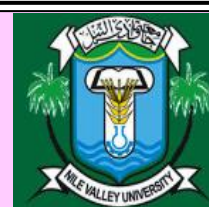




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Difficulties in Learning English as a Foreign Language in Rural Areas of the Blue Nile State 2018-2019

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Abstract:

This study aims to sort out some factors which affect learning English as a foreign language in Rural areas in Sudan. The target population for this study consists of Government Secondary schools in rural areas of Blue Nile State. Sample of 60 students (male and female aging between 13-17 years) has been selected. A survey has been conducted using a questionnaire for collecting data about family factors affecting learning English as a foreign language. The data was analyzed statistically to comprehend the problems. The study assists English teachers, curriculum developers, syllabus designers and education policy-makers of Sudan to overcome these problems which are a constant source of threat for rural area students. Depending on the study results, the researchers drew their recommendations and suggestions.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), rural areas, curriculum.

مشكلات تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية فى المناطق الريفية لولاية النيل الازرق (2018-2019)

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد بعض العوامل التي تؤثر على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في السودان. تتألف العينة المستهدفة لهذه الدراسة من المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في المناطق الريفية بولاية النيل الأزرق. تم اختيار عينة من 60 طالبًا (ذكورًا وإناثًا) تتراوح أعمارهم بين 13 و 17 عامًا) بشكل عشوائي. تم تصميم استبيان واستخدامه كأداة لجمع البيانات يتم توزيعها بين العائلات التي تعيش في الولاية لغرض جمع البيانات حول العوامل الأسرية التي تؤثر على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم تحليل البيانات إحصائياً لفهم المشاكل. تساعد الدراسة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية، ومطوري ومصممي المناهج الدراسية، وواضعي السياسات التعليمية في السودان للتغلب على هذه المشكلات التي تشكل مصدر تهديد دائم لطلاب المناطق الريفية. على ضوء النتائج وضع الباحثون التوصيات.

كلمات مفتاحية: الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية، المناطق الريفية، المناهج

Introduction

Sudan is one of the most geographically diverse countries in Africa with population being divided along lines of ethnicity, tribe and economic activity. More than 40% of Sudan's population is below 15 years of age representing a typical feature of a developing country. High population growth in the country (2.4%) implies enormous challenges in terms of service provision, acceleration of economic growth as well as environment sustainability, resource management and social equity. In spite of the rapid pace of urbanization (from 8.3% in 1956 to approximately 40% in 2008) Sudan remains rural in social, economic and cultural outlooks with the majority of the country's total population (36,163,778 in 2013) living in rural areas. Sectoral distribution of the labour force shows that 44.6% of the population are employed in the agricultural sector while 40.1 are engaged in services sector activities. The industrial sector employs 15.3% of the population. Overall, two-thirds (64.4 percent) of the population of Sudan live in rural areas, with some states having higher or lower proportions of rural populations. For example, only 19.1 percent of the population of Khartoum state is rural, whereas 45 percent of the population in Red Sea state is rural. The rural fractions in the remaining states range from 67.8 percent in White Nile state to 82.3 percent in Northern state. However, Sudan is currently experiencing a phenomenal rural-urban migration driven in part by drought and desertification as well as by the better living conditions in the urban areas. Inadequacy of basic health and education services outside of Khartoum is also playing a role (IMF Country Report No. 13/317, UNDAF, 2009-2012).

A lot of efforts have been made to improve the standard of education in Sudan. Many research studies have been made to find out the reasons and factors which affect the learning English as a second language. These studies concluded that there are various factors which have bad impact on the learning. The importance of this study is that it would give further explanation with respect to the specific area of study which is problematic. It would be helpful to the researchers to find the solution to minimize the effects of the family factors. Methods can be devised to address them at optimum level. Learning is a continuous process. It can be divided in two major categories (a) Natural learning and (b) systematic (institutional) learning. In this study there is going to be a focus on the Institutional learning in which English as a foreign language is the target language. Without its learning no country in the world can imagine to compete the pace of development as it is essential in the field of business, commerce, trade, communication, science & technology especially in education. Keeping in view the importance of EFL, the ministry of education has introduced many policies to learn English as compulsory subject at all levels unfortunately no reasonable improvement has been observed in this regarded areas.

The main cause of low literacy rate is poverty and ignorance. Hening and Wariatmojo (2011) in their research discussed internal and external factors in Indonesia in the perspective of Language Learning and Language Learning Process. According to them; family background, social relations and school factor play an important role in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) performance of students. Educated parents can provide such an environment that suits best for academic success of their children. Muhammad Arshad, Zafar Hayat Attari and Ehsan Elahi (Published: argued in their article that parents' socio-economic status has direct impact on their children's learning (Jerrim and Coleman, 2009) in the form of providing educational resources. According to a report to the Department of Education and Training Australia in 2010 gap of scores attained by students whose parents were poor and prosperous

was observed. Parents pass on a measure of their advantages or disadvantages to their children that affect their children's educational outcomes.

Related Literature Review

The government policies are geared towards the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all. This commitment is reflected in the Interim National Constitution as well as in the Twenty-Five National Strategy 2007-2031. Besides, the National Plan for Education for All was developed in 2003- with detailed activities, programs and estimated budget. However, considerable efforts are still needed in order to ensure significant improvement in all basic education indicators to ensure quality education for all by 2015. In addition, there is also a Five-Year Plan 2007-2011 which is an integral part of the Twenty-Five National Strategy 2007-2031.

Both plans provide a roadmap for the further development of education for making solid progress towards achieving MDG2 by 2015. The establishment of a directorate for girl's education, as stipulated in the Girls Education Policy, at both federal and state levels in 2000 represents one of the important policy tools to reduce gender gaps in education. National education trends have served as the driver of human development progress in Sudan over the last three decades. Combining gross enrolment ratios at all school levels and adult literacy, the education index for Sudan has grown at nearly twice the rate of other HDI components. Gains in primary and tertiary enrolment are largely behind the education improvements. Between 2005 and 2009, gross enrollment rate in basic education rose from 68% to 82% and the net admission rate in the first grade rose from 29.7% to 48%. With regard to secondary education, the fastest relative growth during the last ten years was recorded in 2008/2009, reaching 6%. Higher education witnessed significant expansion during the period 1990 to 2011. In 1990 there was a limited number of institutions (5 universities, 2 private colleges and 12 technical colleges). In the year 2011, the number of higher education institutions rose to 30 government universities, 6 private universities, 44 colleges and higher institutes and 20 technical colleges. Accordingly, the intake capacity of higher education institutions reached more than 500 thousand students, representing 10% of the population in the age group 17-23 years¹². Therefore, one of the important causes of the expansion in education has been tertiary level enrolment. Slow literacy improvements, however, highlight potential challenges in the quality of education. Moreover, primary enrolment is the other central factor in education advances, although at a slower pace than university-level gains. Besides, despite the persistent gender gap in primary education, there are considerable improvements owing to the efforts made by the government over the last five years. At tertiary education level, it is evident that there is a higher rate of enrolment of girls than boys.

Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature and statistical methods have been applied to analyze the data. Questionnaire has been used as an instrument to collect the data from the selected population. Collected data is based upon the questionnaire responses of 60 students (both male and female) from rural area of Blue Nile State. All the students responded voluntarily.

Sample population was selected. They were selected randomly from different secondary schools from rural areas of Blue Nile State. Participants were guided orally by the researcher how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was framed with twenty questions and these questions were divided in six variables: Family's income (1-3), Family's background (4-5),

Relatives (6-7), Parent's education (8-9), Parent's interest in learning EFL for their wards (10-14) and Home atmosphere (15-20). The questionnaire is designed simply to be understood easily. It mainly consists of close end questions and MCQs. Results after data analysis have been presented in percentage.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was framed with twenty questions and these questions were divided in six variables: Family's income (1-3), Family's background (4-5), Relatives (6-7), Parent's education (8-9), Parent's interest in learning EFL for their wards (10-14) and Home atmosphere (15-20). The questionnaire is designed simply to be understood easily. It mainly consists of close end questions and MCQs. Results after data analysis have been presented in percentage

Research population

The target population for this study was Government Secondary schools in rural areas of Blue Nile State. Sample of 60 students (male and female aging between 13-17 years) would be selected.

Research sample

Sample of 60 students (male and female aging between 13-17 years) was selected. They were selected randomly from different secondary schools from rural areas of Blue Nile State. Participants were guided orally by the researcher how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was framed with twenty questions and these questions were divided in six variables: Family's income (1-3), Family's background (4-5), Relatives (6-7), Parent's education (8-9), Parent's interest in learning EFL for their wards (10-14) and Home atmosphere (15-20).

Instruments of data collection

The instrument which is used as data collecting tool is a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions and about sixty students participated.

Reliability

For the quality and reliability of the data and the instruments of the obtained data, a pilot study was conducted with five participants from the participants' sample. The pilot study indicated the appropriateness of materials and the effectiveness of procedures

Validity of the study

The pilot study indicated the quality and precision of instruments and design, the serves the purpose of the study. Each observation was stated clearly in order to communicate the underlay and communicate the purpose of the study.

Data analysis

Students participated in this study were 08 in 13-14 years, 40 in 15-16 years and 12 in 17-18years age group. The data collected through the questionnaire was arranged accordingly into tables. Data in tables show the quantity (frequency) of the students and their percentages.

Table 1. Family's income

Parents job	Frequency	Percentage %
Work	08	123.33
Agriculture	26	43.33
Labourer	16	26.66
Unemployed	10	16.66

In rural areas most of the people directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Table 1 shows that 43.33% parents are directly concerned with agriculture and 26.66 % are indirectly getting their income from agriculture. Moreover, 16.66% parents are unemployed.

Table 2. Status of income

Question Content	Yes Frequency	Yes Percentage %	No Frequency	No Percentage %
Sufficient Income	24	40	36	60
Student's Financial Needs	34	56.66	26	43.33

The above data given in Table 2 shows that most of the students responded that their parents have not sufficient income i.e. 60%. The students opted the option that their parents do not understand their financial needs i.e. 43.33%.

Table 3. Family's background

Question content	Yes Frequency	Yes – Percentage %	No - Frequency	No- Percentage %
Educated Background	16	26.66	36	73.33
Joint Family System	52	86.66	26	13.33

Data given in Table 3 depicts that most of the students responded that their family is not having educated background i.e 73.33%. In case of joint family system 86.66% students gave opinion that they have joint family system.

Table 4. Relatives' background

Question content	Yes Frequency	Yes – Percentage %	No - Frequency	No- Percentage %
Educated Background	14	23.33	46	76.66
Support in Learning	10	16.66	50	83.33

Analysis

When students asked about relatives' educated background here again majority of students responded that their relatives are not having educated background i.e. 76.66%. In the case of second question about relatives support in learning, the ratio is 83.33% which do not help them in learning.

Table 5. Parent's education

Question content	Yes Frequency	Yes – Percentage %	No - Frequency	No- Percentage %
Educated Father	24	40	36	60
Educated Mother	12	20	48	80

Analysis

Parent's education is an important aspect and source of inspiration, guidance and motivation for their children. Data in Table-5 is about the education of parents (Father and Mother). Figures represent that the 60% fathers and 80% mothers of students are uneducated.

Table 6. Help of parent in studies to their children

Parent Help in Studies	Frequency	Percentage %
Do not Help	42	70
Help Partially	14	23.33
Help Thoroughly	04	6.66

Analysis

This question was about the help of parent in studies to their children, most of the 70% students responded that their parents do not help them in studies. Partially help ratio is 23.33% and rest of the students gave opinion that their parents help thoroughly in studies i.e. 6.66%.

Table 7. Parent's interest in learning ESL for their children

Question content	Yes Frequency	Yes – Percentage %	No - Frequency	No- Percentage %
Parent interest	16	26.66	44	73.33
Parent motivation	16	26.66	44	73.33
Understanding the problem	08	13.33	52	86.66
Parent facilitation	20	33.33	40	66.66
Preference to English	04	6.66	56	93.33

Data in above Table -7 shows that 73.33% parents do not take interest of their wards in EFL learning and the same percentage do not motivate children to learn EFL. The ratio of parents which do not understand the problems faced by their children during learning English language is 86.66%. In the same way 66.66% parents do not facilitate in learning English language and 93.33% parent do not give preference to English language.

Table 8. Home atmosphere

Language used by parents at Home	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic	50	90%
Others	10	10%
English	0	0%

This factor belongs to the language used at home. Due to uneducated and rural background 90% parents speak in native language Arabic at home, and only 10% speak others such as (Hawsa, Folani, etc.). Conversation with children all the time in native language affects children English language learning process (Table 8).

Table 9. Language used by student at home

Language used by Students at Home	Frequency	Percentage %
Arabic	55	95
Others	5	05
English	0	0

When were asked by the students which language they used at home, 95% students responded that they speak Arabic at home and only 05% used others. Note that most of the different tribes' tongue was not Arabic. If students use English in their conversation, their hesitation would be removed and they can confidently learn English language (Table 9)

Table 10. Home atmosphere

<i>Question Content</i>	Yes Frequency	Yes Percentage %	No Frequency	Yes Percentage %
Peaceful home atmosphere	12	20	48	80
Helpful for learning	12	20	48	80
Supporting attitude of family	16	26.66	44	73.33
Importance to opinion	08	13.33	52	86.66

Data in Table -10 above is about the home atmosphere. 80% students responded that their home atmosphere is not peaceful and not helpful for learning. The majority of the rural areas in Blue Nile State are still considered as war areas, according to UNCHR reports. 73.33% students opted the choice that they do not have any supporting attitude from their family. 86.66% students expressed that their parent do not pay attention to the importance of their opinion.

Conclusion

EFL learning is only possible when the environment is suitable and helpful. In rural areas no factor is helpful for the students learning. All the factors to some extent were against learning. Due to rural, agricultural, un-educated background and poverty parents do not give any importance to the education of their wards. Most of the parents do not show any interest in EFL learning of their children. Rural and uneducated environment has a bad impact on learners. If the learners are living in area or society where people of the area are well educated, students learning efficiency would be increased (Shamim, 2008; Coleman, 2010). Parents' education, interest, family background and home atmosphere are crucial for EFL learning. If these factors would play positive role, learning would be enhanced. The parents do not realize the importance of English language as a key to success in present era. Moreover, English helps them in reading the modern books related to engineering, medical, agriculture, zoology and literature. English language also helps to understand the latest technology. English language provides the way to progress. Now the world becomes a little global village and the language of communication of international community is English language. Researchers selected family factor because it is basic step for learning. If students are not encouraged and motivated at home their abilities and qualities remained dormant. Due to rural background and unsupportive attitude of parents greatly affect the EFL learning process to the students of rural areas.

Limitations

This study like other studies has some limitations. There are many external factors which affects the learning of English language. The researchers' only discussed the family factor that is one of the external factors. Many other external factors are closely associated with family factor e.g. NGOs, UN, neighbours, student friends, environment of the area, electronic and print media, cable networking, mobile phones and internet are external sources and are closely linked to home atmosphere. The homes having these facilities, the awareness of the children would ultimately be increased. The children of these homes watch different programmes on TV, talk

shows, literary activities and NEWS. Their understanding level is increased and motivated towards learning. Internet connects them with the whole world. They have an easy access to areas of their interest. Internet is a great ocean of knowledge. In short, a comprehensive study of external factors closely connected to family factor depicts the true picture.

Applicability

This study can be applied to all rural areas of Blue Nile Sate. In these areas, tribe leaders, payams, sheikh and some religious leaders are supporting the general education, and especially female education.

Summary of findings

EFL learning is only possible when the environment is suitable and helpful. In rural areas no factor is helpful for the students learning. All the factors to some extent were against learning. Due to rural, agricultural, un-educated background and poverty parents do not give any importance to the education of their wards. Most of the parents do not show any interest in EFL learning of their children. Rural and uneducated environment has a bad impact on learners.

Recommendations

The researcher recommended numbers of solutions which were based on learning English as foreign language in rural areas to reflect certain points to those who want to conduct similar studies. The researcher also, wanted both; students and teachers to pay a considerable attention to how to create new styles for teaching and learning EFL. The researcher recommended to adopt main points that both students and teachers need to take into consideration when they produce English.

- More attention should be given to rural areas education.
- Quick impact projects should be taken in account from the high authorities.
- Adult education, child education, apprenticeship and informal education should be encouraged.

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