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Investigating EFL Learners Weakness in English as Foreign Language:

A Case Study of EFL Sudanese University Learners,(2022)

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Abstract

This study aims at: investigating EFL Sudanese learners' weakness in English language learning. Evaluating the teaching methodology used in EFL Sudanese classes and discussing factors influencing EFL learners' performance. The study adapted the descriptive analytical method. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire from EFL teachers and students. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to 50 of both groups. Then the collected data were analyzed by the SPSS program. The analysis led to the following findings: many of EFL learners lack of confidence to speak in English, for fear of making mistakes and shy feeling, English language is difficult to learn for many of the Sudanese are not well-motivated, encouraged and to gain strategy, the traditional teaching methodology used in many Sudanese institutions influences negatively on EFL learners' performance, providing EFL learners chances of participation increases their interaction, adopting suitable teaching methodology enhances the learning of English language, using real-life interaction like that which improves EFL learners' performance and using modern technology which improves EFL teaching and learning. The study recommended that: EFL learners should always present with real life interaction, teachers should improve their teaching methodology in EFL classes and learners should be encouraged to make presentations in English language.

Key Words: learners' weakness, evaluating the teaching methodology, mistakes

المخلص .

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من ضعف الطلاب السودانيين في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تقييم منهجية التدريس المستخدمة في فصول تدريس اللغة الانجليزية في السودان ومناقشة العوامل التي تؤثر على أداء متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية . استخدمت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي كما استخدمت نظام الاستبانة كأداة لجمع البيانات من خمسين (50) معلماً وطالباً للغة الانجليزية من عدة جامعات سودانية كعين للدراسة. بعد جمع البيانات وتحليلها إحصائياً خلال برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الإجتماعية (SPSS) توصلت الدراسة لعدة



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نتائج ان أهمها: أن العديد من متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية يفتقرون إلى الثقة للتحدث باللغة الانجليزية خوفاً من إرتكاب الأخطاء والشعور بالخجل، يصعب تعلم اللغة الانجليزية للعديد من الطلاب السودانيين بسبب عدم وجود دافع جيدة وتشجيع وإستراتيجية التعلم المكتسبة، أن منهجية التدريس التقليدية المتبعة في العديد من المؤسسات التعليمية تؤثر سلباً على أداء متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، توفير فرص للمناقشات أثناء التدريس يشجع الطلاب على المشاركة والتفاعل، تحسين منهجية التدريس يعزز عملية تعلم اللغة الانجليزية و أن إستخدام التفاعل الواقعي يحسن أداء المتعلمين كما أن إستخدام التقنيات الحديثة في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية يحسن عملية تدريسها وتعلمها. أوصت الدراسة بتشجيع الطلاب على ممارسة الحوارات في مواضيع التواصل الحقيقية و تحسين اساليب التدريس وإستخدام التقنيات الحديثة في صفوف تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتشجيع الطلاب على إستخدام السماعات لتطوير مهارات الطلاب اللغوية

1.0 Introduction

The expansion of the English language has rapidly increased the needs of gaining better communication in English throughout the world because the aptitude of using English is very much needed for social and professional global contacts of different kinds (Hashemi, 2011).

English is not only used as an official language in many nations, but also influences many different cultures in a large number of countries; it is the central language of communication in the world-wide (Susanna, 2007). To communicate competently, students“ must have good capability and self- confidence in speaking the target language. In fact, Sudanese students, like others, often find some difficulties in mastering speaking skill.

Many reasons that cause EFL students' poor performance of English as a foreign language such as a weakness in vocabulary, lack of confidence and the lack of learning motivation. According(to (John & Ehow, 2011), the problems of learning English language derived from many different factors in different environments such as school resources, class size, quality of teachers, and the school attendance of learners.



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However, some factors cause weakness in English learning like, teachers, students, environment and time specified for the teaching methods those are being used by English language teachers at primary, intermediate, high school and university stages as well. The students are affected by the environment at home and school. Also there is some problems of the curriculum which may be presented to the student in a negative and boring way, and it is being set to a form of handles. The teachers are not adequately qualified and in need to more training. Teachers also may feel that there is a big psychological block of English language. Moreover, the ignorance of English language creates a problem of active communication between learners and English language teacher. The time specified for the English language lesson is not enough, and lack of suitable class atmosphere for teaching the language etc

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Many Sudanese learners have no ability of speaking skills of normal conversation, participating orally in classroom discussions and interactions. Also the lack the skills of participating in meetings, speaking to peers and making presentation, etc.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at:

1. Investigating the Sudanese university EFL learners' weakness that hinder their oral communication skills in English.
2. Finding out the causes of learners' weakness in oral communication.
3. Providing some teaching techniques and strategies that help Sudanese university EFL learners to overcome the speaking difficulties when communicating orally.

1.3 Questions of the Study



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This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are EFL learners enabled to communicate orally?
2. What are the causes of EFL learners' problems in speaking skill?
3. How can teachers find solutions that enable Sudanese EFL learners to overcome these speaking problems?

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The study attempts to investigate the following hypotheses.

1. Many of Sudanese University learners are weak in oral communication skills.
2. The teaching and learning environment doesnot encourage EFL learners to improve the communication skills.
3. Changing the teaching methodology may help EFL university learners to improve oral communication.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance for the EFL teachers, learners and syllabus designers and all those who have an interest in EFL teaching and learning. For the learners, the study stresses the importance of gaining the skill of oral communication, for the teachers, it provides them with effective teaching techniques and for the syllabus designers, it shows them the best teaching resources.

2.0 Literature Review

In fact, English language is a global language which can be used for communication with native-speakers and non-native-speakers in the worldwide, especially in the education section, all university students need English language in order to find information and obtain knowledge; therefore, a lot of the universities throughout the world need to include English language as one of the educational tool requirements



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(Khader & Mohammad, 2010). English is often used as the medium of instruction in higher education.

Moreover, (Souvannasy, et al, 2008), argue that teaching and learning English implementation still has shortages of textbooks, unqualified English teachers and also un standardized curriculum. The poor socioeconomic background is one of the factors that face affects on learners' use of the foreign language.

A study has been conducted by (Muhammad, 2007), on the investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skill and the influence on communication in the target language found difficulties of language learning, differences in learners' and target language cultures, the difference in social status of the speakers are the factors which affect on the students' performance of language. In addition, a study of problems encountered by Arab EFL learners showed that learners preferred to use Arabic rather than English for communication in both outside and inside the classroom, the lack of the target language exposure as spoken by its native speakers, the shortage and weakness of the contribution in language teaching context, and lack of their personal motivation (Loae, 2011)

There are various types of difficulties facing the teaching and learning process. For instance, factors like; parental causes , method of teaching causes, time reasons, level of education for teachers and students, etc.

However, the English language lessons need more time specialized for this subject and to have two per week are not enough to have good competence in English. The fact that learners face difficulties on learning English. However, some of the teachers are not well trained on the use of methods of teaching. They need more training on using the methods that suit their learners.



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Factors Affecting Speaking Performance

There are some factors deal with the emotional reactions and motivation of the learners which have a direct effect on learning itself. Students' speaking performance can be affected by the factors that come from performance conditions such as motivation, introversion or extroversion, self-esteem, and anxiety.

Motivation

Motivation is a basic pillar of all kinds of teaching. The language learner need to be motivated by engaging them in interaction practice in which he feels the language is truly communicative and it is appropriate to its context. Also teachers need to move the learners forward to a fuller competence in the foreign language (Broughton et al, 2003,p.47).

“Motivation is the driving force that initiates learning in the first place and sustains learning until the planned goals are achieved. High motivation may provoke learners to interact with native speakers of the target language which in turn increases the amount of input to learners”.

Learners can be roughly divided into the extroverts and introverts. In the process of using oral language, the extroverted students tend to be more active in choosing oral English learning strategies than the introverted ones because of their general shyness and passivity in the classroom.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a crucial factor in determining an individual's success in speaking activity. This psychological factor affects tremendously on learners, particularly foreign language learners. (Mortaza, 2011)



Anxiety

It is a common phenomenon among the EFL learners. It refers to an emotional state of apprehension, tension, and fear of negative evaluation from peers and Instructors. (Kumaravadivelu, 2006:33). It influences learners forget words, make mistakes and lose concentration. As suggested by (Harmer,2001,p.51) to minimize anxiety feeling, Instructors need to pay attention to each student's strengths and weakness so that they can create a learning method which accommodates all students in the classroom.

Overcrowded Classes

Overcrowded classes often considered as one of the main constrains for both students" and Instructors and for the teaching-learning process. In overcrowded classes setting, Instructors could not manage his classroom as well as EFL students opportunities decreased. (Murcia, 2001,p.11) confirms that "large classes are often the norm of overseas, limiting both student opportunities to talk and teacher opportunity to provide feedback". Oral communication course aims to encourage the students' participation and to improve speaking skill.

3.0 Material and Method

The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The participants of this study are fifty (50) EFL teachers and learners.They are randomly selected from different Sudanese Universities, Sudan.(2022). A questionnaire was distributed to them for data collection. Then, the collected data was statistically analyzed with the SPSS program. The results are shown in following tables:



3.1 Material: Questionnaire Statements

Statement (1) The lack of confidence and motivation weaken students' learning of English language

Statement (2) the teaching methodology influences positively or negatively on EFL learners' performance

Statement (3) Large classes prevent EFL students from getting equal chance of participation during the session.

Statement (4) English language is difficult to learn due to students are not well-motivated, encouraged to gain learning strategy

Statement (5) EFL students do not practice speaking English with English native speakers

Statement (6) The majority of learners' lack of English background knowledge

Statement (7) The majority of the English language teachers are not well-trained

Statement (8) Learners are lacking of exposure to the language as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms

Statement (9) Learners have a limitation of vocabulary proficiency as well as English reading materials are not always available

Statement (10) Many of EFL learners lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language

4.0 Data Analysis

The study used the SPSS Program for analyzing the questionnaire statements as shown below in the following tables



Tables	agree	percent	neutral	percent	disagree	percent	Total
Table (1)	46	92%	2	4%	2	4%	50
Table (2)	40	80%	9	18%	1	2%	50
Table (3)	42	84%	6	12%	2	4%	50
Table (4)	47	94%	2	4%	1	2%	50
Table (5)	44	88%	5	10%	1	2%	50
Table (6)	45	90%	3	6%	2	4%	50
Table (7)	46	92%	3	6%	1	2%	50
Table (8)	48	96%	2	4%	0	0%	50
Table (9)	44	88%	3	6%	3	6%	50
Table (10)	48	96%	1	2%	1	2%	50

4.1 Discussions

Statement(1) The lack of confidence harms EFL students' performance

Table (1) indicated that (92%) of the sample agree that, the lack of confidence and motivation harms students' learning of English language while (4%) of the respondents are neutral and (4%) disagree with the statement. According to the statistical analysis the statement is justified.

Statement (2) The teaching methodology influences positively or negatively on EFL learners' performance.

Table (2) indicated that (80%) of the respondents agree, (18%) are neutral and (2%) disagree that, the teaching methodology influences positively or negatively on EFL learners' performance. Therefore, this statement is proved.



Statement (3) Large classes impede EFL students' chance of participation during the session.

Table (3) showed that the majority of the respondents (84%) agree that large classes impede EFL students from getting equal chance of participation during the session, (12%) are neutral and (2%) disagree. This statement is justified

Statement (4) English language is difficult to learn due to students are not well-motivated, encouraged to gain learning strategy.

Table (4) showed that most respondents (94%) agree that English language is difficult to learn due to students are not motivated and encouraged to gain learning strategy while (4%) are neutral and (2%) disagree with the statement.

Statement (5) EFL students do not speak in English with English native speakers.

Table (5) showed that the majority of of respondents (88%) agree that EFL students do not speak in English with English native speakers, (10%) are neutral and (2%) of the sample disagree. Therefore, this statement is proved.

Statement (6) The majority of learners' lack of English background knowledge

Table (6) indicated that (90%) of the sample agree that the majority of learners' lack of English background knowledge while (6%) are neutral and (4%) disagree with the statement. This statement is justified.

Statement (7) The majority of the English language teachers are not well-trained

Table (7) showed that (92%) of the sample agree that majority of the English language teachers are not well-trained while (6%) of the sample are neutral and (2%) disagree. Thus, this statement is accepted.



Table (8) showed that (96%) of the sample agree that majority of the English language teachers are not well-trained while (4%) of the sample are neutral. Thus, this statement is accepted.

Table (9) showed that (88%) of the sample agree that many learners have a limitation of vocabulary proficiency as well as English reading materials are not always available while (6%) of the sample are neutral and (6%) disagree. Thus, this statement is accepted.

Table (10) showed that (96%) of the sample agree that many of EFL learners lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language while (2%) of the sample are neutral and (2%) disagree. Thus, this statement is accepted.

5.0 Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Findings

The study came out with the following findings:

- 1.Many of EFL learners are weak in English language because they lack of confidence and motivation for learning English language
- 2.Adopting the traditional teaching method in Sudanese institutions does not help the learners to learn EFL effectively
- 3 Neglecting class participation in large classes harms classroom interaction.
4. English language is difficult to learn due to students are not well-motivated and encouraged to gain learning strategy
- 5.Many of learners do not speak in English with English native speakers
6. The majority of learners' lack of English background knowledge
- 7.EFL teachers need to be well-trained to teach EFL classes.



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Sudanese EFL Learners are lacking of exposure to the language as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms

9. The lack of vocabulary hinders the learners' participation in classroom interaction

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that:

1. EFL learners should always present with real life interaction.
2. Teachers should improve their teaching methodology in EFL classes
3. Learners should be encouraged to make presentations in English language.
4. EFL learners should be encouraged and enabled to learn EFL effectively.
5. Learners should be encouraged to speak in English language with others.
6. The majority of learners' lack of English background knowledge
7. EFL teachers should be well-trained to teach EFL classes.



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