



Master's Thesis :

The Influence of the Libyan Cultural Context on Teaching English in the University of Tripoli

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**The Influence of the Libyan Cultural Context on Teaching English in the
University of Tripoli**

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Degree in Applied Linguistics**

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of local culture and the extent to which it is incorporated in EFL teaching practice associated with English culture-oriented activities within the Libyan Education context. Forty EFL teachers and twelve students from two faculties of education within the University of Tripoli took part in the investigation. A mixed methods approach was applied for data collection involving a 5-point Likert scale teachers' questionnaire, teachers' semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview for students. While SPSS was used to analyse the questionnaire themes, thematic analysis helped to interpret teachers' and students' responses. The questionnaire themes mean average results revealed consistent neutrality, neither agreeing nor disagreeing thus reflecting teachers' opinions were different. The semi-structured interviews, however, exposed a swing in opposition to local culture incorporation, i.e., in favour of preserving target culture contexts to be explicated in English regardless of cultural difference or sensitivity. In other words, culture and language are inseparable. The students, on the other hand, embraced a more open-minded view by adopting a third dimension of culture integration; an amalgamation of cultures where both local and target cultures are preserved and used to explain meanings of culture-oriented material. Implications for practice and recommendations for further research are forwarded by the researcher.

Dedication

In the Loving Memory of My Father,

And with Heartfelt Thanks to My Mother.

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List of Abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

CRP: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teacher

ESL: English as a Second Language

FL: Foreign Language

FEJ: Faculty of Education Janzour

FET: Faculty of Education Tripoli

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LTE: Language Teacher Education

RQ: Research Question

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours of individuals within a community, influencing their view of the world (Matsumoto, 2007). The interplay between culture and language is particularly significant, as language serves as a primary means of communication and reflects the cultural identity of its speakers. This interconnectedness of culture and language is particularly significant in language pedagogy, where language not only serves as a communication tool but also as a reflection of cultural identity (Kim, 2003). In the case of the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and Faculty of Education/ Janzour, which are concerned with EFL teacher preparation, integrating cultural into language teaching contexts is essential to enable students to engage with the teaching material more positively and with confidence, thus fostering contextualised meaningful learning.

Despite the critical importance of local culture integration in EFL teacher education, there is a notable lack of research specifically addressing the extent to which local culture influences EFL teaching practices in the teacher education system. Without a thorough understanding of culture interplay, and how culture is integrated into practice, existing teaching methodologies may fail to meet the educational needs of Libyan students. This oversight may lead to student disengagement from target language learning, in addition to suboptimal learning outcomes, hindering students' ability to relate to and absorb target language material effectively.

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which local culture is integrated in teaching practice within EFL teacher education contexts. It focuses on the outcomes, strategies, and

challenges teachers face in incorporating local 'culture when addressing English culture topics. By identifying these challenges, the research aims to enhance EFL teaching practices, boost student engagement, and ultimately improve learning outcomes. The study aspires to contribute to a more culturally responsive approach to English language education in Libyan higher education.

1.2 Background to the Study

Culture is said to encompass concepts, traditions, abilities, artistic expressions, and linguistic instruments that distinguish a particular community. Thus, regardless of geographical location, individuals' thoughts and behaviour are typically influenced by their cultural background (Bell, 2005). Additionally, culture embraces ideologies, principles, and tangible items that shape lifestyles; it provides a framework for the cognitive and emotional responses of individuals, impacting their perceptions and attitudes towards almost all practical aspects of life (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014).

The cultural identity of certain groups of people or societies is reflected by the language its speakers use as means of social communication. Such prominent interaction between language and culture is particularly significant in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. In such context, local culture, besides being naturally dominant, can affect how students understand a foreign language material, and the degree by which they accept or reject target language content. Therefore, the incorporation of locally relevant customs, traditions, and practices in EFL teacher education promotes a more engaging learner environment, hence fostering a deeper meaningful connection between students and the target language (Johnson, 2020; Smith, 2019).

As culture and language are deeply interconnected, an understanding of the integration of culture into teaching practice is essential. Accordingly, the researcher addresses the perceptions and challenges EFL teachers face in employing a culturally responsive

pedagogy, where local cultural elements are consciously incorporated into language teaching practices. In identifying and addressing these challenges, the research seeks to contribute to a more culturally responsive EFL methodology that allows students to connect more effectively with the foreign material presented, hence promoting learner engagement and improving learning outcomes (Smith and Johnson, 2018).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Many language teachers assume that the culture of the target language should be the centre of teaching since language cannot be separated from its culture. As a result, EFL teachers overwhelmingly provide their students with language material e.g., texts or dialogues, derived solely from English speaking countries, thus reflecting native speakers' beliefs and traditions. This narrow view of culture integration makes it difficult for students to understand culturally-oriented English material, as most EFL students have limited prior knowledge of the English culture. Very often, the selected material contradicts with local students' beliefs leading to reluctance to study English (Margana, 2009).

In spite of the notable important role of local culture in TEFL, there is a particular lack of research addressing pedagogic concerns within the Libyan environment, namely how integrating local culture may affect the practice of English language teaching, especially in EFL Language Teacher Education (LTE). Without a thorough understanding of how local culture can be integrated into existing language material, and how local cultural dynamics influences students' understanding, EFL teacher may fail to meet the pedagogic needs of Libyan students or address their concerns in coping with target language contexts, especially those that are unfamiliar or culturally-oriented. This oversight is likely to lead to disengagement and less than desirable learning outcomes, hindering students' abilities to relate to and absorb target language material effectively.

1.4 Aims of the Study

1. This study aims to investigate the extent to which Libyan EFL teachers practice local culture integration when discussing English culture-oriented topics. The purpose is to understand how local cultural factors such as traditions, values, and customs shape EFL practices. The study also seeks to identify the challenges EFL teachers encounter in incorporating local cultural elements. By identifying these challenges, the research aims to enhance teaching methodologies, increase student engagement, and ultimately improve outcomes.
2. Since teacher practices are based on perceptions, these are also investigated along with the observed student outcomes. In doing so, the study contributes to a more culturally responsive pedagogy.
3. A third aim of the study is to assess the students' views, responses, and prospective learning outcomes resulting from incorporating local culture contexts.

1.5 Research Questions

In line with the stated aims of the research, the study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent do Libyan EFL teachers practice incorporating local culture in teaching activities that involve English culture?
2. What are the Libyan EFL teachers' perceptions regarding local culture inclusion when discussing English-culture oriented activities? What student outcomes do teachers observe?
3. What is the Libyan students' position regarding the integration of local culture in classroom activities involving English culture topics?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on incorporating local culture in teaching practices involving English culture contexts. By exploring the extent to which local cultural influences teacher education practices concerning culturally-oriented material, the study provides valuable insights that could enhance EFL teacher education approaches in more than one way:

Improving teaching practice: Understanding the specific cultural dynamics that impact English language instruction within EFL teacher education will allow educators to tailor their teaching strategies to align with students' local cultural backgrounds making lessons and the language material more accessible, relevant and effective;

Increasing student engagement: When EFL teachers integrate relevant local content into culturally-oriented activities, the students are more likely to relate to and understand the target material, leading to increased motivation and participation. This can in turn foster dynamic and engaging classroom environments, where students can contribute more effectively to classroom discussion i.e., encouraging them to be active participants in language learning.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to EFL teacher and students at two faculties of education affiliated to the University of Tripoli, namely Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and Faculty of Education/ Janzour. Due to personal travel constraints, the researcher being a female could not include in the study the Faculty of Education at Gasr Ben-Ghashir, which is located on the outskirts of Tripoli.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One begins with an introduction; it introduces the study by outlining the background, aims, and significance of the study as

well as the problem statement and the research questions. Chapter Two outlines the literature review, previous research studies on the influence of local cultural context on language teaching, and critically examines existing theories and frameworks related to culture, highlighting gaps in knowledge that this study aims to address. Chapter Three sheds light on research methodology and points out the mixed-methods research design, including qualitative and quantitative approaches. It identifies the participants and the data collection techniques (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews). Furthermore, it discusses the ethical considerations that guide the study procedure. Chapter Four discusses data analysis and findings in relation to the research questions and relevant previous studies. Chapter Five, the final chapter, presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. It summarizes the key findings and outline implications for enhancing culture integration practice in EFL teacher education.

Recommendations for further research are also given.

1.9 Summary

To sum up, this chapter provided the context of the study. It defined the concept of culture and the role of cultural identity in human communication by explaining how culture and language are interlinked. It also highlighted the role of cultural identity in language teaching in an EFL language teacher education context. The chapter outlined the research aims and significance of the study emphasizing the potential for improving the teaching of English within EFL teacher education by integrating relevant Libyan cultural contexts thereby enhancing student contribution and engagement. The problem statement and research questions that guide the investigation are included in addition to highlighting the scope of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to carry out a review of the relevant literature on the topic of incorporating or integrating aspects of local culture into EFL materials. Accordingly, this literature review chapter explores the role of local culture in language teaching, the importance of incorporating it into EFL language teacher education in particular, the challenges involved, and the strategies implemented in integrating it into EFL teaching.

The literature review sections addressing the research issue are outlined as follows:

1. Defining Culture
2. Types of Culture
3. Local Culture
4. Language and Culture
5. Cultural Awareness
6. Integrating Local Culture in EFL Practice
7. Benefits and Drawbacks in Integrating Local Culture
8. Strategies for Incorporating Local Culture
9. Challenges in Incorporating Local Culture
10. Theoretical Framework
11. Previous Studies

2.2 Defining Culture

In spite of having several attempts to define the notion of culture, scholars have not been able to agree on a common definition. An early perception of culture views it as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 2023, p. 1).

According to Triandis (1994), “culture is a shared meaning system found among those who speak a particular language, dialect, during a specific historic period (p. 34)”. Culture can also encompass religion, cuisine, and music; culture is also acquired and transmitted through socialization with others and can evolve over time as societies change (Jyoti and Kour, 2015). More recent definitions of culture do not add much. Forexample, Naik et al. (2023) perceive it as a broad and complex concept encompassing shared customs, social habits, values, beliefs, behaviours, traditions, artefacts and other products of human work and thought that characterize a particular society or group of people, and are passed on from one generation to the next.

2.3 Types of Culture

The term “culture” may be interpreted in more than one way. Some may refer to it as literary or architectural work; others may view it as background information such as history or geography of various countries. According to Scollon and Scollon (2000, p. 126) “culture” in English has two interpretations, high culture and anthropological culture. High culture “focuses on intellectual and artistic achievements, whereas the anthropological sense of culture reflects culture as customs, worldview, language, kinship system, social organization, and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group”.

Wanglifei (2000), on the other hand, proposes that culture may be viewed in two ways; its broad and narrow sense, hence “it may refer to the intellectual refinement and artistic endeavour, or the appreciation of music, literature, the art, and so on” (p.193). This is culture in its broad sense. Alternatively, culture can refer to whatever a person must know in order to function in a particular society, which is culture in its narrow sense. Samovar and Porter’s (1997) definition of culture belongs to this narrow category. They claim that “culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the

members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning” (p. 36). Although some scholars suggest that the acquisition of culture comprises both the narrow and the broad sense, language educators are mainly interested in the narrow interpretation of culture (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013), and this is what the researcher has adopted in this study.

2.4 Local Culture

While culture in general encompasses a broad array of human experiences and expressions, A localised culture is a subsection of culture that is specific to a particular geographic area or local community that identifies with the distinctive characteristics of a given community or region (Neuliep, 2020). Local culture includes unique customs, traditions, and practices that differentiate one community or society from another, often reflecting history, environment, and social dynamics of a specific location, and can include local dialects, festivals, cuisine, and art forms (William, Smith and Johnson, 2020).

Libyan culture in particular is specifically dynamic and continues to evolve, reflecting both historical roots and contemporary influences (Abdulnabi, 2024). Moreover, Libyan cultural values and traditions are deeply intertwined with the educational process (Smith, 2018). According to Pratt and Nesbit (2000), cultural norms dictate not only the content of education but also the teaching strategies and methods employed. It follows that an understanding of these local cultural norms is essential for developing effective educational practices.

2.5 Language and Culture

Culture has been strongly identified as one of the components of a language (Alptekin, 2002), i.e., language cannot be taught without considering aspects of its culture. Learning how to use the language in its socio-cultural contexts has been stressed by numerous authors, for instance Liddicoat and Scarino (2013). Moreover, Stoller (2006) argues that

since language emerges from societal interactions, language learners cannot realistically learn how to use the language without acquiring some kind of knowledge about the cultural denotations and connotations of its lexis as interpreted by its native speakers. In a similar vein, House (2007) argues that “language is viewed as embedded in culture such that the meaning of any linguistic item can only be properly understood with reference to the cultural context enveloping it” (p. 8). Therefore, it is imperative for EFL language teachers and learners to be inter-culturally competent in order to be effective users of the language (Huang, 2019).

2.6 Cultural Awareness

It has been argued that merely integrating local culture in EFL material is insufficient for learners to develop as competent users of the language. Yu (2020) asserts that research has long recognized a need for appropriate teaching materials to facilitate cultural awareness through course books and methodologies that reflect both the source and target cultures. What constitutes good teaching strategy regarding cultural awareness is often based on the socialization processes and the internalization of roles and expectations, which are closely interwoven with attitudes, values, and beliefs that underlie the teaching of culture. In order to help EFL students be aware of the target culture and acquire intercultural competency, the two cultures need to be integrated in class such that the culture teaching and learning turn into a dialogue between the source and the target culture (Yu, 2020). Two instructional strategies have been employed to achieve the goal of intercultural competence in EFL environments as explained in the following two subsections.

2.6.1 Literary Material

Literary text is viewed as real language in context. English literary text often contains culturally relevant material and it often attracts learner reactions. It offers opportunities to explore and discuss content and to examine language in context. What is said and how it is

said are closely related. EFL literary texts are tools to provide live examples of language resources, and these learners use such language resources to fulfil their learning goals. Thus, contextually appropriate and linguistically graded literary material can be very helpful in allowing students to acquire insight into EFL target culture; its history, politics, economy, habits, customs and moral values. A challenging obstacle in mastering a second language is unfamiliarity with the culture it represents (Brumfit and Carter, 2000).

2.6.2 Using Multi-media

The application of multi-media into EFL teaching contexts has provided teachers with rich target language material that has predominance over traditional means of language teaching material. For example, film and video give EFL students an opportunity to witness at first hand native speakers' common activities and behaviours that are rarely found in text. Scollon and Scollon (2000) suggest that film is a comprehensive means to encapsulate foreign language culture; its look, feel, and rhythm. Film also provides immediate connections between language and cultural issues, such as depicting timing and turn-taking in conversation (Yu, 2020). It has been shown through research studies that EFL learners achieved significant gains in overall cultural awareness after watching videos on the target culture in the classroom (Hinkel, 2001).

2.7 Integrating Local Culture in EFL Practice

As the above discussion demonstrates, language and culture are inseparable from each other. Both language and culture combine to “reflect shared cultural properties such as values, behaviours, and attitude inherent in the society we live and in language patterns we use” (Belli, 2018. p. 1). Incorporating local culture in EFL teacher education has gained significant attention in recent years. This approach not only helps to enhance students' language skills but also fosters intercultural competence and a deeper appreciation of the

learners own cultural heritage. Therefore, the integration of local culture in LTE pedagogic practices and curricula is a sound strategy that is highly valuable in EFL classroom surroundings, where the students have little contact with English language contexts and culture.

Language education in the modern world is more influenced by cultural diversity and the unique backgrounds of learners. As a result, the interplay between local culture, customs, traditions, attitudes and EFL strategies significantly influences students' acceptance of foreign language content, allowing them to draw on their experiences, hence making learning more meaningful (Abdollahi-Guilani, Yasin, Hua and Aghaei, 2012).

Integrating local culture into the EFL teaching process has several pedagogic gains.

Firstly, it establishes a strong connection between new language concepts and students' existing cultural knowledge, making learning more relatable and meaningful (Hernández et al, 2024). Second, it promotes intercultural competence, which is essential in today's globalized world (Choudhury, 2013). According to Hernández et al. (2024), incorporating local culture in EFL contexts enhances students' motivation and communicative competencies by empowering students to recognize and value their own cultural backgrounds. Language teachers must therefore be responsive to these cultural factors to create a more effective and inclusive language learning environment that promotes positive learner outcomes (Hossain, 2024).

Wutun, Arafah and Yassi (2018) point out that effective language education must consider the dynamics of the local culture and its consequential impact on language learning. Local cultural customs, traditions, and practices profoundly affect how students learn English and their acceptance and/or rejection of foreign content (Lambert, 1973).

As noted by Holliday (1994), a totally Western-centric approach that neglects the role of L1 culture in English language teaching can alienate students who do not identify with foreign cultural narratives.

Therefore, understanding the influence of local customs, traditions, and societal attitudes is crucial for the development of effective EFL teaching approaches and methodologies, as well as promoting English language proficiency, ultimately contributing to broader educational reforms. That is, by fostering culturally relevant educational approaches, teacher education practices can enhance students' engagement with the foreign language material and hence improve learning outcomes.

2.8 Benefits and Drawbacks in Integrating Local Culture

Integrating local culture into TEFL contexts offers benefits as well as challenges. Scholars argue that language and culture are inseparable, and incorporating local cultural elements into English instruction can enhance learning outcomes. However, with respect to Arab local cultures, this approach presents several pedagogical and institutional challenges that appear to outweigh the benefits. Khan et al. (2017) argue that the integration of Arab local culture in English language teaching is cynically questioned. They continue that research studies support the idea that foreign language teaching can be reinforced by the incorporation the foreign (British) culture in the target language (English) classroom. This is also supported by the fact that studies in the field of TEFL recognize the notion of culture integration in the sense of incorporating the British or American culture in the EFL materials, e.g., Hua and Le (2025); Hicham et al (2025); Yunusova and Mannonova (2025); Paringga et al. (2025); Nafisah et al (2024); Lavrenteva and Orland-Barak (2022); Hoa and Thi (2020); Allison and Do (2015); Liton and Madanat (2013), and many others.

2.8.1 Benefits of Integrating Local Culture

One of the primary advantages of integrating local culture in TEFL is the enhancement of learner motivation and engagement. When EFL teachers adopt local contexts in instructional strategies, the students encounter culturally familiar content, hence they are more likely to participate and retain information (Alptekin, 2002). Moreover, integrating local culture supports the development of intercultural communicative competence. Learners become more adept at navigating cultural differences, which is essential in global communication (Byram, 1997).

2.8.2 Drawbacks in Integrating Local Culture

Despite these benefits, several challenges hinder the integration of local culture in TEFL. One of the major issues is the lack of culturally relevant materials. Most English course books used in Arab countries are prepared by foreign authors and thus reflect Western cultural norms, leaving little room for local content (Khan et al, 2017).

Integration of local culture in TEFL also carries a risk of reinforcing cultural stereotypes if local culture is presented in a simplistic manner. Accordingly, teachers must be careful to portray cultural elements in a respectful way to avoid misrepresentation (Kramsch, 1993).

In addition, some students in EFL contexts may resist the inclusion of local culture in teaching English, especially if they perceive it as a prospect for global opportunities. This tension between local and global identities can result in pedagogical dilemmas for instructors (Aldawood and Almeshari, 2019).

2.9 Strategies for Integrating Local Culture

Integrating local culture into EFL teacher education is crucial for fostering intercultural competence and making student learning more relevant and engaging for students. This section explores the possible strategies that can be employed in this regard, highlighting their effectiveness and anticipated challenges:

1. Contextualizing Topics: In this strategy, teachers contextualize language lessons by making reference to relevant local cultural topics or material. This approach helps students relate to the target language material more easily and understand the practical use of language in their own cultural context (Herdi et al., 2023).
2. Class Discussions and Brainstorming: This strategy aims to engage EFL students in discussions about their own cultural context and compare it with the target culture. This can enhance their understanding and appreciation of both cultures. Brainstorming sessions can also be used to encourage students to generate ideas on how local culture can be integrated into language lessons (Herdi et al., 2023).
3. Creating Video Projects: In applying this strategy, the students are assigned projects to create video clips that highlight aspects of their local culture. This can be an effective and practical way to integrate cultural content into EFL learning. The strategy not only improves language skills but also allows students to explore and to visually express their own cultural identity and heritage in English (Herdi et al., 2023).
4. Selecting Culturally Relevant Textbooks: Choosing textbooks that include references to the students' local culture can make learning more relatable and engaging. Such locally relevant materials can provide a bridge between the students' cultural background and the new language they are learning (Choudhury, 2013).
5. Designing Lesson Syllabuses: In applying this strategy, EFL educators develop syllabuses that incorporate local cultural elements, but they must ensure that cultural integration is systematic and consistent throughout the course. This strategy helps in maintaining a balance between language instruction and cultural education (Herdi et al., 2023).

6. **Intercultural Communicative Competence:** In EFL teacher education, emphasizing the development of intercultural communicative competence is essential. This strategy involves teaching students not only the foreign language, but also the cultural norms and values associated with it, thus enabling them to communicate more effectively in diverse cultural settings (Choudhury, 2013).

Integrating local culture into EFL teacher education enhances student learning by making lessons activities and material more relevant and engaging. The strategies discussed have shown to be effective in bridging the gap between language and culture. Integrating local culture into EFL education, however, is not without challenges.

Teachers may face difficulties in finding appropriate materials, balancing cultural content with language instruction, and addressing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students (Choudhury, 2013).

2.10 Challenges in Integrating Local Culture

Despite the benefits of incorporating local culture in EFL materials, some challenges lie ahead. Effectively integrating local cultural contexts in EFL teaching education is bound to be confronted by multiple, often overlapping, curricular and pedagogical challenges that involve teaching and learning processes. Addressing these challenges is essential to improve the quality of language education and to enhance students' personality, selfesteem, and language skills when communicating with others.

One of the main challenges is the shortage of English-based resources and materials that reflect local cultural contexts (Hernández et al., 2024). Additionally, EFL teachers may face difficulties in balancing the teaching of local and target cultures, especially in contexts where the target culture is dominant as Choudhury (2013) points out. Choudhury (2013) also highlights the need for EFL teachers to develop intercultural communicative competence to effectively incorporate cultural elements into language teaching contexts.

To overcome the challenges in incorporating local culture, several strategies can be employed. One of these strategies is to select culturally relevant materials and activities that reflect students' local traditions and customs (Margana, 2009), such as incorporating local stories, festivals, and historical events into language lessons. Additionally, teachers can encourage students to share their cultural experiences and perspectives, fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning environment (Hernández et al., 2024). In order to promote mutual respect and understanding, Choudhury (2013) also suggests that teachers should focus on developing students' awareness of their own as well as the target culture.

2.10.1 Curricular Challenges

Adapting EFL curricula to incorporate local cultural elements to enhance relevance and student outcomes can be challenging. As Ituk (2020) points out, identifying appropriate aspects of L1 culture and how to integrate those in existing teaching material can be challenging. Moreover, due to recent introductions of several international schools in Libya, EFL material may not adequately reflect local cultural norms and educational needs of the students. Abdelaty (2023) emphasises that Libyan EFL textbooks are not always compatible with local culture as they are usually designed for the international market. This cultural mismatch can lead to issues of cultural appropriateness and relevance, making it challenging for teachers to engage their students in meaningful language learning.

Also, for the purpose of cost saving, some language institutions prioritize standardized ELT material, which over-emphasise target language culture contexts, thus disregarding local customs and traditions. As highlighted by Baresh (2024), imported standardized curricula often overlook the unique local cultural contexts of Libyan students; as a result, learners often struggle to connect with the foreign content presented, and disengage from class activities or doing homework.

Despite the perceived benefits of standardised international curricula, challenges remain in adequately implementing culturally oriented pedagogy. As noted by Banks (2006), barriers such as rigid curricula can hinder the integration of local culture. Addressing these challenges requires serious policy changes, supported by educational leadership and adequate teacher training and development.

2.10.2 Pedagogic Challenges

In the process of incorporating local culture, effective EFL teaching strategies and/or methodologies must be considered. Obstacles in employing culturally sensitive pedagogy may arise as a result of the discrepancy between local cultural contexts and the requirements of ELT, such as sensitivity to cultural topics, differences in thinking style, or cultural resistance to using a foreign language (EL-Sakran and EL-Sakran, 2021).

Therefore, teachers must be trained to incorporate local dimensions of culture into EFL teaching practices to foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment. As noted by Nigar (2025), a Western-centric approach to language teaching can alienate students who do not identify with those cultural narratives. Consequently, culturally responsive teaching strategies that do not integrate local customs are unlikely to engage students or facilitate meaningful learning (Gay, 2015).

In addition to recognizing and incorporating local cultural dimensions into EFL teacher education, teachers must always be aware of the inherent challenges involved and be able to confront them in order to foster more inclusive and effective learning environments. However, when teachers lack adequate training and resources on how to effectively integrate local culture, they become hesitant to address culturally-oriented topics in the target language (Thompson, 2019).

Considering the students' concerns, on the other hand, their attachment to their cultural identity can also influence their degree of acceptance or resistance regarding English language content. As Kramsch (1993) notes, language learners interpret foreign language material through the lens of their cultural background. For instance, students may resist foreign language content that conflicts with their cultural values, e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, leading to disengagement with associated class activities. EFL teachers must, therefore, be skilful enough to apply suitable strategies to convey target content.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

Incorporating local culture in EFL materials is a pedagogical approach that aims to enhance language learning by integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum. This theoretical framework draws on three key theoretical concepts. These include intercultural communicative competence, constructivist learning theory, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

2.11.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a foundational concept in the integration of local culture in EFL materials. ICC involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. As outlined by Byram (1997), ICC includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence, as well as attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural interaction. By incorporating local culture, EFL educators can help students develop these competencies, making them more adept at navigating both their own and other cultures.

2.11.2 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory, as proposed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in the learning process. According to this constructivist theory, learners construct knowledge through their experiences and

interactions with the world around them. In the context of EFL, incorporating local culture in language teaching allows students to connect new target language concepts to their existing local cultural knowledge, facilitating deeper understanding and retention of the language.

Moreover, the incorporating of local culture is grounded in constructivist theories of learning emphasizing the important role of local contexts in the learning process. As Vygotsky (1978) points out, learning is inherently social and contextual, meaning that students construct knowledge influenced by their social and cultural background. According to Bourdieu (1990), cultural capital, comprising values, beliefs, and attitudes within a community has significant consequences on educational outcomes.

2.11.3 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In accordance with the constructivist learner-centred perspective, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) has been defined as a student-centered approach to teaching in which students' unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote their educational achievement and well-being in the learning environment. Culturally responsive teaching, as it is sometimes called, is an educational approach that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in aspects of teaching (Gay, 2000). CRP aims to create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment by validating and reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds of students. In EFL classrooms, this can be achieved by using culturally relevant materials, activities, and teaching strategies that resonate with students' lived experiences.

Accordingly, a CRP perspective acknowledges the potential value of the students' cultural backgrounds, their languages, and experiences, thus creating more inclusive and effective learning environments (Lynch, 2016). CRP is concerned with teaching practices that recognize and incorporate students' native cultural backgrounds into L2 learning processes.

The CRP approach aims to make English language education more relevant and engaging for local students by integrating their L1 cultural contexts and perspectives into the English curriculum (Hammond, 2015).

Thus, it can be said that a culturally responsive pedagogy accommodates the integration of local cultural norms and traditions in EFL classrooms and in ELT curricula in order to enhance student engagement and facilitate meaningful learning experience. It has been found that cultural identity, which refers to the sense of belonging to a particular culture, significantly influences learner attitudes and motivation in language learning (Dixon, 2007). As Norton (2000) highlights, learners with a sense of cultural identity who feel their culture is acknowledged and respected are more likely to invest serious effort in learning a foreign language. Conversely, when English is perceived as a threat to cultural identity, motivation is likely to diminish.

2.12 Previous Studies

Several empirical studies were carried out to illustrate the impact of incorporating aspects of local cultures in the processes of culture integration in teaching EFL. Most of the previous studies addressing the issue assert that the closer the foreign language topics to the students' culture, the more interested are the students to engage in the material (Estuarso and Basthomi, 2017). Other studies emphasize that incorporating local culture contents in target language material functions as bridges in learning a foreign language (Aminullah et al., 2019).

A study by Rashid, Fatima, and Gondal (2025) investigated Pakistani English language teachers' attitudes towards the impact of cultural factors in ELT practices. A qualitative research design was used in which semi-structured interviews were carried out with 15 English Language teachers from different language centres in Lahore. The results show that EFL teachers' awareness of local culture helped them embed suitable cultural contexts

in their class material to promote learner motivation and comprehension. The study highlights the importance of EFL teachers' understanding of the strategies in integrating local culture to create meaningful language learning environments. The practical integration of local cultural elements was faced with several challenges, e.g., inflexible curriculum structure and the prevalence of Western cultural reference in ELT course books. The study recommends revamping ELT curricula to include more culture content relevant to local students, and providing teacher training on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Focusing on the Libyan context, Baresh (2024) explored the influence of the cultural background on the writing performance of English in Second and Foreign Language environments, since cultural backgrounds are thought to shape the writing strategies adopted by ESL and EFL learners. The impact of cultural background was observed across various dimensions of writing, e.g., content, organization, style, language, and conventions. The study paper advocates greater awareness among EFL and ESL teachers regarding the cultural backgrounds of learners when designing or adopting instructional techniques for teaching writing. The study revealed that very few studies were conducted concerning teaching EFL and the local cultural background regarding the Libyan context.

Thus, it identifies challenges faced by Libyan undergraduates in EFL writing due to their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The study offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between cultural background and EFL writing performance.

Herdi, Eriyanti and Huda (2023) explored strategies for integrating local culture into an intensive EFL teaching course and the effects on students' learning in Indonesian higher education setting. Through a qualitative approach, the researchers used narrative inquiry, with observations and teachers' semi-structured interviews. Data were collected through classroom observations and in-depth semi-structured interviews with an English teacher. The data were analysed using narrative inquiry to identify the strategies used by the teacher

to integrate local culture into EFL teaching. The study identified eight strategies for integrating local culture: brainstorming, contextualizing topics, conducting class discussions, creating video projects, looking for references/literature, designing lesson syllabuses, selecting textbooks, and drilling topics. The results indicated that integrating local culture significantly improved students' ability to learn English.

A study by Wang and Zhang (2022) examined how local cultural knowledge is incorporated into EFL teacher training programmes in China and its impact on teaching practices. This case study involved EFL teacher training programs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teacher trainers and students, as well as observations of training sessions. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify how local cultural knowledge was incorporated into the training programs and the consequential impact on teaching. The findings showed that integrating local culture into teacher training improved teachers' cultural competence and their ability to incorporate cultural content into their EFL teaching.

Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2021) carried out research investigating the perceptions of EFL teachers in the Middle East regarding the inclusion of local culture in their training and its influence on their teaching methods. This mixed-methods study was conducted at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The research involved surveys and semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers to gather their perceptions of the inclusion of local culture in their EFL training sessions. Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed using statistical methods, while qualitative data from the interviews were analysed by thematic analysis to understand the teachers' experiences and perspectives. The results indicated that teachers felt more confident and effective in their teaching when local culture was included in their training, and that their lessons were more relatable and engaging for students.

In a study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Abdulaziz and Almeshari (2019), perspectives of Saudi EFL learners were observed to investigate the influence of incorporating local cultural contexts into English language learning. Using a questionnaire administered to seventy undergraduate female students, the results show that the students recognized the fact that culture and language are interrelated and that the learning of the target language cannot be fully realized without considering both aspects of language cultures. Moreover, the study found that incorporating corresponding local cultural elements enhanced the EFL learning process and provided enjoyment for the students. The study also demonstrates that the process of learning English not only involves familiarity with its syntactic structures and vocabulary, but should accommodate elements of local culture. The problem faced by the students was the differences between Arabic and English cultures.

Belli (2018) conducted a study to explore the attitudes of 96 ELT Turkish university students towards local culture and its integration in teaching. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of three sections: demographic information, multiple-choice questions, and 5-point Likert-type scale items. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and a post-hoc test, were conducted to analysis data; open-ended items were qualitatively analysed. Overall, the findings yielded significantly positive attitudes towards local culture and its incorporation in language teaching. Female students had more positive attitudes towards local culture than males. Furthermore, it was found that the participants learnt culture mainly to develop cultural awareness and maintain better communication with people from different cultures. In the light of the findings, implications were made for FL teachers and teachers regarding raising cultural awareness of students and developing positive attitudes towards incorporating culture in language instruction.

A study by Wutun, Arafah and Yassi (2018) explored learners' perspectives on local culture integration in the English learning program in Indonesia. The research study used qualitative methods in which students' interviews were used. The data revealed that most students found it easier to express themselves in English using local cultural input. It seems that as the students brought their own background knowledge and experience into their speaking, the local culture reduced the cognitive load and enabled them to personalize their learning. Further, the integration of the local culture provided a positive and joyful learning atmosphere with which they gained greater confidence in incorporating local terms from their native language to express meanings in English.

Görgülü (2016) investigated the impact of integrating local culture into EFL learning materials on Turkish university students' reading and writing skills. The study employed an experimental design with two groups of university preparatory class students in Turkey. The experimental group used EFL learning materials that integrated both local and target cultures, while the control group used materials that only included the target culture. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests to measure reading and writing skills, as well as questionnaires and interviews to gather students' preferences and perceptions. The findings showed that the experimental group significantly improved in reading and writing skills compared to the control group. Moreover, the students expressed a preference for learning materials that included aspects of local cultures.

Liton and Madanat (2013) conducted a study addressing the issue of integrating culture into ESL/EFL classrooms. Employing observation tools, they maintained mixed methodology. Findings show integrating culture into classroom is a highly motivating factor in language acquisition. Besides developing students' intercultural competence, it also improves cross-cultural communication skills. The study concludes that

familiarization with other cultures leads learners to develop effective target language communication.

The previous studies presented in this section emphasise student preferences for culturally inclusive EFL materials that include both local and target cultures, as these materials make the learning process more engaging and relatable. Incorporating local culture into EFL teacher training programs improves teachers' ability to integrate cultural content into their teaching, enhancing their overall teaching practices.

Additionally, the findings of the above previous studies collectively highlight the importance and benefits of incorporating local culture into EFL teacher education. They suggest that such integration can lead to more effective teaching and learning experiences by making the target language content more relevant and engaging for both teachers and students.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Broadly defined, as pointed out by Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2010), the purpose of research is to provide answers to research questions and to acquire new knowledge, hence expanding frontiers in a specific field of study. The authors (ibid) add that research aims to make “valuable contributions to what we know and how we think about things” (p.1).

Research design, as indicated by Kazdin (2003), refers to the overall plan used to examine the focus of interest in an intended field of research. That is, research design refers to the multiple ways and means by which research may be carried out in order to answer specific research questions.

Methodology, on the other hand, sets out the principles, procedures, and practices that govern the research process itself. Research methodology should then be viewed as encompassing the entire process of conducting research, i.e., planning and conducting the research study, drawing conclusions, and disseminating the findings (ibid, p. 22).

This chapter then outlines the research design and methodology of the present research study, including data collection instruments, participants, and the sampling techniques involved. This chapter also determines the procedure for data collection. The process and methods for data analysis as well as ethical considerations are also dealt with in this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

The research design for the present study is exploratory in nature. Exploratory research is “a purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life” (Stebbins, 2001, p.8). A mixed-method design adopted in which a

combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments are used (Leedy and Ormord, 2016). This mixed-method approach allows for triangulation of data where quantitative and qualitative data support and validate each other. Hence, while quantitative data focusing on hypotheses testing is analysed through statistical means, qualitative data deals with non-numerical information e.g. interviews or observations that seek to explore and formulate theory through summarizing, categorizing and interpreting (Streefkerk, 2020).

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

In order to provide satisfactory answers to the research questions (Chapter One, Section 5), data was collected from EFL teachers through a teachers' questionnaire, and teachers' semi-structured interviews. The idea is that what could not be gathered through the closed-ended items of the questionnaire could be gained from in-depth interviewing techniques (Jain, 2021), such as probing and follow-up questions (Davis, 2019).

A focus group interview was also conducted with volunteer students who possess good speaking skills and have an interest in the practice of culture integration. A focus group discussion facilitates informal open-ended questions and answers in order to obtain respondents experiences and perceptions on certain phenomena (Kinzie, 2015).

3.3.1 Teachers Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire (Appendix A) consisted of two sections. An initial section gathered personal data (6 items), e.g., gender, age, and years of experience. The second section consisted of thirty 5-point Likert scale items from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). To facilitate data analysis, this section of the questionnaire was organised into five themes each addressing a different aspect of EFL teachers' incorporation of local culture; perceptions, practice, outcomes, strategies, and challenges.

At the distribution stage, 50 questionnaires were given out by the researcher to EFL teachers at the Faculties of Education Tripoli and Janzour. Forty responses were returned, 28 from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli, and 12 from Janzour. This yielded a response rate of 80%. The researcher waited for the teachers to help clarify misinterpretations in the questionnaire items and to maximise the response rate.

3.3.2 Teachers Semi-structured Interviews

Qualitative interviews as a data collection tool involve asking a number of open-ended questions to respondents either face to face or otherwise and recording their answers (Kumar, 2014). As Karatsareas (2022) points out, semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions followed by cues and prompts, to keep the interviewee on the right track with respect to the purpose of the study.

The teachers' semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) were conducted in person to delve deeper into the research topic and obtain in-depth data concerning the incorporation of local culture in EFL teaching material and classroom practice. Therefore, research issues that could not be gleaned by the questionnaire items were facilitated through the semistructured interview (Codó, 2008).

Six EFL teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews; four of them from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and two from the Faculty of Education/ Janzour, who expressed readiness to be interviewed. The researcher, in face-to-face mode, was able to ask open-ended questions followed by probes and follow-ups, thus obtaining in-depth data on perceptions, and practices that could not have been afforded by the questionnaire alone.

3.3.3 Focus Group Interview

The focus group discussion method is a way of gathering participants' in-depth views on a specific issue under research (Adams and Cox, 2008). The researcher was able to summon

the help of twelve female students from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and the Faculty of Education/ Janzour. The focus group questions and sub questions (Appendix C) were designed to stimulate discussion associated with incorporating local culture into EFL material and classroom practice, perceptions and merits/ shortcomings, identified student preferences, and the pedagogic challenges involved in the process.

3.4 Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 40 EFL teachers who participated in the questionnaire, 28 from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and 12 from the Faculty of Education/ Janzour. In addition, four teachers from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and two from the Faculty of Education/ Janzour agreed to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Twelve female students contributed to the focus group interview; eight from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli, and four from the Faculty of Education/ Janzour.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the process of “selecting a few (research sample) from a bigger group (research population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation, or outcome regarding the bigger group” (Kumar, 2014, p.177). In this research, all participants were selected using volunteer sampling technique.

For the teachers' questionnaire, a total of 50 questionnaires were given out to EFL teachers at the Faculties of Education in Tripoli and Janzour. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and asked teachers if they would be willing to participate, resulting in 40 teachers volunteering to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, these teachers were asked verbally if they were prepared to take part in the follow-up interviews, which also relied on their voluntary participation.

Similarly, the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview were conducted with participants who volunteered. Six EFL teachers expressed their readiness to be

interviewed. For the focus group interview, students in the teaching practice phase were contacted to participate. Twelve students from them agreed on their voluntary participation. The students were assured that they could withdraw from the group interview at any time they wished.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The study was conducted in the English Departments of two faculties, the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli, and the Faculty of Education/ Janzour, as representative faculties of education at the University of Tripoli. Permission was granted by the heads of the two departments at both faculties to conduct the study, which facilitated authorized access to both teachers and students. The participants at both sites were assured that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes.

The process of data collection began with distributing the paper questionnaires at the two faculties, where the researcher personally handed the questionnaires, along with a pen and a piece of chocolate as a gesture of appreciation. The researcher informed the teachers that they were welcome to request clarification concerning the questionnaire items, and that they could withdraw at any time if they wished.

Two teachers declined to participate, and two others initially agreed but did not turn up. Despite several follow-up visits, those questionnaires were never returned. In total, the researcher was able to collect 40 questionnaires from both faculties; 28 from FET, and 12 from FEJ.

After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher initially analysed the responses and used them to develop the teachers' semi-structured interview questions, which aimed at collecting more in-depth data. It was observed that some teachers supported teaching English through the lens of local culture, while others were against using local culture to explain English culture elements.

Participation in the focus group interview was arranged in coordination with the teaching practice coordinators at both faculties. In total, 12 students, who expressed interest in the research topic and had good speaking skills to express themselves freely; eight are from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and 4 from the Faculty of Education/ Janzour. The students were then contacted by the researcher to agree a mutual place and time for the focus group meeting. The focus group session was held on the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli premises and lasted for approximately two hours providing valuable student insights on the study focus.

The focus group interview process was smooth but lively. The researcher assured the participants that they were free to express their opinions openly and that they were allowed to speak in Arabic if they felt unable to fully express their ideas in English. This helped create a relaxed environment and encouraged participants to share their thoughts easily. Management of turn taking was necessary so that students did not speak at the same time. That helped to minimise noise and produced a more intelligible audio recording.

3.7 Piloting the Questionnaire

Piloting of the questionnaire was carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and to avoid any ambiguity in the items involved (Borg and Gall, 1996), which may discourage respondents from answering certain questions, or from returning the questionnaire (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Piloting the questionnaire was done with the help of three Libyan experts; two of them were from the Libyan Academy and one from the University of Tripoli. The experts checked the questionnaire items for appropriateness and, consequently, five of the items were modified, hence improving face validity of the questionnaire.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Before administering a questionnaire, face and content validity checks by experts are strongly recommended (Thorn and Deitz, 1989). Face validity refers to how well a measurement tool appears to assess what it intends to measure, while content validity measures the degree to which measurement items cover the scope of the construct being measured (Lam et al, 2018).

As for reliability, according to Cohen et al. (2018, p. 268) a reliable study refers to one that “if it were to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found”. Regarding the reliability of the current study, the researcher has made efforts to make the data collection tools satisfy the reliability conditions. More details are provided in Chapter Four (See section 4.2.2).

3.9 Data Analysis

With respect to the teachers’ questionnaire, quantitative data analysis was carried out using SPSS, the Statistical Package for Social Science. Raw data from the paper questionnaire were entered manually into SPSS using the themes; (a) teachers' perceptions, (b) teachers practice, (c) students’ outcomes, (d) teacher strategies, and (e) teaching strategies. The themed variables were allocated the values 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. The mean values and descriptive statistics for each theme were calculated and analysed.

Data gathered from the teachers’ semi-structured interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis process (Xu and Zammit, 2020). Thematic analysis involves reading through a set of data while detecting similar patterns belonging to specific themes. Data from the focus group interview was also analysed using thematic analysis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The EFL teachers who participated in the questionnaire were informed of the significance of the study and were asked if they would take part in subsequent semi-structured interviews, thus expressing their consent to being interviewed. Prior to the interviews, consent to audio recording was obtained. The teachers were told that whatever information they provide would be kept confidential and that anonymity is assured using teacher numbers not names, e.g., T1, T2, etc.

Concerning the students in the focus group interview, consent was obtained to audio record their discussion prior to the interview. The students were given a brief description of the study and were informed that as participants their anonymity and confidentiality are respected, and that their names would appear as numbers (S1, S2, etc.). In addition, the participating students had permission to withdraw from the group interview at any time they wished.

3.11 Summary

This chapter addressed the research design and methodology for the study. It started with defining relevant terms such as research design and methodology before outlining them specifically for the purpose of this study. This included the data collection methods employed, the participants involved, and the sampling techniques used to pick the study sample of EFL teachers and students. The procedure for data collection was described for added transparency. The intended process for data analysis concerning the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was also outlined along with the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of the study along with a discussion of the results. This means that at each stage of the analysis, relevant discussion follows so that tables or graphs associated with data analysis are closely visible by the reader instead of having to flip pages backwards and forwards.

Since the data was gathered through a mixed-method design, consisting of a teachers' questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and a students' focus group, data analysis also follows a mixed approach. That is, inferential statistical analysis and descriptive analysis. SPSS was used for the Likert-scale questionnaire, and thematic analysis was applied to analyse the semi-structured interviews and focus group interview.

4.2 Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire was analysed as follows:

4.2.1 Personal Data

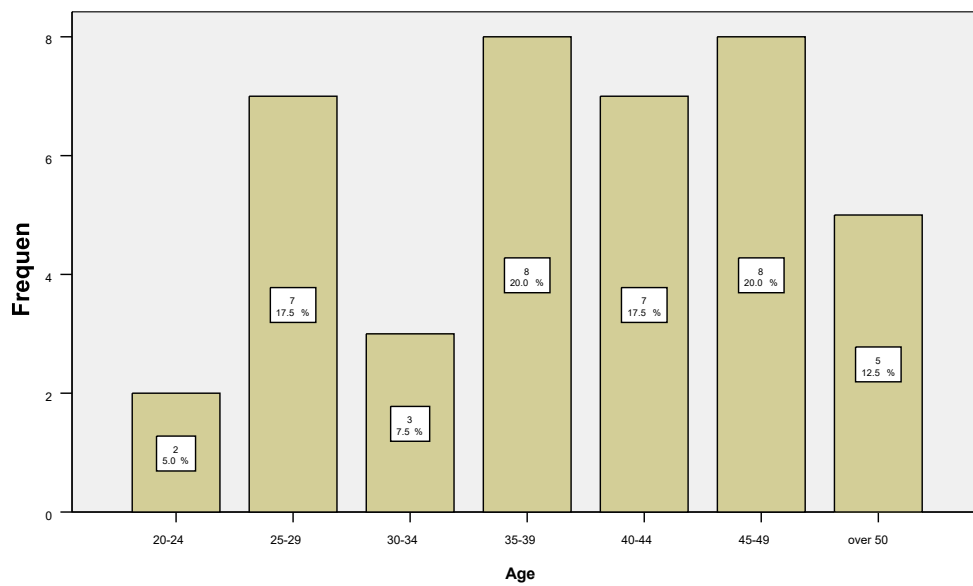
Table 1 shows that the questionnaire participants consist of 10 males (25%) and 30 females (75%). No missing values exist as all participants have responded to all questionnaire items, and that applies to the other items too.

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	10	25.0	25.0	25.0 %
	Female	30	75.0	75.0	75.0 %
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	100.0 %

With respect to age, (Figure 1) shows the range of age distribution. Two participants (5%) are aged between 20-24; seven (17.5%) are between 25-29 years of age; three (7.5%) fall between 30-34 years; eight (20%) are aged between 35-39; seven (17.5%) fall between 40-44; eight (20%) are aged between 45-49; five (12.5%) are over 50. The highest age ranges being 35-39 and 45-49 at 20% followed by 40-44 range at 17.5%. The lowest age range is 20-24 at 5%.

Figure 1: Age distribution



Regarding highest qualifications, the majority of the participants which is (85%) hold a Master's degree, but only six of them, which is (15%) are PhD holders.

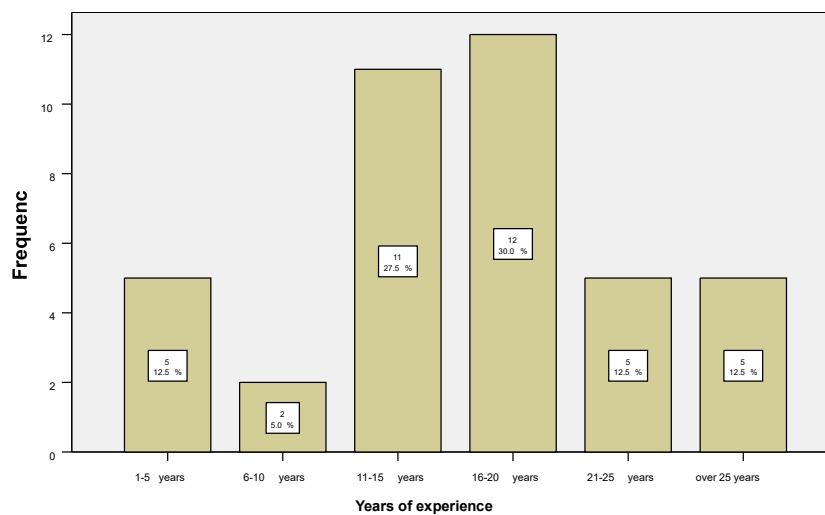
Table 2: Highest qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid MA	34	85.0	85.0	85.0 %
PhD	6	15.0	15.0	15.0 %
Total	40	100.0	100.0	100.0 %

As for participants experience, the highest level of experience is 16-20 years which is 12 participants at 30% (Figure 2).

The next highest level is 11-15 years at 27.5% with 11 teachers. Hence, it can be said that the majority of participants (23 at 57.5%) have experience range between 11-20 years. The minimum level of teaching experience appears at 6-10 years with only two participants (5%).

Figure 2: Teachers' experience



4.2.2 Questionnaire Reliability

The Likert scale used for the teachers' questionnaire in this study is a widely used tool that is considered reliable for measuring attitudes, perceptions, and opinions in social science research in general (Malapane and Ndlovu, 2024). However, the reliability of a Likert scale measurement is essential to ensure validity of research findings. A reliability check also ensures the internal consistency of questionnaire items.

Consequently, a Cronbach Alpha reliability test was carried out on the Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire contains five themes (A-E) with six items per theme

resulting in 30 items in all as in appendix A. According to Kosova et al. (2023), an internal consistency reliability test is interpreted according to the following criteria:

- - 0.6: Poor internal consistency
- 0.6 - 0.7: Questionable internal consistency
- 0.7 - 0.8: Acceptable internal consistency
- 0.8 - 0.9: Good internal consistency
- 0.9 - 1.0: Excellent internal consistency.

Consequently, a higher value of alpha indicates greater internal consistency, suggesting that the Likert scale items are more reliable in measuring the underlying constructs (Kosova et al., 2023).

Table 3: Questionnaire reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N. of Items
.896	30

As Table 3 reveals, the Cronbach Alpha reliability test for the questionnaire items yielded a score of 0.896. This reliability test result is interpreted as a good, almost excellent, measure for internal consistency.

4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics provide insights into the overall level of data, e.g., satisfaction or variation in perceptions among survey participants by analysing mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies (Roni and Djajadikerta, 2021). In the present descriptive statistics regarding EFL teachers' integration of local culture into their teaching practice, analysis of five Likert-scale questionnaire themes is carried out using SPSS. These themes are Perceptions, Practice, Outcomes, Strategies, and Challenges.

Before analysing the descriptive statistics of the 5-point Likert scale, it is necessary to understand how to interpret it. Since the range between the Likert scores is 4 (5-1), the interval between each score is 0.8 ($4 \div 5$). Hence, the mean values of the scale are incremented by this interval as the scale of agreement increases. The distribution of the 5point scale is interpreted in terms of the mean value as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean Likert values and interpretations

<i>Likert Scale</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Mean value</i>
Strongly Disagree	1	1-1.8
Disagree	2	1.81-2.6
Neutral	3	2.61-3.4
Agree	4	3.41-4.2
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.0

Theme A: Perceptions

For theme A, concerning EFL participants' perceptions of integrating local culture into teaching practice, a new variable reflecting the average means was calculated by averaging the five Likert scale measures representing teachers' perceptions.

5: Statistics for teacher perceptions

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		3.00
Median		3.17
Mode		3.67
Std. Deviation		.78

It turned out that the average mean for participants' perceptions as in Table 5 is 3.00, which falls into the neutral range (See Table 4). The median (mid-point) at 3.17 is still within the neutral range, but the mode (most frequently occurring value) is 3.67 reflects agreement. The standard deviation measure shows how dispersed the responses are around the mean with a relatively low value of 0.78. This means that the participants' perceptions of integrating local culture into their EFL teaching practice are close to each other.

Theme B: Practice

Similarly, for theme B concerning participants' practice when incorporating local culture in their teaching, a mean average was calculated.

6: Statistics for teachers' practice

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		3.03
Median		3.00
Mode		3.00 (a)
Std. Deviation		.60

The average mean for participants' practice produced a value of 3.03 (Table 6) which, as in participants' perceptions (3.00), also translates to a neutral value on the Likert scale. The median value is very close at 3.00 also representing neutrality. There is a case of multiple modes, the smallest value of which is 3.00 (Neutral). The standard deviation indicating dispersion shows little variation in the mean values at 0.6.

Theme C: Outcomes

Regarding theme C, students' outcomes as a result of incorporating local culture, the created average mean of the Likert scores gave a value of 3.15 (Table 7). As in the previous themes, this measure for student outcomes also falls within the neutral range. The median and mode values also fall within the same range. However, the mode (3.67) showing the most frequent scores appears within the agree range. The standard deviation at 0.65 also reflects low variation in the sample scores.

7: Statistics for student outcomes

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		3.15
Median		3.33
Mode		3.67
Std. Deviation		.65

Theme D: Strategies

Regarding teacher strategies for incorporating local culture into their teaching, the calculated average mean is 3.24 (Table 8), again yielding a neutral score. The values for median and mode, however, are both 3.5 which fits into the agree scale. This implies that the participants' mid-point and most frequent scores regarding the strategies used for integrating local culture fall within the agree range.

Table 8: Statistics for teacher strategies

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		3.24
Median		3.50
Mode		3.50
Std. Deviation		.65

Theme E: Challenges

As for the challenges faced by the teachers when incorporating local culture, the average mean of 3.09 (Table 9) yet again represents a neutral measurement on the Likert scale. With median and mode values, both at 3.20, a neutral measure is again confirmed. A relatively low dispersion value of 0.68 standard deviation produced by the challenges measure also reveals close association of participants' opinions regarding encountered challenges.

Table 9: Statistics for challenges encountered by teachers

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		3.09
Median		3.20
Mode		3.20
Std. Deviation		.68

Statistics summary

Table 10 presents a summary of the calculated average means for the Likert scale questionnaire themes (A-E), namely Perceptions, Practice, Outcomes, Strategies and Challenges. As observed, the average mean values for the questionnaire themes A-E all fall between 2.61 and 3.4, giving an overall average mean value of 3.1 falling within the neutral Likert scale range as pointed out earlier in Table 4.

Table 10: Statistic summary for the questionnaire themes

Statistics	Theme A Perceptions	Theme B Practice	Theme C Outcomes	Theme D Strategies	Theme E Challenges
N Valid	40	40	40	40	40
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Average Mean	3.00	3.03	3.15	3.24	3.09
Median	3.17	3.00	3.33	3.50	3.20
Mode	3.67	3.00(a)	3.67	3.50	3.20
Std. Deviation	.78	.60	.65	.67	.68

The observation of neutrality in Table 10 does not mean that the majority of participants have ticked neutral on the Likert scale. It simply means that the Libyan EFL teachers' responses represent two almost equally balanced directions regarding the integration of local culture in English-oriented topics, i.e., they neither support nor reject local culture integration. In other words, the participants' perceptions, practices, observed student outcomes, the strategies implemented, and the challenges faced all reflect different opinions; some for incorporating local culture topics and others believe that English culture should be explained or discussed in isolation of target culture norms. In other words, the English culture is learnt or acquired as part of the language learning process regardless of being totally different or sensitive with respect to local culture.

4.3 Teachers Semi-structured Interviews

The purpose of the participants' semi-structured interview was to gain further insight into their perceptions of incorporating local culture, what classroom strategies they use, observed students' responses, and the challenges encountered in doing so. As a result, the

participants semi-structured interview data helped to support and supplement the participants' questionnaire and, thus provide data triangulation.

4.3.1 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative participants' responses were analysed through thematic analysis techniques. As described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), thematic analysis is "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p.1278). First, the interview responses by the six EFL teachers were transcribed, and then similar patterns of interest relating to the interview categories were highlighted and integrated into the interview discussion. The thematic categories that formed the structure of the semistructured interview consisted of perceptions, outcomes, strategies, and challenges. The researcher used follow-up and probing questions to gain further insights into those target categories. To maintain anonymity, the six teachers were referred to numerically from T1 to T6, e.g., T1 for Teacher 1. Second, the focus group interview data from twelve students were processed following the same procedures. Similarly, they were referred to numerically from S1 to S12.

Theme 1: Perception

One of the EFL teachers (T1) perceived the inclusion of local culture as means for providing *"ways and contexts for learning new words and expressions"*. T1 gave examples of local culture events *"Ramadan, Pilgrimage, national days such as mothers' day, teachers' day; students excel when talking or writing about these events and work harder to find suitable terms and structures to discuss them"*.

T2 believes that *"incorporating Libyan culture into teaching practice is essential for creating a relatable and meaningful learning experience"*. For T2, incorporating local culture *"helps in teaching abstract or culturally sensitive concepts, especially when*

students struggle to understand certain English terms or situations". T2 also added, "relating idioms or metaphors to Libyan sayings often clarifies meaning. This makes the material more accessible and stimulates classroom discussion".

T3 believes that heavily relying on local culture undermines students' potential to truly acquire intercultural competence. She said, *"I see the incorporation of Libyan culture as potentially limiting. English is a global language, and students need to be exposed to a range of cultural contexts to develop true intercultural competence".*

Teacher 4 views language and culture as inseparable by saying *"English must be taught through its culture. While some might think using local culture makes lessons more relatable, I see it as counterproductive in the long run. When dealing with culture specific customs, it's not possible to have parallels, such as Thanksgiving Day. So, I explain the historical and cultural background of Thanksgiving itself. This helps students build not only language skills but also global cultural awareness".*

For T4, inserting too much local culture into English lessons, *"limits students' ability to think beyond their cultural comfort zone. It's more effective to teach English discourse as it is, and explain the cultural mindset behind it. This empowers students to understand original meanings, which is essential in authentic communication".*

T5 thinks that incorporating local culture into teaching materials *"boosts students' confidence, fosters a sense of identity, and enriches their learning experience by making it more relevant and relatable to their culture".*

T6 thinks that local culture can be useful to familiarize and enhance students' knowledge about their own culture, but they *"won't be familiar with the target culture and related expression especially when there are cultural differences".*

Theme 2: Practice

One practical strategy employed by T1 is *"asking students to write about a national event using the grammatical structures learnt"*. In other situations, diaries were used to *"write about different issues some of which are related to local culture"*.

T2 practices *"contextualization, storytelling, and cultural comparison strategies. For instance, I might compare a Western festival to Eid or a Libyan wedding when discussing celebrations. These comparisons not only help students understand the target language text but also encourage cultural reflection"*.

T3 is selective in practicing the use of local culture. *"I use Libyan culture mainly when introducing abstract ideas or when students are completely lost. Otherwise, I prefer to maintain the original context of English material"*. The goal *"is to help students step outside their comfort zone and interact with global realities, not just reflect their own. Over-relying on local examples can make students overly dependent on cultural translation instead of engaging with English as in real-world contexts"*.

T3 provides an example of culture incompatibility where employing local culture serves no purpose. *"In a lesson about holidays, I replaced Christmas with local celebrations, but the students then struggled as they were unfamiliar with the context and lacked the vocabulary to understand or discuss the topic. So, while local culture substitution may simplify learning in the short term, it can limit long-term intercultural competence"*.

Therefore, incorporating Libyan culture does not necessarily assist or help students better understand English text. In fact, as T3 stresses, it can sometimes be confusing. *"Linking English texts too closely to Libyan culture causes students to misinterpret the original meaning. For example, students once interpreted a character's independence in a*

Western novel as disobedience due to cultural bias". As a result, T3 finds it "more effective to teach students how to understand English culture as it is, rather than filtering everything through a Libyan lens. This prepares them for authentic communication, international exams, and studying abroad".

When T4 refers to local culture, it is mostly in the form of comparison rather than substitution. *"For instance, I might ask, 'How is this concept different from what we believe here?' This encourages students to reflect on cultural differences without replacing the context; it keeps the integrity of the target material while still making room for critical thinking".*

T5 used strategies relating to *"Storytelling in culturally relevant text facilitated the most meaningful learning. This is because it captures students' attention and fosters a personal connection with the material, while culturally relevant texts provide context that enhances comprehension. In these strategies, there is an environment that makes students feel valued and motivated to learn, which leads to deeper understanding and retention of the material".*

Integrating local culture does not necessarily benefit students (T6) because they are *"already familiar with their own culture".*

Theme 3: Outcomes

Regarding outcomes, T1 agrees that using local culture helps to engage students by providing *"opportunities for learning new words, expressions, idioms, and structures".* In teaching comparative literature, T1 used the Arabic collection of folktales 'One Thousand and One Nights' to engage students in comparing their translations with the English version; *"I really wondered at the number of the new words, expressions and styles that the students learned".*

"Including Libyan cultural elements" significantly impacted learning outcomes, as T2 states. She added, "One of the major benefits for students is increased student engagement and motivation, as learners often respond more positively when they see their own culture reflected in the language content". A classroom example given by T2 was to "do English family relationships"; relating the topic to Libyan families helped students connect the English vocabulary with their own cultural context. In another situation where T2 introduced English holidays without sufficient cultural adaptation, the students were confused and disengaged. A third example by T2 occurred during "reading comprehension on English hospitality". When comparing this to Libyan traditions,

" students immediately understood the characters' motivations and values. This culture integration led to a richer classroom discussion and deeper text analysis". T2 emphasized that "when students see parallels between English content and their cultural background, they grasp ideas faster and respond more enthusiastically. This showed me that incorporating local culture contexts can facilitate comprehension".

T3 believes that relying too heavily on Libyan cultural references hinders students' language development; *"the students become unfamiliar with the relevant English contexts and related vocabulary. So, while (local) culture substitution may simplify learning in the short term, it can limit long-term competence and confidence".*

In T4's experience, *"inserting too much Libyan culture into English language lessons has limited students' ability to think beyond their cultural comfort zone".* In case of international examinations, such as ILETS or TOFEL the students struggle because they had only practiced *"conversations using Libyan settings and values"*. When students only practice conversations through Libyan settings and values, they struggle when faced with international exams like IELTS or TOEFL, where they are likely to encounter unfamiliar

(TL) scenarios. Therefore, while *"relating a concept to Libyan culture might get a quick positive reaction, but it's a superficial gain. For example, if I relate a story about independence to a local tale about obedience, the moral value (of the tale) changes.*

Students may understand the vocabulary but miss the core message. It's more effective to teach English texts as they are and explain the culture mindset behind them".

For T5, *"incorporating local culture significantly aids students understanding of English text because it provides a framework for students to relate to English texts and makes comprehension easier by connecting new information to their own experience. Relating English stories or concepts to local culture also captures students' interest and engages them with the material".*

T6 believes that *"English can only be taught through its culture".* Local culture may be helpful in cases of *"comparison between the two cultures where it may help students understand English culture concepts more".*

Theme 4: Challenges

Finding the right material was one of the challenges that faced T1 in integrating local culture: *"I spend a long time trying to find suitable local material concerning the language level and the content".*

For T2 incorporating local culture becomes awkward when faced with sensitive *"English cultural concepts, such as dating or boyfriend/ girlfriend relations that clash with Libyan culture norms. Students sometimes react with shock and resistance to participate, especially if they perceive the material as morally inappropriate".*

T3 believes that, despite the discomfort caused, encountering cultural sensitivity is unavoidable as *"part of the learning process".* T3 stresses that *"avoiding sensitive English culture topics to protect students from discomfort does them disservice in the long run.*

We need to prepare them to understand the world, not just their own. Cultural clashes are moments for dialogue and learning, not avoidance". Moreover, for T3, "the challenge is that students often resist or feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar (English) content. However, I believe this discomfort is part of the learning process". However, T3 thinks such discomfort with unfamiliar sensitive topics is part of language learning; "the challenge is that students often resist or feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar content. However, I believe this discomfort is part of the learning process".

T4 holds similar thoughts regarding sensitive English topics. *"These topics can be difficult, but they are part of real-world English usage and often appear in literature, films, or conversations. Instead of avoiding them, I approach these issues academically and analytically. For instance, I make it clear that discussing such topics does not mean promoting them. Students need to learn how to understand and critically engage with diverse views, not shut down discussions based on cultural taboos".*

While integrating local culture helps T4 to engage students and motivate them to learn new vocabulary and expressions, a potential challenge lies in *"overemphasizing local culture which might limit exposure to global perspectives that are also necessary for language acquisition and intercultural competence".* This view is also shared by T3 who believes that *"overemphasizing local adaptation can be counterproductive in an EFL context".* Therefore, a main goal in incorporating local culture for T2 is *"striking a good balance with English culture so that a discussion of cultural differences fosters open dialogue while respecting cultural norms and sensitivities".*

The challenges in integrating local culture for T5 included *"ensuring respect while discussing cultural differences, the students sometimes struggle with vocabulary specific to*

cultural concepts, and some students were hesitant to engage in discussions about unfamiliar topics".

To review the teachers' responses to the semi-structured interview themes and construct an overall assessment of their reactions, Table 11 provides a visual summary.

Table 11: Summary of teachers' semi-structured interview responses to incorporating local culture

Theme	1.Perception	2.Strategies	3.Outcomes	4.Challenges
Teacher 1	<i>Supports learning</i>	<i>Writing; diaries</i>	<i>helps engage students</i>	<i>Finding material</i>
Teacher 2	<i>Provides Relatable context</i>	<i>Storytelling; cultural comparison</i>	<i>Impacts learning outcomes</i>	<i>Difficult to find suitable material</i>
Teacher 3	<i>Undermines students' potential</i>	<i>local culture serves no purpose</i>	<i>Hinders TL growth</i>	<i>Student discomfort</i>
Teacher 4	<i>Counter productive</i>	<i>Compare, not substitute cultures</i>	<i>Limits students TL abilities</i>	<i>managing students' reactions</i>
Teacher 5	<i>limits students' ability</i>	<i>Culturally relevant storytelling</i>	<i>English stories interest students</i>	<i>Engaging students in discussion</i>
Teacher 6	<i>Distances students from target culture</i>	<i>Students familiar with own culture</i>	<i>Comparing cultures can help</i>	<i>Discussing immoral topics</i>

It can be seen that the participants' perceptions of including local culture in their teaching practice reflect different opinions. While T1 and T2 support the use of local culture, T3 - T6 believe that local culture integration, besides being counterproductive undermines student potential for language development, it distances them from target culture norms.

Teacher strategies regarding the inclusion of local culture also reflect different responses in line with teacher perceptions. That is, T1 and T2 apply writing diaries and storytelling respectively, whereas T3 - T6's practices imply degrees of rejection of local culture

integration.

The teachers' views on student outcomes because of integrating local culture reveal a similar deviation of assessment. T1 and T2 suppose that integrating local culture assists learning, but the other teachers do not think so. Instead T3 and T4 believe that local culture hinders language growth and limits their abilities, T5 believes in using English stories, and T6 thinks culture comparison helps.

With respect to the challenges, teacher conformity persists. T1 and T2 face the problem of finding suitable local culture material; T3 - T6 encounter difficulties not in using local culture to support understanding, but in maintaining the English culture context while facilitating student discomfort, managing reactions, engaging students, and dealing with sensitive topics.

Overall, the state of participants' undecidedness observed in the questionnaire is reflected by the different opinions emerging from the participants' semi-structured interview responses. And these responses align with each other throughout the themes, demonstrating consistency of teacher opinion.

4.4 Students Focus Group Interview

The focus group interview with the students was carried out specifically to gain insights into participants' perspective concerning teachers' classroom practices when local culture is incorporated. The focus group included twelve female volunteer participants from the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and Faculty of Education/ Janzour whose names are concealed by student numbers for anonymity purposes. The focus group interview involved four main issues regarding culture integration in activities involving English culture: student perceptions, student reaction, student preference, and the pedagogic challenges faced in the process.

1. Perception

The participants also appear to have different views, perceiving the use of local culture in different ways. While some thought local culture helps them to understand target language contexts, others thought that the two cultures should be present in class discussion, while some others thought English should be taught only through its own culture.

S1: *"English lessons become more understandable when local culture is used, especially when familiar examples are used".*

S2: *"I think that in order to completely comprehend the (target language) context, English language and culture must coexist".*

S3: *"It depends on the subject because local culture may or may not be helpful".*

S4: *"I feel more connected to the lesson when teachers use Libyan customs".*

S5: *"English culture in the classroom demonstrates to me how English is used in everyday situations. The Libyan culture does not do that".*

S6: *"Culture serves as background support, in my opinion, though it's not always required".*

S7: *"When English culture is incorporated into our everyday lives, I feel more inspired to learn the language".*

S8: *"Compared to English cultural examples, local examples are simpler to comprehend".*

S9: *"When educators attempt to compare unrelated cultures, I become perplexed. Cultures are different and each of them should be taught in its context".*

S10: *"In my opinion, educators should begin by discussing our culture before introducing concepts from English. We can compare and understand more".*

S11: *"I can better understand the meaning of English expressions thanks to Libyan traditions".*

S12: *"While Libyan culture is important, but too much of it can overpower the English language".*

2. Reaction

The participants' reaction to integrating local culture was also mixed. While some are proud of their Libyan culture and welcome its inclusion in learning material, others find it uninteresting, and some think it is unnecessary as English expressions and vocabulary should be learnt along with the language culture. Other open-minded participants are indifferent, and appreciate different culture norms despite the culture shock, though some feel uneasy when the culture context clashes with theirs. Others find such encounters rather funny. The goal for others is to learn foreign culture perspectives despite the unease encountered when faced with sensitive topics.

S1: *"When the teacher incorporates Libyan culture, I am pleased because it makes things simpler for me".*

S2: *"If the teacher focusses too much on local culture, I occasionally become disinterested".*

S3: *"Even if it (English culture) shocks me, I like learning about it".*

S4 *"When the English subjects conflict with our religion, I feel uneasy, but I like learning about English culture".*

S5: *"I appreciate different cultures, and I want teachers to give thorough explanations of culture related topics".*

S6: *"Learning new things about the language, even if they are not from Libya, is exciting".*

S7: *"I want to learn about other cultures, but because some culture topics are so dissimilar to ours, some subjects make me laugh!"*

S8: *"Including Libyan culture in English classes makes me proud".*

S9: *"Comparing cultures rather than just presenting them separately is beneficial for learners".*

S10: *"Lessons with language content that seems too alien to me are difficult to learn, so I dislike them".*

S11: *"My comprehension of English vocabulary improves when teachers clarify cultural meaning in its context".*

S12: *"I'm indifferent; seeing various viewpoints is a necessary component of learning a language".*

3. Preference

The focus group participants' again expressed a variety of views regarding preference. Some expect teachers to begin by giving local culture examples; others prefer a balanced mix of cultures; some wish to gain further insight into English through accessing various cultural contexts. Simply, the participants want their teachers to be good explainers when it comes to cultural encounters whether sensitive or shocking or indifferent. This means expecting and accepting the culture shock syndrome, adapting to it and getting their students be open and adaptive. Using appropriate audio-visual material helps the learners to contextualize culture and learn to use acquired new language realistically.

S1: *"I would rather that (have) the teacher begin with examples related to the Libyan culture".*

S2: *"I find it balanced when both cultures are present and both are explained".*

S3: *"In preparation for future travel (to English speaking countries), I wish to gain a direct understanding of English culture".*

S4: *"The teacher should explain the English cultural concepts in English to know more about the language, but more slowly and clearly".*

S5: *"When there isn't an example in the Libyan culture, the teacher should properly explain what the English culture concept means".*

S6: *"I look for examples from the English culture that are pertinent to Libyan youth".*

S7: *"Teachers ought to explain English culture and relate their examples to our families or school lives".*

S8: *"As long as it is properly explained, I don't mind if the culture is different".*

S9: *"To comprehend English culture, I prefer the use of lively teaching aids like videos or stories".*

S10: *"I benefit most from a combination of Libyan and English culture".*

S11: *"If there is no effective way to explain a sensitive subject, teachers should stay clear of it".*

S12: *"Teachers ought to allow us to express our cultural opinions in class as well".*

4. Challenges

The students faced a few challenges when local culture is integrated in class teaching. The most prominent one is culture shock. Some English culture topics are so sensitive that some teachers avoid them altogether, as confessed by T6 (Section 4.2, Teachers Semi-structured Interviews). Certain culture topics such as drugs, alcohol abuse, or teen suicide should not be viewed for they can be seen as neutral. Other topics such as Halloween are of different nature to our culture, and should also not be avoided; they merely require adequate background knowledge by the teacher. The question is should teachers avoid English culture topics that are embarrassing or sensitive because they clash

with our culture such as dating, girlfriend/ boyfriend relations? Participants' responses were as follows:

S1: *"Topics like dating and alcohol abuse don't fit our lives so I don't understand them".*

S2: *"I get confused when teachers omit (avoid) to explain difficult or unfamiliar subjects".*

S3: *"I recall that when Halloween was explained, I completely missed the explanation".*

S4: *"It feels uncomfortable to bring up gay rights and related subjects in class".*

S5: *"Although I know they are serious in English culture, there are some things that make me laugh".*

S6: *"Teachers pause occasionally when explaining sensitive topics, which adds to the confusion".*

S7: *"I wish they explained odd taboo subjects with more local analogies".*

S8: *"When I don't understand a topic, I ask questions. Sometimes there are no good answers".*

S9: *"Once we had a topic about teen suicide, but I didn't know what it meant".*

S10: *"When a lesson includes material that contradicts our beliefs, it can be challenging".*

S11: *"I have more trouble when the instructor appears uneasy".*

S12: *"Local proverbs and stories, in my opinion, could aid in the explanation of foreign concepts".*

In addition to students' responses, the researcher thinks that rather than adopting a strategy of avoidance and leaving their students confused, teachers should prepare a proper background before introducing such topics while telling the students to expect a cultural shock or clash because such topics are morally unacceptable in our country, but are normal in western culture nowadays. However, certain other topics may be too sensitive to handle,

e.g., rape, gay rights, or same-sex relations which unfortunately have occurred in Arab countries too.

To sum up the focus group interview, the twelve participants portrayed varying though balanced perceptions towards the inclusion of local culture. Five of the participants favoured having local culture integrated with English because lessons are easier to be understood; students feel more connected; ability to comprehend more by culture comparison. Five other participants believed local culture involvement is unnecessary since English language use is demonstrated through its own culture; English must be taught separately from other cultures; English culture is a source of inspiration for language learning. Also, too much local culture in EFL classes can suppress English language development. The two remaining participants were indecisive; one thought local culture inclusion depends on the subject, and the other viewed local culture as background support otherwise unnecessary.

Reactions of the participants to incorporating local culture were also of mixed nature. Three students expressed positive responses because either local culture assists learning, makes students proud of themselves, or due to a sense of alienation when it is left out. Conversely, seven participants found local culture unexciting or unnecessary for English, and it should be learnt through its own culture; they like learning English culture despite the shock; they appreciate knowing about different cultures; they experience excitement when learning about new cultures; they experience improved comprehension when learning through English culture contexts. Two other open-minded participants are indifferent; one supports culture comparison rather than culture inclusion; another appreciates different cultural viewpoints as part of the language learning process.

With respect to participants' preference, an assortment of viewpoints also emerges. Three of the participants prefer local culture-oriented discussion by providing examples from

local culture; relating context to Libyan society; letting students express their culture perspective. Six participants favour understanding directly through English culture for reasons such as travel needs, enhancing own English, appreciation for social contexts, seeking youth culture contexts, knowing different culture norms, comprehension through lively aids. Three participants sought a balance of cultures; e.g., both cultures are present, acquaintance with a combination of cultures, but stay clear from sensitive English culture topics.

The participants were met with a variety of challenges when local culture was integrated into class discussion addressing English culture-oriented topics. The challenges involved teacher avoidance, teacher incompetence, or even lack of knowledge regarding English culture, handling culture sensitivity, religious contradiction, and taboos, confusion due to teacher's lack of confidence or hesitation, and inappropriate local culture clarification.

4.5 Summary

In addition to introducing the chapter, data Analysis and discussion provided detailed analysis of the combined quantitative and qualitative data collected through the given instruments. First questionnaire descriptive statistics provided analyses for the teachers' personal information (age, highest qualification, years of experience), followed by the Likert-scale themes analysis interpreted through the 5-point mean Likert values. This was followed by analysing the teachers' semi-structured interviews and students' focus group interview, both of which were analysed through thematic analysis.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the results of the study in line with the research questions. It also draws attention to limitations of the study and provides important recommendations to improve pedagogic practices associated with incorporating local culture in culture-oriented contexts.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

In the following subsections, major findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions. Moreover, these results are linked to the literature reviewed in the second chapter of this study.

5.2.1 RQ1: Extent of Local Culture Integration

The first research question (RQ1) addresses the extent to which Libyan EFL teachers incorporate local culture in teaching practices concerning English culture. This question was mainly answered through the teachers' 5-point Likert scale questionnaire.

It turned out that the overall average means for the questionnaire themes (3.1) yielded a neutral Likert scale value (between 2.61 and 3.4) as shown in Table 10, thus revealing different opinion. This means that half of the participants supported the incorporation of local culture to explain features of English culture, thereby presenting material in a familiar local context thereby facilitating meaningful learning. On the other hand, the remaining half of the participants thought otherwise. Their rationale centred on the idea that cultures are different, and accordingly, English culture cannot be fully explained through the Libyan culture. In other words, English culture should be understood through its own language, i.e., culture and language are inseparable.

5.2.2 RQ2: Teacher Perceptions and Observed Outcomes

The second research question (RQ2) sought to investigate the teachers' perceptions and observed student outcomes when incorporating local culture during English-culture-oriented activities. Although these components were addressed by the teachers' questionnaire, it was thought that further in-depth data would be revealed through the semi-structured interviews, which utilise probing and follow-up interviewing techniques that are unavailable in questionnaires (Jain, 2021). It was interesting to observe that the participants' different-opinion status portrayed by the questionnaire was also reflected through the interviews, thus, to some extent, demonstrating data triangulation.

Throughout the interviews, in line with Belli's (2018) study, only two participants were consistent in supporting the incorporation of local culture elements to enhance target language learning and provide meaningful contexts for students. The rest of the participants were in contradiction of including local culture, which they think can be counterproductive. That is, only two participants supported using local culture, while four favoured introducing English culture topics as an integral part of English language learning, hence improving inter-cultural competence, which resonates with Liton and Madanat's (2013) findings.

As noted in the questionnaire results, themes including students' outcomes revealed neutrality, i.e., different opinions. The in-depth teachers' semi-structured interview data revealed that when discussing English culture topics, the students' outcomes tally with maintaining English culture contexts. Their reasoning is that integrating local culture can be counterproductive to target language learning processes and does not serve the goal of language development.

The question that poses itself here is why do the teachers' interview data, despite showing different opinions, favour retaining English culture contexts compared to the questionnaire data? i.e., the balance in the interview results is tipped towards retaining English culture features (four teachers) against integrating local culture (two teachers). The answer to this lies in the fact that a limited sample of six volunteer teachers was interviewed not the whole sample who participated in the questionnaire which was (40) teachers. The neutral option in a Likert scale questionnaire may have presented an easy option, thus influencing the overall questionnaire result. It has been shown that when presented with a neutral Likert option, respondents are more likely to select that option than to report their actual opinion (Edwards and Smith, 2014).

5.2.3 RQ3: Students Position

In answering the third research question, regarding the students' views regarding the integration of local culture, a students' focus group interview was conducted. The students' responses revealed a similar trend as exhibited by the teachers, i.e., a diversification of opinion, but in a more balanced mode. For example, although five of the twelve participants viewed local culture inclusion as positive, five others saw it as unproductive and two others believed it could sometimes serve as background.

That is, the students perceived the incorporation of local culture in three different ways, rather than two as the teachers did. Some participants thought local culture assists understanding of English target culture, while others held the view that English culture can only be appreciated through its own context, i.e., language and culture are inseparable. On the other hand, some others believed that both local and English cultures should coexist inside the classes. Therefore, the participants added another dimension to the spectrum of local culture integration; the amalgamation of cultures. In fact, this finding echoes with

that by Abdulaziz and Almeshari (2019) and Görgülü (2016), where target language learning was realized by considering aspects of both cultures.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite efforts to conduct research under perfect conditions and fully accomplish research objectives, there bound to be certain limitations that cause some constriction to, for example, sample selection, data collection, or data analyses in some way.

First, the neutral option in the 5-point Likert scale questionnaire appeared to have offered an easy way out for the participants, rather than contemplating and reporting their actual opinion (Presser and Schuman, 1980). This in turn is believed to have swayed the theme average means towards a neutral midway value neither agreeing nor disagreeing. To avoid this issue of Likert scale neutrality, it is recommended that questionnaires of this nature use an even scale, either 4-point or 6-point to bypass the neutral option altogether.

Second, the study was also limited by gender representation. While the questionnaire sample size was minimally sufficient for quantitative data analysis ($n=40$), gender composition was limited to a ratio of 1:3 (10 males against 30 females). Moreover, the males were also under-represented in the interviews (1 male against 5 females).

Additionally, time constraints imposed by interview schedules may have influenced the fullness of probing and follow-up questions that typically characterise semi-structured interviews and which facilitate for more in-depth qualitative data.

5.4 Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Some important implications and recommendations for EFL teaching practice are pointed out:

1. The Libyan EFL teachers should be fully familiar with the local culture and the English terminology needed to convey and incorporate appropriate local culture contexts into their language teaching contexts as necessary.

2. The EFL teachers must be aware of a full spectrum of English culture norms and contexts. They should also possess a high level of intercultural competency as well as the required teaching skills to convey the cultural dimensions of English culture to promote students' intercultural competency.
3. Teacher education programmes should perhaps provide planned opportunities for prospective teachers to enrich their culture background knowledge not only on local culture and corresponding English vocabulary, but also on English culture norms and contexts. Despite the sensitivity therein to meet the changing expectations of language learners in today's world, hence developing the goals of communicative language teaching.
4. Culture discrepancy, culture shock, or clash of cultures between local and target contexts are expected in our reserved society and Libyan EFL teachers seeking culturally sensitive pedagogy must not avoid it.
5. When EFL students move up to advanced language learning levels, they are more likely to confront more English culture contexts. Hence they should become even more familiar with various dimensions of English culture as an integral part of acquiring intercultural communicative competence and language proficiency.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Suggestions for further research often emanate from limitations to current studies that had caused hindrances in the first place. Consequently, the researcher gives the following suggestions:

1. In research contexts that require decisiveness, e.g., determining attitudes and perceptions such as in the present study, it is suggested that questionnaire design avoid

a neutral option. This is particularly important when the available sample size is not too large.

2. To achieve a gender-balanced opinion and meaningfully compare gender results, it is suggested to conduct research based on a balanced gender mix. For instance, in Belli's (2018) study (See Previous Studies), the sample size of 96 students consisted of a reasonable gender ratio: 54 (56%) males and 42 (44%) that allowed for one-way ANOVA analysis. In spite of the lower ratio of females, statistically significant differences were found in favour of female students in terms of their perceptions of incorporating local culture in EFL classrooms.
3. To fully realise teachers' views on the research issue, it is suggested to complement the teachers' questionnaire with an attitude scale on integrating local and English culture in language teaching. In the case of this research, results of teachers' attitudes would be useful in view of the students' focus group findings which revealed a third dimension of culture integration; that of adopting both local and English cultures in EFL teaching classrooms.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teachers Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

My name is Salma Khalifa and I am an MA student at the Libyan Academy. This questionnaire is designed to explore the Influence of the Libyan cultural context on teaching English in The University of Tripoli/ Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and Faculty of Education/ Janzour

You are kindly invited to complete it. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

For more information please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Salma khalifa e-mail Salmakhalifa67@gmail.com Personal information:

1- Gender: male ☐ female ☐

2- Age: 20-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39 ☐ 40-44 ☐ 45-49 ☐ 50+ ☐

3- Highest qualification: MA ☐ PhD ☐

4- Experience in years: 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 25+ ☐

(A) Perceptions

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Local culture should be integrated in EFL material					
2	Language can be taught without using local culture					

3	Teachers should teach English through Libyan culture					
4	I like to teach my students according to local culture					
5	I dislike teaching students according to English culture					
6	English should be taught through local culture					

(B) Practice

No.	Item	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1	I consider Libyan cultural norms when preparing lessons					
2	Using local cultural significantly influenced my teaching practice					
3	My material addresses Libyan cultural contexts					
4	I have no difficulty teaching local culture topics					
5	I include local cultural elements in my class activities					
6	I avoid using local culture in my teaching practice					

(C) Outcomes

<i>No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1	Using local culture helps students in learning English					
2	Local culture helps students in understanding English contexts					
3	Aligning teaching with local culture helps engage students					
4	Students find local culture difficult to be understood					
5	Students are encouraged by including local culture content					
6	Local culture helped students cope with the English culture					

(D) Strategies

<i>No.</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1	I collaborate with teachers to incorporate local cultural					
2	I use storytelling to make cultural content relatable					
3	I compare local culture with target culture to help students					
4	I explain cultural differences to enhance student learning					

5	I encourage students to express views using local culture					
6	I help students discuss English culture differences in class					

(E) Challenges

<i>No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1	Libyan cultural values hinder teaching English concepts					
2	It is difficult to explain English culture through local culture					
3	Students do not respond positively to local culture					
4	I find difficulty in explaining English through local culture					
5	Some English culture usage is problematic due to sensitivity					
6	Resistance from students is a barrier to using local culture					

Thank you for participating

Appendix B: Teachers Semi-Structured Interview Questions

This set of questions is for the English language teachers at the Faculty of Education /Tripoli and Faculty of Education/ Janzour. The questions aim to explore teachers' perceptions on integrating Libyan cultural elements in teaching material and practices, the strategies and challenges involved in doing so, and the students' responses. Example prompts and follow-up questions are included to enrich data and obtain in-depth responses.

(A) Perceptions

1. How do you perceive the process of incorporating local Libyan culture into teaching material and practice in your classes? What benefits or drawbacks could be involved in the process in your view?
2. Under what circumstances or situations would you incorporate local culture in your teaching material or practice? Explain/ justify your opinion.

(B) Strategies

3. Are you aware of any of the strategies used in integrating local culture in teaching material or classroom practice? Name a few. What do you know about each (if teachers are unaware, I tell them and ask if they heard of them)
4. What strategies do you use to integrate local culture into English material content? Do these make target material more relatable to your students? Which of these strategies facilitate meaningful learning more than others? Justify.

(C) Outcomes

5. In your opinion, does the inclusion of Libyan cultural impact students' learning outcomes? Give reasons for your views. Share examples or real situations when your use of Libyan culture facilitated, or not facilitated learning.

6. Do you think incorporating Libyan cultural helps students better understand English texts? Justify your opinion. Can you give examples? When you relate a story or concept in English to Libyan culture, do the students react more positively?

(D) Challenges

7. What are the challenges you have faced when integrating local culture in your EFL material or classroom practice? When English cultural concepts are involved do you find the situation more challenging to deal with? How do your students react?
8. Have you faced difficulty explaining ideas like dating, night life, boyfriend girlfriend relationships, gay rights, same-sex marriage, alcohol consumption, drug use, teen suicide, birth control, superstition, or Halloween, etc.? Give details of any or similar situations and the strategies you used. What problems/ challenges faced you?

Appendix C: Students Focus Group Questions

This set of FG interview questions has been prepared for the students at the Faculty of Education/ Tripoli and the Faculty of Education/ Janzour. The questions explore the students' experiences of EFL classroom learning through the incorporation of local culture. Example prompts and follow-up questions are added to enrich interaction and responses.

(A) Perceptions

1. When do you think local culture can or cannot facilitate your understanding of English material?
2. How should the process take place for maximum benefit, if so?

(B) Reaction

3. How do you feel when your teacher attempts to incorporate local culture content into English teaching material and/or classroom practice? Does this depend on the kind of topic being discussed? Explain.
4. How about when the target material involves culture topics that are different from the Libyan culture? How do you find the experience? e.g., interesting, confusing, strange, or exciting? Share your views.

(C) Preference

5. How do you prefer your teacher to explain such issues? Do you prefer that your teacher explains English culture topics using Libyan traditions, or customs? Why or why not? What if there are no parallel contexts in our local culture? How do expect the teacher to explain them in class?
6. Do you think integrating local culture in class helps you understand English culture topics better? Why or why not? How do you prefer target culture topics to be explained? Does this depend on the culture topic?

(D) Challenges

7. What problems or difficulties or challenges have you encountered in trying to understand English culture topics? Give examples you encountered in class relating regarding. How were they explained by the teacher? Were the teacher's attempts successful, or unsuccessful? Share your experience.
8. Consider these English topics: dating, night life, boyfriend girlfriend relationships, gay rights, same-sex marriage, alcohol consumption, drug use, teen suicide, birth control, superstition, or Halloween? Which of them (a) neutral, (b) ambiguous, (c) embarrassing, or (d) sensitive Share your views? What reasons can you give for such difficulty? Share you views with examples. How do you think local culture can help you understand such topics?