Investigating Communication Problems Encountered by Sudanese Undergraduates with Native Speakers when using English slang between the two Parties

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the problems, which was encountered by Sudanese learners of formal English when slang forms are used by Englih Native - Speakers. The descriptive analytical method was used. A diagonstic test was used as a tool for the data collection; the study diagnostic test was answered by (30) participants of undergraduate students. Data was analyzed statistically by (SPSS) programme. The study came up with the following results: Universities fail to provide students with sufficient courses in informal English. Based on the above mentioned results, the study recommended: Ministry of High Education should offer every possibility to solve this problem by reviewing the syllabus in order to introduce students to the slang forms of English. In addition, some suggestions forwarded for future studies.

Key words: Non- native speakers, language difficulties.

المستخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصى المشكلات التى تواجه السودانيون الدارسين للغة الانجليزية الفصحي فى التواصل مع الناطقين بالانجليزية عند استخدامهم انماط اللغة الانجليزية العامية . استخدم المنهج الوصفى التحليلى فى جمع المعلومات الخاصة بالبحث كأدة لجمع المعلومات أستهدفت الدراسة ثلاثين طالبا جامعياعبر اجابتهم لأختبار تحريرى. وقد تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الحزم الأحصائية للعلوم الانسانية . توصلت الدراسة الى النتائج الاتية : لم تتمكن الجامعات من تقديم منهج كافى متعلق بالغة الانجليزية التى تستخدم فى الاوساط الغير رسمية . أستناد على النتائج المذكورة انفا توصى الدراسة ب... على وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي العمل على حل هذه المعضلة وذلك بمراجعة المنهج وتعريف الطلاب بانماط اللغة الانجليزية العامية فضلا عن بعض المقترحات التى رأها الدارس لدراسة الطلاب فى المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الناطقيين بغير اللغة الانجليزبة – صعوبات اللغة.

Introduction

English language is spoken and written formally in countries where it is used as a foreign language. Sudan is one of those countries, where English language is formally taught and spoken. English is a West Germanic that originated from the Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Britain by Germanic settlers from various parts of what are now northwest Germany and the northern Netherlands. Old English was a diverse group of dialects, reflecting the varied origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of England. One of these dialects, Late West Saxon, eventually came to dominate. The original old English language was then influenced by two waves of invasion: The first was by speakers of the Scandinavian branch of the Germanic family, who conquered and colonized parts of Britain in the 8th and 9th century and the second one was the Normans. These two invasions caused English to become mixed to some degree (though it was never a truly mixed language in the strictest sense of the word; mixed languages arise from the co-habitation of speakers of different languages, who develop a hybrid tongue for basic communication).

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The Norman influence entered English largely through the courts and government. Thus, English developed into a borrowing language of great flexibility and with a huge vocabulary. Formal English is more difficult to be defined; linguists struggle to find exact description of what formal English is. Findings revealed that formal English has nothing to do with pronunciation but more to do with grammar and vocabulary. Everyone seems to agree on is that formal English is related to the language of educated users, which is a controversial claim. As Tony Crowley (1999, p.271) believes that Grammar and formal English go hand in hand. Formal English is used in newspapers and published words. Many linguists have different conceptions as to what they perceive formal English to be.

This study tries to realize whether Sudanese users of formal English encounter problems when they communicate with the native speakers of English language in a private conversation in terms of lexical choice of informal variety, and therefore explores whether native speakers of English are intelligible to Sudanese learners of formal English in a private conversation. The study arised some questions: To what extent do Sudanese formal learners of English encounter problems in aprivate conversation in terms of lexical choice of informal variety? Do Sudanese Universities and provide students with sufficient courses on informal language as far as the syllabuses are concerned?

Slang is the language of informal words and expressions that are not considered as formal English. Slang is used by all people of the society. Slang is described as vocabulary idioms, which is not appropriate to standard form of a language or to formal contexts. Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar (1994) describes it as words, phrases and uses that are regarded as informal and are often restricted to special contexts or are peculiar to specific profession, classes etc. Dictionary of Slang describes slang as, a counter language, the language of the rebel, outlaw, despised and the marginal. Among many descriptions of slang, one thing is common it is a long way from English mainstream. First recorded usages of slang in Britain occurred in 16th century in plays of ThomasDekker, Thomas Middleton and WilliamShakespeare (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

The word colloquialism comes from the Latin *colloquium*, which means a conference or conversation. As a literary device, colloquialism refers to the usage of informal or everyday language in literature. Colloquialisms are generally geographic in nature, in that a colloquial expression often belongs to a regional or local dialect. They can be words, phrases, or aphorisms. Native speakers of a language understand and use colloquialisms without realizing it, while non-native speakers may find colloquial expressions hard to translate. This is because many colloquialisms are not literal usages of words, but instead idiomatic or metaphorical sayings. Colloquialism is similar to slang, but the definition of colloquialism has some key differences. Colloquialism is used for casual communication. Colloquialism is characterized by wide usage of interjections and other expressive devices; it makes use of non-specialist terminology, and has a rapidly Changing lexicon.

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It can also be distinguished by its usage of formulations with incomplete logical and syntactic ordering. Colloquialism or general parlance is distinct from formal speech or formal writing. It is the form of language that speakers typically use when they are relaxed and not especially self-conscious. An expression is labelled *colloq.* for "colloquial" in dictionaries when a different expression is preferred in formal usage, but this does not mean that the colloquial expression is necessarily slang or non-standard. Some colloquial language contains a great deal of slang, but some contains no slang at all. Slang is often used in colloquial speech, but this particular register is restricted to particular in-groups, and it is not a necessary element of colloquialism. Other examples of colloquial usage in English include contractions or profanity.

Colloquial should also be distinguished from non-standard. The difference between standard and non-standard is not necessarily connected to the difference between formal and colloquial. Formal, colloquial, and vulgar language is more a matter of stylistic variation and diction, rather than of the standard and non-standard dichotomy. The term colloquial is however also equated with non-standard at times, in certain contexts and terminological conventions. A colloquial name or familiar name is a name or term commonly used to identify a person or thing in non-specialist language, in place of another usually more formal or technical name. In the philosophy of language, colloquial language is ordinary natural language, as distinct from specialized forms used in logic or other areas of philosophy. In the field of logical atomism, meaning is evaluated in a different way than with more formal propositions.

Colloquialisms are distinct from slang or jargon. Slang refers to words used only by specific social groups, such as teenagers or soldiers. On the other hand, jargon refers to words used only by specific trade fields or industries, such as engineers or computing. Colloquial language may include slang, but consists mostly of contractions or other informal words and phrases known to most native speakers of the language. Jargon is terminology that is especially defined in relationship to a specific activity, profession, or group. The term refers to the language used by people, who work in a particular area or who have a common interest. Much like slang, it is a kind of shorthand used to express ideas that are frequently discussed between members of a group, though it can also be developed deliberately using chosen terms. While a standard term may be given a more precise or unique usage amongst practitioners of relevant disciplines, it is often reported that jargon is a barrier to communication for those people unfamiliar with the respective field. (*Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger)

Languages change all the time. For instance, all the computer and internet terminology, which are used all the time now did not exist thirty years ago, simply because a browser and downloading did not also exist in people's lives. Furthermore, the ability to speak two or more languages is extremely widespread or has even become a norm. In many contexts it is normal for a language to exist side by side with one or more other languages in the region, or in minds of multilingual individuals.

Such languages are spoken in contact with each other; quite naturally, they influence each other in many ways. As a consequence of this contact, pattern-forming habits in the minds of speakers are taken over from one language context into another, and many of them become firmly integrated in a newly emerging linguistic system. This applies to the new English of Africa and Asia, which tend to have been shaped to some extent by contact with the indigenous tongues of the region. This phenomenon enriches the expressive potential of English, like that of any other language. New sounds or newly adopted patterns allow for further means of expression in the recipient language. Linguists have come to talk of different English has thus become localized and indigenized in a great many different countries. It is not only viewed as a useful international language, but it fulfils important local functions. In doing so it has developed local forms and characteristics, so that not infrequently people enjoy using it in their own way. In many places local ways of speaking English has become a new home dialect, which like all local dialects, is used to express regional pride.

One really interesting aspect about all of this is that this indigenization and nativity process of English in many countries, frequently former colonies in the British Empire, is a product of the very recent past and not primarily of their colonial heritage of centuries ago. It is only for the last few decades, quite a while after independence in many cases, that English has made such inroads into local cultures. In the case of English in many African countries, one can conveniently say that local norms of acceptability have developed. Recent studies point out that very few users of English in those countries ever had the opportunity of learning from native speakers of the language. The average users of English in Africa and Asia therefore speak a variety of English, which is strongly marked by the environment in terms of its lexis, especially at the idiomatic and collocation levels. This reveals that the variety of spoken English is marked with a discrete character of its own and is credited with the status of a distinct type. Slang and Colloquial Usage is an area of lexis in a permanent state of flux consisting of vivid, colorful words and phrases, which characterize various social and professional groups, especially when these terms are used for communication group. Slang provides and reinforces social identity but it is also used in society at large to achieve an atmosphere of informality and relaxation.

Jargon is a professional vocabulary that only jobholders use. Slang is casual and often features usage that could not be used in a workplace. Jargon is common but risky. Horticulture pro might talk about a branch collar (a structure on a tree) , which is more difficult for everyone to understand. Sometimes jargon is a form of showing off that causes confusion and worse problems. Think of a doctor rambling on in medical terms that the patient does not understand. Slang as ("ain't," "veg out," and "gotcha!") is fun and creates a feeling of belonging. But it should never be used in a formal setting. In order to be understood better a void both jargon and slang for formal writing. In any profession, people do not often deal with those, who do not know the jargon in their   field.

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Interestingly enough, jargon and slang have one main attribute in common but play two different functions within English-language. That common attribute is a kind of communicating within special groups of individuals, who understand the actual meanings behind words or phrases. Slang is a collection of words or expressions used to depict a graphic, racy, or lively thing.

Slang is found in newspaper reports, films, and regular conversations. Jargon, also referred to as gobbledygook, is quite a particular kind of language most often used within professional groups and it cannot be understood. Words or phrases used within these groups exclude others, which are not informed nor belong to these given groups; consequently, these terms are pointless to outsiders. Jargon and slang are just two distinct parts of English language with one main, common attribute. Both are a kind of communicating within special groups of individuals, who understand the meanings behind words or phrases. And though they both also have one attribute in common, they perform different functions. Slang and Jargon together are parts of a colloquial vocabulary of English language. They both are very confusing processes in everyday vocabulary usage. Slang in Oxford dictionary is a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people. For example, in army slang'' the grass '' is slang for marijuana.2) Words and expressions that are informal and not standard English. (Jean Rafenski Reynolds).

Suggests that there is a critical age for language acquisition without the need for special teaching or learning. During this critical period, language learning proceeds quickly and easily. After this period, the acquisition of grammar is difficult, and for some people, never fully achieved. Cases of children reared in social isolation have been used for testing the critical age hypothesis. None of the children, who had little human contact, were able to speak any language once reintroduced into society. Even the children, who received linguistic input after being reintroduced to society, were unable to fully develop language skills.

These cases of isolated children and of deaf children show that humans cannot fully acquire any language to which they are exposed unless they are within the critical age. Beyond this age, humans are unable to acquire much of syntax and inflectional morphology. At least for humans, this critical age does not pertain to all of language, but to specific parts of the grammar developed the capacity of speech. Some obvious reasons for the problems experienced in second language acquisition are related to the fact that most people attempt to learn another language during their teenage or adult years, in a few hours each week of school time rather than via the constant interaction experienced by a child, with a lot of other occupation the child has little else to do, and with already known language available for most of their daily communicative requirements. Some less likely reasons include of the suggestion that adult's tongues get stiff from pronouncing one type of language (e.g. English) and just cannot cope with the new sound of another language (e.g. French or Japanese).

It is a perfect idea, but there is no physical evidence to support it. As the linguistic repertoire of the child increase, it is often assumed that the child is, in some sense, being taught the language. This view seems to underestimate what the child actually does. For the vast majority of children, no one provides any instructions on how to speak the language nor should picture a little empty head gradually being filled with words and phrases, a much more realistic view would have children actively instructing, from what is said to them, possible ways of using the language. Child linguistic production, then it mostly a matter of trying out instructions and testing whether they work or not. It is simply not possible that the child is acquiring the language through the process of consistently imitating (parrot – fashion) adult speech. Of course, the child can be heard to repeat version of what adults say and is in the simply do not produce many of types of the expressions, which turn up in children speech. Phonology:

A child's error in pronunciation is not random, but rule-governed. Typical phonological rules include: consonant cluster simplification (spoon becomes poon), devoicing of final consonants (dog becomes dok), voicing of initial consonants (truck becomes druck) and consonant harmony (doggy becomes goggy, or big becomes gig.) Morphology: An overgeneralization of constructed rules is shown when children treat irregular verbs and nouns as regular. Instead of went as the past tense of go, children use goed because the regular verbs add an -ed ending to form the past tense. Similarly, children use gooses as the plural of goose instead of geese, because regular nouns add an -s in the plural.

One of the related study by Dr. Maryadi University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta Indonesia (2020) classifying English slang words and to analyze the reasons of using slang words by the characters in "Deadpool II" movie script. Based on the analysis, the findings of this research are 30 data of the types of slang words and thirteen reasons of using slang words. The types of slang words are 8 data of clipping, 8 data of imitative, 5 data of fresh & creative, 8 data of flippant, and (1) data of acronym. Then, the researcher also found that there are thirteen reasons of using slang words: to avoid a seriousness situation, to make a statement shorten and clear and entertain someone at daily conversation.

Another study by Grace E Adamo (2013) is one of the related studies .The study argues the slang terms for academic activities at a Nigerian University (A semiotic approach). Study inquires into how students in an ESL context are able to exchange meanings with one another using their own form of English. Study used a combination of Peirce's, de Saussure's and Barthes' semiotic models of analysis. Study has come out with present evidence of linguistic change as prescribed by youths. It reveals that slang is one of the ways in which students represent meanings that is important in their socio-cultural environment. It represents the ideology of the youths. These symbols accurately measure the range of their thoughts and values at any given time and they function in the mind of the interpreters to convey specific meanings in specific situations. Slang is therefore a symbolic semiotic system, whose signification can be unveiled.

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Similar related study about pronunciation of Elkhair Hassan November (25, 2014) experienced by learners, whose first language is Sudanese Arabic language, discussed the problematic sounds and the factors that cause these problems.. The findings of the study revealed that Sudanese students of English, whose language background Arabic language, had problems with the pronunciation of English vowels that have more than one way of pronunciation in addition to the consonant sound contrasts e.g. /z/ and /ð/, /s/ and /θ/, /b/ and /p/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/. Based on the findings, the study concluded that factors such as: interference, the differences in the sound system in the two languages, inconsistency of English sounds and spelling militate against Sudanese students of English competence in pronunciation.

The third study by [Napoleon](2012) investigates features of slang in Cameroon English through the following processes – coinage, semantic extension, clipping. The study finds that these features of Cameroon verbal discourse are a quintessential development for the identity of non-native varieties of English around the world. On the other hand Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar (1994) describes slang as words, phrases and uses, which are regarded as informal and are often restricted to special contexts. Dictionary of Slang describes slang as, a counter language, the language of the rebel, outlaw, despised and the marginal. Among many descriptions of slang, one thing is common it is a long way from English mainstream. First recorded usages of slang in Britain occurred in 16th century in plays of [Thomas Dekker], [Thomas Middleton] and [William Shakespeare]…

Study topic conducted through analytical descriptive method as an appropriate way of investigating the knowledge of undergraduates to English slang using in communication. The sample of this study is collected randomly from (30) undergraduate students both from female and male for academic year (2020-2021) at Sudan University of Science and Technology, college of languages. In this study one tool was utilized to collect data .A diagnostic test was used for undergraduate English language students. It analyzed statistically by using statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) Students' diagnostic test is the first tool of the study, which consists of two questions from a conversation of slang short answer questions, writing the meaning of some slang vocabulary to find out to what extent students are able to deal with English slang.

Question one as below:
Match the meaning of words in list (A) To (B)

1. Game	a. annoyed	( )
2. Blond	b. Friend	( )
3. Mate	c. Football	( )
4. Sussed out	d. Haired woman	( )
5. Hacked off	e. Discovered	( )

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Table (1) illustrates the frequency and percentage for the test question one

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Pass	18	60.0%
Failure	12	40.0%
Total	30	100.0%

Source: IPM SPSS 24 package
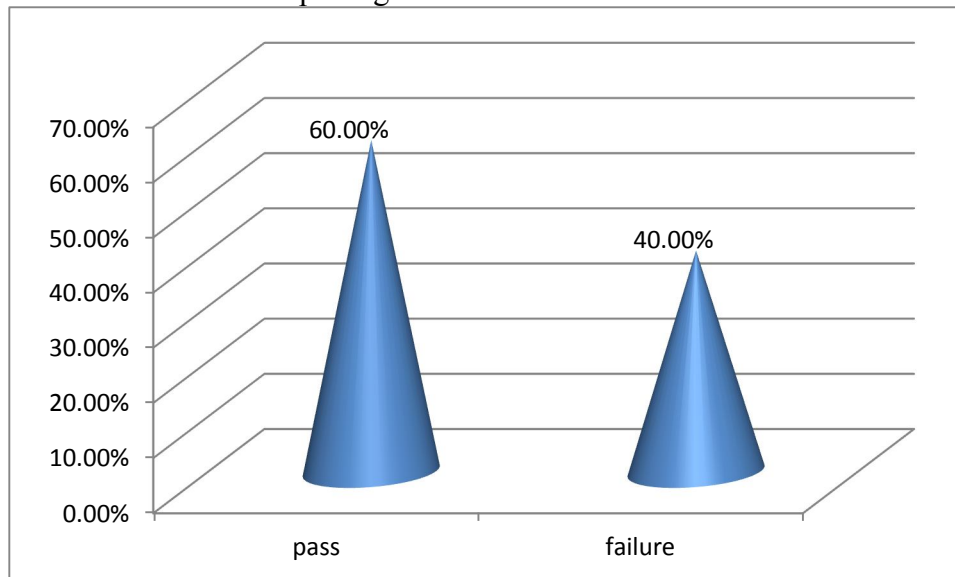
Source: excel 2016

The chart above illustrates the views of the distribution of the test question one pass by (60.0%) and failure by (40.0%).

Materials and Methods:

Study adopted a descriptive analytical method. Adiagnostic test designed for the BA undergraduate students from Sudan University of Science and Technology was used as a crucial tool. Study used a (SPSS) to analyze the data collected. Study discussed the history of English slang and the importance of using it. Study recommended that slang must be taught at universities as it is important.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Students' Test Results

Table (1) and the figures (1) above show the calculation and the analysis of the test question one. As it is noticed that many of the respondents with a higher percentage were able to answer the test question one correctly, whereas few of the respondents with a lower percentage failed to answer the test question correctly. It is clear that the type of the question is straight forward (Matching list - A to B). That type of question is more accessible to be answered correctly since the given options in hand, for the reason mentioned respondents needed not to think deeply and guess of what the meaning exactly. Therefore respondents did find it easy to answer the question According to the respondents' answers above it is clear that the first question which was (To what extent do Sudanese formal learners of English encounter problems in aprivate conversation?) is rejected.

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Question Two shown as below:

Read the dialogue and answer the underlined words below:

Bloke A: Did you see the **game** last night?

Bloke B: Nah couldn't, was out with that **blond** we met last week, but won't be seeing her again, as talking to her; she sounded like **a bunny boiler**!

Bloke A: Sorry **mate** but you must've had your **beer goggles** on.I'd

Bloke A: Cheers.

already **sussed** that **out** and I think she' a total **moose**!

Bloke B: Yeh, you're right, that's the last time I take someone's number when I'm **off my face**. I'm **hacked off** I missed the footie but will **defo** watch Chelsea **thrash** Man U next week.

Bloke A: It won't be **a doddle**but we should do it as long as we don't get any **iffy** decisions against us and they don't get **a jammy** goal.

Table (2)

Shows the overall of statistical percentage of the test question two.

Valid	Frequencies	Percentage
Pass	4	13.3%
Failure	26	86.7%
Total	30	100.0%
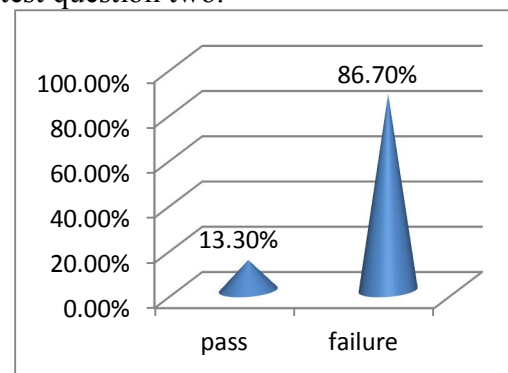
Source: excel 2016

The chart above illustrates the views of the distribution of question two pass by (13.3%) and failure by (86.7%).

Table (2) and the chart above scientifically analysed and calculated the percentage of the respondents, who were able to answer the test question two. Table (2) shows that few of the respondents with a lower percentage were able to answer the test question two correctly, meanwhile many of the respondents with a higher percentage failed to answer the test question two correctly. Let's fairly say that question two was mainly focusing on the English slang (research topic) rather than checking students' intelligence in answering the question. Respondents

find it difficult to deal with such slang vocabulary as**:** abunny boiler, thrash, adoodle, sussed out, hacked off etc... this clearly shows that the Sudanese learners of formal English are far away from the British slang culture, which is used upon the British community No doubt that the result clearly indicates English slang constitutes a big problematic area in comprehending by the Sudanese learners of formal English. Furthermore, the result of this question emphasizes that the research second question, which was (Do Sudanese Universities provide students with sufficient courses on informal language as far as the syllabuses are concerned?) is accepted.

CONCLUSION:

It has been observed that from the statistical results of the test, the percentage number of students, who were unable to answer the question correctly, was extremely higher than those, who were able to answer the question correctly. This indication shows that using English slang with the native speakers of English represents a problematic area for the Sudanese learners of formal English. Based on the findings above of this study, the following points are recommended: English language teachers have to make comparison of using formal English and English slang while they teach undergraduates communication and enlighten them about these differences. Students at Universities have to be informed with the necessity of formal and English slang. Students should be encouraged to use English slang outside the classroom. Students have to be on the internet to explore more about English slang to enhance their acknowledgement.

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