

The Benefits of the Rehearsal English Language Exam of 8th Grade Pupils (An Evaluative Study of Some Basic Level Schools in Khartoum Bahri Locality-Khartoum State)

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed at investigating the benefits of the rehearsal English examination of 8th grade pupils. The following hypothesis was raised: "Pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination." Then, the literature written on testing and previous related studies were reviewed. Two tools were used to collect data: a questionnaire for 100 pupils and a questionnaire for 20 teachers of English both males and females from some basic level schools in Khartoum Bahri Locality. The analytical descriptive method was adopted using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences programme. The numerical data collected from the respondents were statistically analyzed and results were critically discussed. The most important results revealed: 1-It is obviously found that pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination. 2-The rehearsal English examination investigates the pupils' points of strengths and weaknesses. Based on the findings of this study the researcher would like to recommend the following: 1-The practice of conducting the rehearsal English examination should continue as it contributes a lot to the benefit of pupils. 2-It is advisable that pupils should consider the rehearsal English examination as a learning tool that promotes their academic level and enhances their proficiency in English language.

Keywords: Benefits, Rehearsal, English Examination, 8th Grade Pupils

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقصي فوائد امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية التجريبي لتلاميذ الصف الثامن. وطُرحت الفرضية التالية: "يستفيد التلاميذ من امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية التجريبي". ثم عرضت المفاهيم الأساسية للاختبارات والدراسات السابقة المتعلقة بها. استخدمت أداتان لجمع البيانات: استبانة لـ (100) تلميذ وتلميذة وأخرى لـ (20) معلم ومعلمة لغة إنجليزية أختبروا من بعض مدارس مرحلة الأساس بمحلية بحري. ومن ثم أتبع أسلوب التحليل الوصفي باستخدام برنامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية باستخدام النسبة المئوية، وقد تم عرض البيانات في جداول بجانب النصوص مع تحليلها وشرحها ومناقشة نتائجها. وخلصت الدراسة إلى النتائج المهمة التالية: 1- أكدت الدراسة إستفادة التلاميذ والتلميذات من امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية التجريبي. 2- تقصى امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية التجريبي لنقاط القوة والضعف. وبناءً على نتائج الدراسة يوصى الباحث: 1- بأن يستمر العمل بامتحان اللغة الإنجليزية التجريبي لما فيه من فوائد جمة للتلاميذ والتلميذات. 2- بأن يتخذ التلاميذ والتلميذات امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية وسيلة تعليمية ترفع مستواهم الأكاديمي وتعزز كفاءتهم في اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فوائد ، تجريبي ، امتحان اللغة الإنجليزية ، تلاميذ الصف الثامن.

INTRODUCTION

The selection of the rehearsal examination for the study is due to its importance, not only in preparing and training pupils for the examination, but also in predicting their

performance. It can also provide teachers with useful feedback for developing and enhancing the pupils' performance in Basic Level Certificate English Examination.

It is normally held as a preparatory step 45 days before the Basic Level Certificate English Examination. Based on the expected results, the study will eventually suggest ways to enhance and promote effective testing procedures. In the words of Al Amin (18/9/2016) (Personal Contact) the Manager of Measurement and Evaluation Department, Khartoum State, Ministry of Education that this department is the sole entitled, authorized and approved body for preparing, conducting and having control on the whole process of the Basic Level Certificate Examination. Regarding the rehearsal examination, he confirmed that they have nothing to do with this exam and they lack coordination with the officials of Education Administrations who bear full responsibility for preparing, conducting and marking this exam.

Problem of the Study

It has been noticed that 8th grade pupils find it difficult to predict their problematic areas before taking the rehearsal English examination. Besides, their inability to understand the questions' rubrics clearly. So, the study concentrates on investigating the benefits of this exam.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To detect the problems that the pupils usually encounter in taking the rehearsal English examination.
2. To highlight pupils' points of strengths and enhance them.
3. To highlight pupils' points of weaknesses and make remedy for them.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that the rehearsal English examination can investigate the pupils' areas of strengths

and weaknesses. It can provide both teachers and pupils with useful feedback that facilitates the learning process and contributes to the achievement of the desired educational goals. It is hoped that this study will be an endeavour to suggest some appropriate solutions for the study problem. It is also hoped that it will be of some benefit and importance to pupils, teachers, directors, parents, researchers and to all who are interested in examination studies.

Questions of the Study

1. To what extent do pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination?
2. To what extent does the rehearsal English examination predict the pupils' performance?
3. Should the rehearsal English examination continue?

Hypothesis of the Study

Pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination.

Test Definition:

Davies (1968: 46) defines test as "a procedure designed to elicit certain behaviour from which one can make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual".

Test is a procedure of measurement. This procedure must be a systematic one. It is used to measure the target behaviour. Language is regarded as a verbal or vocal behaviour of human beings. The test tends to measure one's ability, attainment or progress in language skills.

Measurement and Evaluation:

Assessment is a global term incorporating tests and examinations (whether oral, written, or practical), and any other method of measuring students' performance. In Chase's opinion (1987: 6-7):

"Measurement is the process of using numbers to describe quantity, quality, or frequency according to a set of rules. While measurement only identifies amount, evaluation lays amounts against criteria so that we may make value judgments about the observed amounts".

Types of Tests:

A) Standardized Tests:

The *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1989: 271) defines a standardized test as one which has been developed from tryouts and experimentation to ensure that it is reliable and valid.

In fact, standardized tests may exert such a considerable influence on the average teacher that they are often instrumental in determining the kind of teaching that takes place before the test.

B) Communicative Tests:

Heaton (1979: 19) believes that communicative tests are concerned primarily (if not totally) with how language is used in communication.

A good communicative test of language, however, should have a much more positive effect on learning and teaching and should generally result in improved learning habits.

Qualities of a good Test

A good test should possess validity, reliability, employability and practicality. Al-Mutawa and Kailani (1998:164) elaborate on the qualities mentioned above and add the following qualities:

- Comprehension:** (comprehensiveness) the test covers almost all the contents in the syllabus which have been studied.
- Relevance:** The items measure reasonably well the desired objectives or achievements.
- Balance:** A practical test evaluates both linguistic and communicative competence. That is to say, it must reflect the students'

real command of the language with regard to appropriateness and accuracy.

(d) **Economy:** An efficient test makes best use of the teacher's limited time for constructing and grading tests items, and of students' allotted time for answering them.

(e) **Authenticity:** The language of a test should reflect everyday usage.

(f) **Difficulty:** The test questions should be appropriate in difficulty; neither too hard nor too easy, and should be developed from easy to difficult to eliminate stress and tension.

(g) **Clarity:** All questions and test instructions should be clearly stated.

(h) **Objectivity:** The answers to the questions should be definite so that the scorer would give the score that a student deserves.

(i) **Time:** A good test is the one that is appropriate in length for the allotted time.

Serious Examinations Complaints

It seems that Sudanese schools are also experiencing a similar situation. El-Noor (2001:154) quoted a letter from the Head of English Department, University of Khartoum, to the Dean Faculty of Arts complaining that: "...the grades scored by the pupils in their School Certificate Examination do not relate meaningfully to their performance."

The report went on saying that "the practice of giving extra marks to pupils in order to enable a certain percentage to pass is a dangerous one." El-Noor (2001:154) adds that:

a recent educational report on the examination system also states, in view of the changes which took place in the hierarchy of the educational organization and the expansion in various Departments of Examinations in the last few years, many sections of the Examination Department, came under the chairmanship of some teachers who are not

well- acquainted with the rules and regulations of the examination."

This state of affairs led to many transgressions which affected the prestige and reliability of Sudan National Certificate. These two reports make it very clear that the secondary school examination system in Sudan has witnessed some defects, and still, not on the right track. It is defective and its defect seems to be part of the educational ailment as a whole.

Previous Related Studies

1. **"The Effects of Monthly English Tests on Learners' Performance in Private Schools"**. A case study: El-Gabbas Secondary Schools for Boys and Girls in Khartoum, which was prepared by El Khawad (2006). The study aimed at investigating the effects of monthly English tests on learners' performance in private secondary schools. It focuses on detecting the problems that students encounter in dealing with monthly written English tests and finding out some appropriate solutions.

The study sample consisted of two groups. The first was a group of hundred students both males and females from El-Gabbas Private Secondary Schools in Khartoum. These schools adopt monthly tests which are not common in governmental schools. The second was a group of twenty English language teachers both males and females from different schools in Khartoum, Omdurman and Shendi. Two tools were used to collect data: a questionnaire for students and an interview for teachers. Then the analytical descriptive method is adopted to carry out the study.

The main findings are as follows:

- Most importantly the learners' performance is negatively affected by

monthly tests.

- The majority of English language teachers confirm that the frequency of testing should be reduced.
 - Tests' scores do not reflect the depth of the students' acquired knowledge, or achievement, or relate meaningfully to their performance.
2. **"Subjective and Objective Tests as Measuring Tools of Language Performance"**. A case study in Medani Secondary Schools, which was prepared by Ali (2004). The study aimed at helping teachers to use testing as an essential diagnostic tool for keeping track of their students' progress and measuring their own success and failure in the classroom. The analytical descriptive method was adopted by the researcher which comprised administering and scoring an objective test and an essay question, and conducting a questionnaire on objective tests. The sample was selected from Wad Medani Secondary Schools English Language teachers. The main findings are:

1. Most of Wad Medani Secondary Schools English language teachers lack the knowledge for constructing objective tests.
2. Compared with objective tests, subjective tests are not very valid or reliable.
3. Objective tests have several practical advantages over tests of a more traditional character. They are both valid and reliable. Comments on Previous Related Studies:

The previous related studies are of great importance to this study because they investigate the area of examinations and testing English Language at the secondary school level.

They are in most cases similar to the present study as they attempt to analyze and diagnose the effects of testing on learners' performance. They concentrate on increasing the advantages of examinations and decreasing the disadvantages. The present study differs from the ones mentioned before as it adopts testing English Language at Basic Level Schools in Khartoum State taking some of Khartoum Bahri Locality Schools as a sample. It is worth considering this study due to the importance given to both the rehearsal and certificate English examinations in basic level schools in particular. The conclusions of the reviewed relevant studies support what the current research is trying to find out.

Materials and Methods

The data has been collected from two samples: a sample of pupils and a group of teachers of English. The first group constitutes a total of 100 pupils both males and females who were selected from 10 basic schools in Khartoum Bahri Locality. These schools adopt the rehearsal English examination which is common in all governmental and private schools. The pupils are regularly tested towards the end of January each year on what they have been taught during the school year. 50 of the pupils were males and 50 were females. The second group comprised a sample of 20 English language teachers, 10 males and 10 females, and were selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment from various basic schools in Khartoum Bahri Locality.

Tools of Data Collection:

An analytical descriptive method was adopted to conduct the study. Two questionnaires have been used as methods of data collection. The first one was distributed among the pupils' sample. It aimed at collecting data to achieve the objectives of the study and find appropriate solutions for the raised problem.

The second one was used to collect data from the teachers of English language at basic level education to serve the same purpose of the study and to test the hypotheses of the study to find appropriate solutions and suggestions. Judgmental sampling was followed. The two questionnaires have been selected and constructed to ensure maximum validity and reliability.

Techniques of Data Analysis:

The data obtained from the different subjects by means of the two questionnaires was organized and tabulated to be processed by the computer. The programme which was used by the researcher was (S.P.S.S) which refers to Statistical Packages for Social Sciences and deals with the raw data, codes it and then analyses it. EXCEL programme and descriptive statistics were used as well. The data collected was analyzed by computing percentages and tables were used to convey statistical information.

Results and Discussion

The Analysis of the First Tool: Pupils' Questionnaire:

Pupils' benefits:

Tables of Chi-Square Test:

Table (1) Chi-Square Test Results for Respondents' Responses to the Statements of the Study Hypothesis: Pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination.

No.	Statement Pupils' benefits:	Mean	SD	Chi Square	P-value
10.	The rehearsal English examination covers the whole syllabus.	2.4	0.7	26	0.00
11.	The rehearsal English examination prepares you for the Certificate Examination.	2.4	0.5	24.9	0.00
12.	The rehearsal English examination helps you understand clearly the questions' rubrics (instructions) of the Basic Level Certificate English Examination.	2.3	0.8	24	0.00
13.	The rehearsal English examination sufficiently predicts your performance in Basic Level Certificate English Examination.	2.9	0.6	24	0.00
14.	The rehearsal examination highlights your points of strengths.	2.6	0.4	26	0.00
15.	The rehearsal examination highlights your points of weaknesses.	2.6	0.8	27	0.00
16.	The rehearsal English examination helps you make remedy for your points of weaknesses.	2.4	0.9	25	0.02
17.	The rehearsal examination motivates you if you get full mark in the Certificate Examination.	2.4	0.5	35	0.03
18.	The rehearsal examination disappoints you if you don't get high mark in the Certificate examination.	2.4	0.7	25	0.02
19.	Your teacher devotes much time to the remedy of your errors.	3.0	0.8	27	0.00
20.	You receive extra useful lessons after the school day.	2.7	0.6	24	0.00

In this study the validity calculated by using the following equation:

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

The reliability coefficient was calculated for the measurement, which was used in the questionnaire using Alpha-Cronbach coefficient equation as the following:

For calculating the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire from the above equation, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to respondents.

The results have been shown in the following table:

Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Validity	0.92	20
Reliability	0.96	20

High reliability coefficient

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 1st statement was (26) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 1st statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 2nd statement was (24.9) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 2nd statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 3rd statement was (26) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 3rd statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 4th statement was (24.4) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the

respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 4th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 5th statement was (26) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 5th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 6th statement was (27) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 6th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 7th statement was (25.7) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 7th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 8th statement was (35) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22).

This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 8th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 9th statement was (25) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 9th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 10th statement

was (27) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 10th statement.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 11th statement was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (8.22). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, which support the respondent who agreed with the 11th statement.

Analysis of the Second Tool: Teachers' Questionnaire:

Pupils' benefits:

Table (2) Chi –Square Test for the Study Hypothesis: Pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination.

No	Statement	mean	SD	Chi square	p-value
1	The rehearsal English examination covers the whole syllabus.	2.8	2.1	27	0.000
2	The rehearsal English examination prepares pupils for the Certificate Examination.	2.7	1.5	29	0.000
3	The rehearsal English examination helps pupils understand clearly the questions' rubrics (instructions) of the Basic Level Certificate English Examination.	2.6	0.5	34	0.000
4	The rehearsal English examination highlights the pupils' points of strengths.	2.4	1.6	27	0.000
5	The rehearsal English examination highlights the pupils' points of weaknesses.	2.9	2.7	23	0.000
6	Pupils make remedy for their points of weaknesses after taking the rehearsal exam.	2.7	1.5	30	0.000

In this study the validity of the teachers' questionnaire calculated by using the following equation:

$$\text{Validity} = \sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$$

The reliability coefficient was calculated for the measurement, which was used in the questionnaire using Alpha-Cronbach coefficient Equation as the following:

For calculating the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire from the above equation, the researcher distributed (20) questionnaires to respondents to calculate the reliability coefficient using the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient;

the results have been shown in the following table:

Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Validity	0.93	20
Reliability	0.86	20

High reliability coefficient

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 1st statement was (27) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.8) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "The rehearsal English examination covers the whole syllabus."

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 2nd statement was (29) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.7) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents

who agreed with the statement "The rehearsal English examination prepares pupils for the Certificate Examination."

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 3rd statement was (34) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.6) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement "The rehearsal English examination helps pupils understand clearly the questions' rubrics (instructions) of the Basic Level Certificate English Examination".

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' responses in the 4th statement was (27) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7).

This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.4) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement “The rehearsal English examination highlights the pupils’ points of strengths.

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents’ responses in the 5th statement was (23) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.9) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement “The rehearsal English examination highlights the pupils’ points of weaknesses.”

The calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents’ responses in the 6th statement was (30) which is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which was (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents, and also the calculated mean is (2.7) which is greater than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agreed with the statement “Pupils make remedy for their points of weaknesses after taking the rehearsal exam.”

Findings of the Study

1. It is obviously found that pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination. It is worth considering its predictive ability to infer pupils’ performance and appreciating its valuable testing contribution that makes pupils’ achievement possible and success comes true.

2. The rehearsal English examination investigates the pupils’ points of strength.

3. The rehearsal English examination investigates the pupils’ points of weaknesses.

Verification of the Study Hypothesis:

The study hypothesis: “Pupils benefit from taking the rehearsal English examination.”

The verification of this hypothesis is assured to be valid by tables (1) and (2) which refer to the results of the pupils’ questionnaire and teachers’ questionnaire as they are indicated by the respondents’ responses to the statements of the study hypothesis. The very high responses to the statements of the pupils’ questionnaire are in harmony with those of the teachers. So, they support each other and are more than sufficient to verify and confirm this hypothesis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the researcher would like to recommend the following: The practice of conducting the rehearsal English examination should continue as it contributes a lot to the benefit of pupils.

1. It is advisable that pupils should consider the rehearsal English examination as a learning tool that promotes their academic level and enhances their proficiency in English language.

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