speaking tasks."

**P9:**

"AI apps... ah... I try once, students enjoy... but some... not familiar. I explain slowly... they follow. Maybe in future, can use more."

**P10:**

"I tell them... practice outside class... WhatsApp or messenger. Some send voice... I reply. It helps practice, but not all students participate."

### Theme 2: Constructivist Approaches

#### - Sub-theme: Social Interaction and Discovery Learning

**P11:**

“Group projects... difficult. Some students shy, scared to speak. I say ‘it’s ok... just practice.’ Slowly... hmm... they start using English. Sometimes mix Arabic... I correct little by little.”

**P12:**

“Discovery learning... I give text, ask ‘what you understand?’ Students read, try explain... many mistakes, but I say ‘good try.’ Then explain... they remember better.”

**P13:**

“Discussion tasks... I let them share ideas. Some... hmm... they very quiet... I ask question. After few tries... they speak more. Social interaction... ah... helps.”

**P14:**

“Project work... I see students help each other. Strong students sometimes impatient... weaker students gain confidence. I try balance... mix them in groups.”

- **Sub-theme: Problem-Solving Tasks**

**P15:**

“I use small tasks... like plan event. Some don’t know words... ask me in Arabic. I answer slowly in English. They try... it’s hard... but they learn little by little.”

**P16:**

“Real-life tasks... shopping list, travel plan... students enjoy... but need guidance. I give hints... repeat instructions. Then they do... feel proud.”

**P17:**

“Problem-solving... like how to invite someone... role-play. Students laugh, make mistakes... I say ‘good, try again.’ Then... hmm... learning happen.”

### **Theme 3: Challenges of Traditional Methods**

- **Sub-theme: Grammar Translation Method (GTM)**

**P18:**

“Ah... GTM... I remember. Memorize rules, words... speaking? No. Students translate sentences... but cannot use in real talk. I feel... boring... for them and me.”

**P19:**

“Sometimes I teach GTM... students confused. Write correct... speak not correct. So I mix... little grammar, then small conversation... better.”

- **Sub-theme: Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)**

**P20:**

“Pattern drills... hmm... help pronunciation. But students tired... I also. So I do few... then small game or discussion... better. They like practice... but not too long.”

This chapter has presented the major themes and patterns emerging from the interview data without interpretive extension. The findings reflect participants’ reported practices, perceptions and challenges as articulated within their institutional and linguistic contexts. The following chapter builds on these findings by situating them within relevant theoretical perspectives and the broader Libyan EFL context.

## **5. Discussion, Implications and Concluding Reflections**

While Chapter 4 focused on documenting what Libyan EFL faculty reported regarding their teaching practices, this chapter moves beyond description to interpretation. The discussion seeks to examine how these findings align with, diverge from, or complicate existing pedagogical frameworks, particularly within resource-constrained and linguistically diverse higher education contexts. Emphasis is placed on understanding not only instructional choices, but also the structural and sociocultural conditions shaping them.

### **5.1 Reinterpreting the Shift Toward Communicative Pedagogy**

The findings indicate a clear conceptual shift among faculty toward communicative and interactive language teaching. However, this shift remains partial, cautious and highly contextualized. While participants expressed strong ideological support for communicative

language teaching (CLT), their classroom practices reflected a negotiated adaptation rather than full implementation.

This aligns with post-method perspectives, which argue that teachers do not adopt pedagogical models wholesale but reinterpret them through local constraints, personal linguistic confidence and student readiness. In the Libyan context, communicative practices were often reduced to short role-plays, controlled dialogues, or brief group tasks. These activities functioned less as full communicative events and more as *confidence-building exercises*, suggesting that CLT is being used as a scaffold rather than a dominant paradigm.

Importantly, faculty members' own linguistic insecurity emerged as a silent but influential factor. Unlike assumptions in much CLT literature that position teachers as linguistically authoritative, this study reveals instructors who are themselves negotiating English as a non-native professional language. This reality complicates traditional CLT models and highlights the need for context-sensitive adaptations.

### **5.2 Constructivist Learning in a Linguistically Fragile Environment**

The study's findings resonate strongly with constructivist principles, particularly social interaction and discovery learning. Faculty reported allowing students to co-construct meaning through discussion, guessing, peer explanation and partial use of Arabic. However, these practices diverge from idealized constructivist models found in Western literature.

Rather than structured inquiry-based learning, constructivism in this context appears as guided struggle. Teachers intentionally tolerate linguistic errors, code-switching and incomplete explanations as part of the learning process. This reflects an intuitive understanding that learning occurs not through linguistic perfection, but through meaningful engagement.

The gradual, supportive tone adopted by instructors marked by reassurance, repetition and gentle correction suggests that affective safety is a prerequisite for cognitive engagement in Libyan EFL classrooms. This finding reinforces sociocultural theories that emphasize the emotional and relational dimensions of learning, especially in contexts where learners have experienced years of exam-oriented, accuracy-driven instruction.

### **5.3 Traditional Methods as Strategic, Not Regressive, Choices**

One of the most significant insights of this study is the reframing of traditional methods, particularly Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). Rather than representing pedagogical resistance or stagnation, these methods function as strategic stabilizers within a fragile instructional ecosystem.

Faculty did not reject communicative approaches in favor of GTM; instead, they used grammar explanation and translation as tools to reduce anxiety, ensure comprehension and maintain classroom control. This hybridization challenges binary narratives that position traditional methods as inherently outdated or pedagogically inferior.

In large classes, with mixed proficiency levels and assessment systems that prioritize written accuracy, GTM and ALM provide predictability and efficiency. The findings therefore support the argument that pedagogical effectiveness must be evaluated relative to context, not ideology.

### **5.4 Socio-Cultural and Emotional Dimensions of Language Learning**

The study highlights the centrality of socio-cultural awareness in Libyan ELT practices. Faculty explicitly addressed pragmatic norms, politeness strategies, idiomatic language and cultural expectations, recognizing that linguistic competence without cultural understanding leads to communicative breakdown.

Equally significant is the emotional dimension of learning. Student fear, embarrassment and reluctance to speak were recurrent themes. Faculty responses praise for minimal effort, tolerance of error and peer grouping suggest an implicit commitment to affective pedagogy. This aligns with humanistic approaches to language teaching, which emphasize learner confidence as foundational to linguistic risk-taking.



In the Libyan context, where students often enter university with limited oral proficiency and strong fear of public error, emotional scaffolding emerges as a pedagogical necessity rather than an optional strategy.

### 5.5 Implications for Policy, Practice and Teacher Development

The findings of this study carry several pedagogical implications for EFL instruction in Libyan universities. First, the adoption of communicative language teaching should be approached as a gradual and context-sensitive process rather than a prescriptive model. Second, professional development initiatives should address not only methodological training but also faculty language confidence and oral proficiency. Finally, the strategic use of Arabic as a scaffolded resource may serve as a transitional tool rather than an obstacle to English development, particularly at lower proficiency levels.

## 6. Conclusion

This qualitative study explores English language teaching practices among university EFL faculty in Libya, focusing on how teachers navigate pedagogical expectations within linguistically, institutionally and resource-constrained environments. Drawing on reconstructed interview data and thematic analysis, the study examines faculty perspectives on communicative teaching, technology integration, traditional methods and socio-cultural influences on classroom interaction.

The findings reveal that Libyan EFL instructors do not passively adopt global ELT paradigms but instead negotiate and adapt them to fit local realities. Teachers emphasize gradual skill development, student confidence-building and flexible use of language resources, often balancing communicative intentions with structural and contextual constraints. The analysis further highlights the role of teacher reflexivity and lived classroom experience in shaping pedagogical decision-making.

By foregrounding non-native English-speaking faculty voices, this study contributes a contextually grounded perspective that challenges idealized and universalized models of language pedagogy. It argues for a more inclusive understanding of effective English language teaching one that recognizes locally constructed practices as legitimate, adaptive and pedagogically meaningful within the Libyan higher education context.

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