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Difficulties of Learning English as a Foreign Language at Sudanese Basic Schools: A Case Study of Duiem Locality

Abstract

The objective of this study is to identify the difficulties of learning English language in Duiem locality basic schools of the Republic of Sudan. To fulfill the study goals, the researcher used the analytical-descriptive method. The sample of the study consisted of (95) teachers, and the researcher used SPSS program to answer the study questions and to examine its hypotheses. The study comes up with following results: Sudanese secondary school students face difficulties in learning English as a foreign language due to teachers, the students themselves, and the curriculum. Male and female teachers of English agreed that there are difficulties facing learning English in Sudanese secondary schools. Teachers of English agreed that the problems of learning English in Sudanese secondary schools are not related to experience, ages or monthly incomes. In light of the study results, the researcher recommends the following: Establishing an incentive-punishment system for teachers so as to encourage them to do their best in instructing. Supplying schools with educational equipment and instructional tools to improve teaching and to increase student performance. Developing programs for preparing teachers of English language and providing them with essential training courses that enhance professional and educational level. Creating a program for effective educational activities that benefit English language classes, taking into account the general outcomes of English language teaching.

Key word: learning English, basic schools, difficulties, students

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مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على صعوبات تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في مدارس الأساس السودانية بمحلية الدويم و لتحقيق SPSS الدراسة، استخدم الباحث المنهج التحليلي الوصفي. تكونت عينة الدراسة من (95) معلمًا، واستخدم الباحث برنامج للإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة وتحليل فرضياتها

توصلت الدراسة إلى النتائج التالية:

- 1- يواجه طلاب المدارس الثانوية السودانية صعوبات في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بسبب المعلمين، والطلاب أنفسهم، والمناهج الدراسية.
- 2- اتفق معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية من الذكور والإناث على وجود صعوبات تواجه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية السودانية.
- 3- اتفق معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية على أن مشاكل تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية السودانية ليست مرتبطة بالخبرة أو الأعمار أو الدخل الشهري.

في ضوء نتائج الدراسة، يوصي الباحث بما يلي:

- إنشاء نظام للمكافآت والعقوبات للمعلمين لتحفيزهم على بذل أقصى جهدهم في التدريس 1-
- تزويد المدارس بالمعدات التعليمية والأدوات التوجيهية لتحسين التدريس وزيادة أداء الطلاب 2-
- تطوير برامج لإعداد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية وتزويدهم بالدورات التدريبية الأساسية التي تعزز مستواهم المهني 3 - والتعليمي.
- إنشاء برنامج لأنشطة تعليمية فعالة تفيد دروس اللغة الإنجليزية، مع مراعاة النتائج العامة لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية 4-

Introduction:

1-0 Background:

Language plays an important role in our lives. It has been a thinking tool as well as being a tool for expressing our needs, emotions, and feelings for a long time. It is also a communicating tool among people, in that they can express their ideas, opinions, emotions or perceptions through speaking and listening

Teaching English language has become a necessity for the great importance it has in our daily life, and for the identification of social status, particularly during the 3rd millennium that witnesses rapid technological and scientific development. The relevance of English language to Sudanese populace especially that of Duiem locality cannot be overemphasized. This demands and relevance of English language necessitated the conduct of this research.

1.1 Problems of the Study:

Since last century, Ministry of Education in Sudan has started teaching English as a foreign language for basic school students both in private and public ones. Through his contact with teachers and students, the researcher noticed the appearance of some difficulties that face students while learning English.

1.2 Hypothesis of the Study:

This study tries to investigate the following hypotheses:

- 1- Sudanese basic school students face difficulties in learning English as a foreign language.
- 2- These difficulties happen due to teachers, the students themselves and due to the curriculum.

1.3 Questions of the study:

1. What is the level of English language learning among students in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?
2. Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?
3. Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?
4. Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?
5. Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic from its teachers' point of view?
6. Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic from its teachers' point of view?

1.4 The significance of the Study:

This study deals with the main difficulties of learning English as a foreign language at Sudanese basic schools. This makes it important to teachers of English, decision makers and workers and to curriculum designers.

1.5 Limits of the study:

This study is limited to the Sudanese basic school students (students of Duiem locality) during the academic year (2022-2023). The generalization of the results will be limited to this population and to the instruments used in this study.

Literature Review

2.1 Features of basic school students:

1. identify the entire concepts, that is because he acquires a lot from school, so his realization of these concepts becomes possible, and this ability of realization increases through school stages.
2. increase in muscular and dynamic growth, so he can hold things tightly and strongly. Also, his ability to move becomes stronger.
3. ability to understand place and time relations, similarity and contrast, and this ability progresses through school stages.
4. ability to think more clearly, but at the start of the stage, his concentration and attention is limited.
5. the memory is growing continuously, as well as the ability to comprehend, understand, and solve problems. He starts realizing some of the relations among things.
6. at the end of this stage, his interests start to be more limited and objective.
7. self-centeredness decreases strongly, and he starts practicing give and take, feeling that he is related to friends, family.....
8. caring for the outside world, and getting to know what is going there (Alkhatabi & others, 1424h, pp 75-87).

2.2 The Role of the school Curriculum in achieving the demands of basic stage students:

The role of curriculum in meeting these demands and features requires that the designers should convert these features and demands into behavioral skills to be acquired by students, that's because the student's thinking ability, as well as his ability to realize place and time relations must be transferred into behavior or behavioral practices acted by the student.

The curriculum should also provide teachers with various choices of activities that help students acquire behavioral patterns of habits, ideas and values which in turn enhance his ability of thinking and understanding relations

Achieving mastery in foreign languages comes as a result of longer periods of studying it, and that is through starting teaching it earlier in the basic stage (the local American Educational committee report, 1983, pp 36-37).

Also, students who study the second or foreign language at an early age in the basic stage, and who continue studying and practicing it both inside and outside the school get better chances to be more proficient and skillful than those who don't (Marcos, 2011, p 138).

2.3 The positive aspects of English language teaching at an early age

Teaching the foreign language at an early age offers longer time for earning, and it also prepares students for the coming stages (intermediate and secondary). Moreover, it saves

time, effort and money, and removes the fear associated with this language. Instead, it increases their self-confidence and their love to this language until it becomes familiar to them (Richards, 1990, page:43).

2.4 The current scientific opinion regarding teaching the foreign language at an early age

Some studies recommended the idea of teaching the foreign language at an early age, and these studies proved that teaching the foreign language during the elementary stage can not affect his mother tongue or even learning it.

According to Al-Shammari (1409H, p:179), argues that children are more adept at acquiring foreign language during their childhood and starting the language during the elementary stage will enable the student to acquire the English language when being young. Burstal (1975, p:17) adds that the kid's ability to learn a foreign language and keep it is bigger than the adult's.

Penfield (1976, p:248) asserts and states that "the kid before the age of 9 enjoys a special ability to learn languages, and that he during this age can learn 2 or 3 languages as easy as learning the mother language". Fenex (1982, p:46) asserts that idea and states that the elementary student's abilities are better in learning a foreign language than his abilities during the intermediate stage.

2.5 The importance of teaching English language at basic schools:

Learning the English language has become so important because it is the first world language and the most spreading. It is the language of science and technology, scientific research, travel and tourism, and the language of many medical scientific organizations. It is also the language of international conferences and foreign employment, the language of economy and electronic trade via the Internet. In addition, it occupies a remarkable position through being the computer language and studying language in most universities and colleges. Because of the large number of English language teaching methods and styles, here are the most famous and most common ones:

2.6 Grammar-Translation Method:

This method is considered the oldest one used in teaching foreign languages, so it is known as the ancient method where the mother language is used widely to explain meanings of words and language structures

It is important in this method to memorize the rules written in students' language, as well as encouraging them to memorize words, definitions, word parts; verbs, adverbs, prepositions, adjectives, and grammatical rules. But this method was criticized, both by Rivers (1981, p 55-59), and Muttawa & Kailani (1989, pp 76-70) who gave the following comments:

1. it ignores the correct pronunciation of words.
2. it ignores the skills of listening and speaking.
3. it uses the mother language widely in a way that reduces students' use of the targeted language in class.
4. it focuses on teaching the grammar of the target language.
5. it focuses on teaching word items through longer lists so as to make it easier.

2.7 The Direct Method:

This method is concerned with discussion and speech, making them a way for teaching the English language. Rivers (1981, pp 30-33) shows the features of this method as follows:

1. its concern with the speaking skill, rejecting the memorization of grammar rules.
2. avoiding the use of translation in teaching the foreign languages, considering it useless and because of that the mother language is not used here at all.
3. explanation of statements and word items is introduced through demonstration or miming, or through using real objects (realia).

2.8 The Communicative Method:

Supporters of this method say that using foreign languages for the purpose of achieving the goals of linguistic communication includes more than the correct use of statements and linguistic structures, since Sociolinguistics and Linguistics Ethno clarified that the style by which language is used has is linked with the linguistic interaction between groups and individuals. The most important features of this method:

1. it asserts the importance of communication skill which means the ability to use the language from the very beginning, since the main purpose of this curriculum is to enable students use the language to express their needs and communicate with others. Grammatical rules are explained using the deductive method where the rule is explained first, then it is followed with clarifying examples.
2. it concentrates on understanding, especially listening for a purpose (Haycraft, 1998, pp 121-122).

Method & Procedures

This chapter presents the methodology followed by the researcher, which includes the community, the sample, description of the tools and procedures by which the study was conducted, as well as the statistical processing needed for analyzing data to attain results and conclusions.

3.1 The methodology of the study:

The researcher used the analytic-descriptive methodology which is based on a group of researching procedures that rely on collecting facts and data, categorizing and analyzing them adequately and accurately to figure out their significance, and deriving conclusions and generalizations about the targeted phenomenon. That methodology was the most proper one for conducting this study.

3.2 The community of the study:

It contains all the male and female teachers of the English language whose native language is Arabic in the private and public schools of Duiem locality. They are about (150) schools with (210) male and female teachers.

3.3 The sample of the study:

It contains (120) male and female teachers who were randomly selected, then 25 were excluded because they didn't complete answering the items in the tool. So, the sample became (95) teachers of basic schools in Duiem locality.

Table (2) shows the sample features according to the variables of gender and school.

Table (2) distribution of study sample according to gender & school

Variables	Gender		Total
School	male	Female	
Private	10	13	23
Public	20	52	72
Total	30	65	95

3.4 The tool of the study:

The tool of the study included (41) items (see index no. 1) with a positive formula. These items were divided into 3 domains: one related to the teacher with a total of (14) items, the other related to the student with a total of (16) items, and the last domain was difficulties related to the curriculum having (11) items. Each item tries to identify the nature of students' English language learning difficulties from the teachers' point of view.

3.5 Modification of the study tool:

The tool was modified according to five levels of answers, as shown in the following table: Table (8) key to items modification

Response level	Very great	Great	Medium	Low	Very low
	5	4	3	2	1

3.6 Validity of the study tool:

To ensure its appropriateness, the researcher depended upon 3 types of validity: Arbitrators validity:

Logical validity is used, by consulting 16 specialized arbitrators in the University of Bakht-er-Ruda, University of Gezira and University of Bahri with the purpose of ensuring its appropriateness to achieve goals and its proper items. The initial image of the tool included (42) items, and the degree of agreement between arbitrators on its items was 92%. As a result, 4 items were deleted for not being proper according to arbitrators. Then, (41) items remained (see index 3), and that indicates the sound validity of the tool.

3.7 Stability of the tool:

Researchers intentionally computed stability using (Cronbach's Alpha) method, and the coefficient was (0.92) as a whole. It was a very high stability coefficient. Whereas Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the first field that is related to difficulties of teachers was (0.77), and for the second field that is related to difficulties of students was (0.89). As for the third field that is related to difficulties related to curriculum, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was (0.84), and these were acceptable and suitable stability coefficients. The following table shows these values for the whole tool and for its fields using the formula of Cronbach's Alpha.

Table (9) stability coefficients for the study toll as a whole and for its domains using the formula of Cronbach's Alpha

Fields	Stability coefficients
Difficulties related to teachers	0.77
Difficulties related to students	0.89
Difficulties related to curriculum	0.84
The tool as a whole	0.92

Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Results related to the first question:

What is the level of English language learning among students in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, means and standard deviations were computed as well as the percentages for the tool fields and the ultimate degree

Table (10) means, standard deviations, percentages and estimations for the tool domains and the entire degree

Domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage	Estimation
First: difficulties belong to teachers	2.82	0.58	56.4	Intermediate
Second: difficulties belong to students	3.54	0.62	70.8	High
Third: difficulties belong to curriculum	2.97	0.74	59.4	Intermediate
The overall degree	3.17	0.53	63.4	Intermediate

The table results clearly show that the estimation of English language learning difficulties' level in Sudanese secondary schools from its teachers' point of view was intermediate. The entire or overall degree mean was (3.17), with a percentage of (63.4%). The estimation of the tool fields was ordered in a descending manner, where the second domain of measuring difficulties related to students came first with a high level of estimation, and its mean was (3.54) with a percentage of (70.8%). Then came the third domain that is related to difficulties of curriculum, with a mean of (2.97) and a percentage of (59.4), and its estimation was intermediate. Finally, the first domain occupied the least level with a mean of (2.82), and a percentage of (56.4%), having an intermediate estimation level.

4.2 Results related to the second question:

Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, the researcher used independent samples t-test for the tool fields and for the entire degree, and the following table clarifies that.

Table (11) independent samples t-test results for the tool domains and the entire degree according to gender

Fields	Males		Females		T value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
First	2.99	0.83	2.78	0.54	0.826	0.412
Second	3.79	0.47	4.50	0.63	1.16	0.252
Third	3.35	0.88	2.92	0.72	1.43	0.156
Overall	3.42	0.59	3.14	0.52	1.37	0.175

It is clear from that table that differences between means for the 3 domains and the overall degree according to gender were not statistically significant at the significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$), which means that teachers agreed on the estimation level of English language learning difficulties.

Table (11) clearly shows that the differences at the three domains and the entire degree were not statistically significant at the significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$), which means that male and female teachers agreed on the estimation of difficulties degree for learning English language.

4.3 Results related to the third question:

Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, the researcher used independent samples t-test for the tool fields and for the entire degree, and the following table clarifies that.

Table (12) independents samples t-test results for the tool domains and the entire degree according to school type

Fields	Males		females		T value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
First	2.99	0.83	2.78	0.45	0.826	0.412
Second	3.79	0.47	4.50	0.63	1.16	0.252
Third	3.35	0.88	2.92	0.72	1.43	0.156
Overall	3.42	0.59	3.14	0.52	1.37	0.175

4.4 Results related to the fourth question:

Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic schools from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, one-way ANOVA was used for the tool domains and the entire degree, illustrated in the following table.

Table (13) results of one-way ANOVA for the tool domains and the entire degree according to experience years

Fields	Source of Variance	Total of Sums	Freedom degrees	Mean of Sums	F value	Level of Significance
First field	Between groups	0.099	2	0.050	0.144	0.867
	Inside groups	20.695	92	0.345		
	Total	20.795	94			
Second field	Between groups	1.046	2	0.523	1.362	0.264
	Inside groups	23.041	92	0.384		
	Total	24.87	92			
Third field	Between groups	0.873	2	0.437	0.776	0.465
	Inside groups	33.749	92	0.562		
	Total	34.622	94			
Entire	Between groups	0.577	2	0.278	0.981	0.381
	Inside groups	17.029	92	0.284		
	Total	17.585	94			

Table (14) clearly shows that the differences at the three domains and the entire degree regarding the years of experience variable were not statistically significant at the significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$), which means that teachers agreed on the estimation level of English language teaching difficulties regardless of their experiences.

4.5 Results related to the fifth question:

Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, one-way ANOVA test was used for the tool domains and the entire degree, illustrated in the following table.

Table (15) results of one-way ANOVA for the tool domains and the entire degree according to age

Fields	Source of Variance	Total of Sums	Freedom degrees	Mean of Sums	F value	Level of Significance
First field	Between groups	0.683	2	0.137	0.391	0.853
	Inside groups	20.301	92	0.350		
	Total	20.984	94			
Second field	Between groups	3.103	2	0.621	1.715	0.146
	Inside groups	20.986	92	0.362		
	Total	24.089	92			
Third field	Between groups	1.627	2	0.325	0.572	0.721
	Inside groups	33.015	92	0.569		
	Total	34.642	94			
Entire	Between groups	1.211	2	0.242	0.857	0.516
	Inside groups	16.399	92	0.283		
	Total	17.610	94			

Table (16) clearly shows that the differences at the three domains and the entire degree regarding the age variable were not statistically significant at the significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$), which means that teachers agreed on the estimation level of English language teaching difficulties regardless of their ages.

4.6 Results related to the sixth question:

Are there differences of statistical significance in the mean level of English language learning difficulties in Duiem locality basic from its teachers' point of view?

To answer this question, one-way ANOVA test was used for the tool domains and the entire degree, illustrated in the following table.

Table (17) results of one-way ANOVA for the tool domains and the entire degree according to monthly income

Fields	Source of Variance	Total of Sums	Freedom degrees	Mean of Sums	F value	Level of Significance
First field	Between groups	1.479	2	0.493	1.517	0.219
	Inside groups	19.505	92	0.325		
	Total	20.984	94			

Second field	Between groups	2.746	2	0.915	2.573	0.062
	Inside groups	21.343	92	0.356		
	Total	24.089	92			
Third field	Between groups	1.081	2	0.360	0.644	0.590
	Inside groups	33.561	92	0.559		
	Total	34.642	94			
Entire	Between groups	1.352	2	0.451	1.663	0.185
	Inside groups	16.352	92	0.271		
	Total	17.610	94			

It is clear that the differences between means according to this variable were not statistically significant at the level of ($\alpha=0.05$) which means that teachers agreed on the estimation level of English language learning difficulties regardless of their salaries.

Table (18) clearly shows that the differences at the three domains and the entire degree regarding the age variable were not statistically significant at the significance level of ($\alpha=0.05$), which means that teachers agreed on the estimation level of English language teaching difficulties regardless of their monthly incomes.

Summary, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5-1 Summary:

This study aimed to identify the difficulties of learning English language in Duiem locality basic schools. To fulfill the study goals, the researcher used the analytical-descriptive method. The study community included all the teachers of the English language whose native language is Arabic in both public and private, with a total of (210) male and female teachers. The study sample included (95) male and female teachers, and the researcher used SPSS program to answer the study questions and to examine its hypotheses.

5.2 Findings of the study:

The study comes up with following results:

- 1- Sudanese secondary school students face difficulties in learning English as a foreign language due to teachers, the students themselves, and the curriculum.
- 2- All male and female teachers of English agreed that there are difficulties facing learning English in Sudanese secondary schools.
- 3- Teachers of English agreed that the problems of learning English in Sudanese secondary schools are not related to experience.
- 4- Teachers also agreed on the estimation level of English language teaching difficulties regardless of their ages.
- 5- Teachers of English also agreed on the estimation level of English language teaching difficulties regardless of their monthly incomes.

5.3 Conclusion:

Many secondary school students in Sudan face difficulties in learning English in their schools and they make efforts to overcome this problem. The researcher believes that some of the main reasons are:

1. Lack of exposure outside the classroom.
2. Lack of opportunity to communicate with native speakers of English language.
3. Learning English is often viewed as a means to pass exams and enter universities only.

As a result, it is necessary to encourage students to engage with the language through various media and avoid relying on Arabic to understand English. They should be encouraged and supported with different methods to improve their language proficiency.

5.4 Recommendation of the study:

Due to the above findings, the study recommends the following:

- 1.** Supplying schools with educational equipment and instructional aids as computers, interactive software, and online resources to make learning more engaging and accessible.
- 2.** Provide teachers with professional development programs focused on effective teaching methods, modern techniques, and language acquisition strategies.
- 3.** Integrate cultural aspects of English- speaking countries to make the language more relevant and interesting for students.
- 4.** Revise and adapt the curriculum to make it more engaging, practical, and suited to students' interests and real-world applications.
- 5.** Increase exposure to English through extracurricular activities, language clubs, and media in English (movies, music, books).
- 6.** Carrying out a study that identifies the nature of difficulties students face while studying English language, that are related to students, teachers and curriculum.

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