

Investigating Main Causes of Errors in Sudanese Secondary School Students' Spoken English: A Case Study of Some Secondary School Students in Omdurman Locality, Khartoum State

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the main causes of the errors of spoken English language of the Sudanese Secondary School Students at Omdurman Locality in Khartoum State. The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative method. The researcher designed and conducted three tools to collect data from the targeted population. These tools were: first , an interview with (120) pupils at Omdurman Secondary Schools. Second, an interview with (15) experts in English language. Third, a questionnaire with (100) English teachers in Omdurman Locality. The study tried to find answers for the following questions: First, to what extent are the spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary Schools Students at Omdurman Locality in Khartoum State due to lack of listening comprehension in SPINE series at secondary level. Second, to what degree are these errors a result of lack in the ability to develop students' oral communication skills in SPINE series at the secondary level? Third, to what extent are these errors caused by lack of sufficient training of teachers of secondary school in occurrence of these spoken errors? The findings of the study show an agreement on the existence of these spoken errors in English language of Sudanese Secondary Students, at Omdurman Locality in Khartoum State. It is also agreed upon the above mentioned causes are among the causes of spoken errors of those students in that locality in the same state.

Key words: *Interference, error analysis, SPINE series*

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقصي الأسباب الرئيسة لأخطاء المخاطبة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب السودانيين بالمرحلة الثانوية بأمر درمان بولاية الخرطوم. تبنت الدراسة الطريقة الكمية والكيفية. قام الباحث بتصميم وإجراء ثلاث أدوات لجمع البيانات من مجتمع البحث المستهدف. هذه الأدوات هي: أولاً، مقابلة مع (120) دارسة ودارس من مدارس أم درمان الثانوية. ثانياً، مقابلة مع (15) خبيراً باللغة الإنجليزية. ثالثاً، استبانة لعدد (100) من معلمات ومعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بمحلية أم درمان. حاولت الدراسة الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية: أولاً، إلى أي مدى تعود أسباب أخطاء المخاطبة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب السودانيين بالمرحلة الثانوية بمحلية أم درمان بولاية الخرطوم لانعدام مهارة الاستماع في سلسلة اسباين بالمرحلة الثانوية. ثانياً، إلى أي درجة تكون هذه الأخطاء

نتيجة لانعدام المقدرة على تنمية مهارة المخاطبة في سلسلة اسباين بالمرحلة الثانوية. ثالثاً، إلى أي مدى يتسبب عدم كفاية تدريب معلمات ومعلمي في حدوث هذه الأخطاء في المخاطبة.

جاءت النتائج موضحة الاتفاق على وجود أخطاء في المخاطبة باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب السودانيين بالمرحلة الثانوية بأمر درمان بولاية الخرطوم. كما تم الاتفاق على الأسباب المذكورة أعلاه ضمن أسباب أخطاء المخاطبة لأولئك الطلاب في تلك المرحلة بتلك المحلية بنفس الولاية.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout my career as a language teacher, I have been asking myself this question: why do Sudanese learners of English language make errors? This phenomenon attracts my attention, and I feel inclined to investigate the reasons behind it. I notice that the production of such errors is common in the spoken and written language of learners of ESL. But, they occur more frequently in speech. This study is important because it tries to solve a problem which is very acutely felt by Sudanese learners of English language. It attempts to raise their general standard in English Language. This makes it urgent to investigate the reasons behind this problem. One study that is relevant to this research is written by Naser (2008). This study attempts to shed light on the actual problems that face the learners of the foreign language. It tries to investigate the errors made by second year students in pronouncing English consonant sounds at Imam ALhadi College. The data were collected through oral ability test and dictation. The errors were identified, classified and analyzed. The results reveal that, mother tongue interference is the major cause of the errors of consonant sounds. The study also shows that, the absence of some sounds in L1 causes difficulty in sounds system. The results of Nasir's

study also shows that most of the errors in pronouncing sounds are due to poor teaching techniques. Nasser's study supports most of the hypothesis in the study under investigation. In other words, it confirms the hypotheses which the researcher is trying to prove. Firstly, it agrees with the assumption that most of the errors made by second language learners are due to the mother tongue interference. The second study is conducted by Elgack (2008), entitled The Use of Language Communication Strategies to Solve The Students' Communication Problems. The findings of the study reveal that the Sudanese learners are of low English proficiency and are not smooth in their delivery. It is also found that most of the Sudanese students have problems in speaking skills. Shyness and fear of making mistakes are behind students' reluctance to participate in oral interaction in the classroom. University lectures of English language do not concentrate on teaching communication. Findings of the study states that 62% of the teachers say that SPINE does not enhance speaking. Moreover, speaking activities provided by SPINE are of a routine and mechanical type which does not help the pupils to achieve and develop communicative competence. This is

typically one of the findings of the present study. The same finding is in agreement with Rezig (2008) and Ahmed (2008). Elgack (2008) reports that 50% of the English language teachers never use authentic materials and aids. This is also agrees with the finding of the present study.

The objectives of the present study are: First, to investigate the speaking problems of Sudanese secondary school students. Second, to survey expert teachers and students' opinions about the speaking problems they encounter. Third, to help teachers as well as syllabus designers and students to give oral communication activities more emphasis.

Major conclusions

of the present study are: First, as a result of lack of listening comprehension in SPINE books (4 , 5 , 6), students show a low and weak ability in the spoken English, students make enormous error in speech. Second, results also indicate that spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students are due to lack in the ability to develop oral communication competence. Third, it is also found that lack of trained and qualified teachers of English language has its impact on the deterioration of the students' spoken English. The study is based on three hypotheses. which have been confirmed by the participants' responses to the three tools questions/statements directed to them.

The hypotheses

of the present study are as follows: First, The spoken errors of Secondary School Students are due to the lack of listening comprehension in SPINE series. Second, the spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students occur as a result of lack in the ability to develop oral communication skills of the students. Third, the speaking errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students are caused by the lack of trained teachers of English language.

Rationale for the study

Results from this study might possibly help the syllabus designers, teachers and other E.L.T practitioners to think again and to evaluate SPINE series as far as the oral communication is concerned. The study could also help to pay more attention to listening comprehension skills. The study will possibly improve the quality of teaching and learning of oral communication skills in secondary schools in Sudan. The study might attract the attention to give more emphasis to teachers' training and its impact on learning process.

The approach

to solve the problem. The researcher uses qualitative and quantitative approach to analyze the data.

Materials and Methods

In order to investigate the study problem, the researcher uses qualitative and quantitative analysis.

- **Research group:**

The research conducted to the secondary level of Omdurman Locality that includes secondary schools.

The population of this study are the following participants:

- (i) 120 teachers of secondary schools in Omdurman.
- (ii) 15 experts in English in secondary schools in Omdurman.
- (iii) 120 Pupils from secondary schools in Omdurman.

- **Tools:**

The tools which were used to collect data consisted of:

- (a) A questionnaire for the teachers of secondary schools in Omdurman Locality.
- (b) An interview of the English language experts.
- (c) An interview of the pupils of secondary schools in Omdurman Locality.

To realize a reasonable validity for the teachers' questionnaire, the researcher tried to get help as much as he could through discussion with friends, colleagues, teachers and experts in the field of ELT or TEFL, as a result of this discussion some words were highlighted, some ambiguous items were made clear, some items were added, some difficult words were replaced with more clear ones and some items were eliminated.

Statement 1: The spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students

To check the reliability of the questionnaire, a final piloting with similar sample of the study was carried out to shed light on the general appearance of the question, the clarity of the instructions and the process of administration.

- **Procedures:**

The researcher collected data by:

- (a) Distributing questionnaire.
- (b) Carrying out direct interviews with experts at secondary level, recording their responses and answers.
- (c) Carry out direct interview with pupils and tape recorded them with the help of their teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The aim of this study is to investigate the main causes of errors in Sudanese Secondary School Students' spoken English at Omdurman Locality in Khartoum state. To achieve this aim three instruments were utilized to collect data for the present study. A questionnaire was developed to collect data from secondary school teachers in Omdurman Locality. Two interviews were devised to draw data from English language expert teachers and from students of secondary schools. The SPSS was used to analyse the data gathered by the three mentioned instruments.

happened as a result of lack of listening comprehension in SPINE Books.

Table (4.1): Distribution of respondents answers to statement No. (1).

Obtain	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	61	51.7
Agree	44	36.7
Undecided	5	4.2
Disagree	4	3.3
Strongly disagree	5	4.2
Total	120	100

The table above reflects that a great majority of the respondents answer (105) agreed that the spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students happened because of lack of listening comprehension in SPINE Books. This result is in agreement with Fad Elmaula's (2011) finding that there are some weakness in SPINE series such as lack of authentic materials in the target language culture. The same finding is also agrees with what Salih (2008) finds out that lack of listening comprehension is the direct result of the weakness of the students in oral interaction. Again the

result reveals what Ahmed (2008) who states that the lack of using authentic materials in teaching speaking and listening is behind the decline of the pupils spoken English. This result agrees with the findings of Algack (2008) declares that 50% of the teachers of English language never use authentic materials or aural or visual aids in teaching.

Statement 2: The spoken errors of Sudanese Secondary School Students' are due to lack in the ability to develop oral communication skill in SPINE Books.

Table (4.2) Distribution of respondents to the statement No. (2)

Obtain	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	53	44.2
Agree	39	32.5
Undecided	3	2.5
Disagree	17	14.2
Strongly disagree	8	6.7
Total	120	100

The above table indicates that the majority (93) of the respondents agreed that the spoken errors of these students are due to lack in the ability to develop oral communication skill in SPINE Books. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Salih (2008) who states that Sudanese students have some difficulties in oral interaction, in other words they lack the ability to develop oral communication. It is worth mentioning that this point is closely related to the first point mentioned in the first result, that the lack of listening comprehension is logically reflected in the lack of ability to develop oral

communication. Because simply this skill is not exercised or practised. The result reveals the finding of Mahgoub (2008) that there is weakness in all aspects of language in the Sudan as a whole. By definition there is no doubt that the spoken aspect is witnessing a great weakness, since it is the most important skill that the learner of FEL wants to develop.

Statement 3: The errors of Sudanese Secondary School Student in the spoken English are due to lack in trained teachers of English language.

Table (4.3): Distribution of the respondents answers to the statement No. 3

Obtain	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	50	41.7
Agree	37	30.8
Undecided	10	8.3
Disagree	18	15.0
Strongly disagree	5	4.52
Total	120	100

The above table reflects that a great majority of respondents answers (87) agreed that the errors of the spoken English of Sudanese Secondary School Students are due to lack of trained teachers of English Language. This is why there is weakness on the spoken language of the students. Similar results is supported by Salim (2008) who finds that the teachers' training is badly

needed. Such finding is previously reported by Naser (2008) that English language teachers training is not enough. The same finding is supported by what Goron (2004) states that English language teachers are not well trained. The finding is also in agreement with what Rezig states that the English language teachers need more training to improve the performance in teaching.

CONCLUSION :

In the light of the performance of the teachers' questionnaire and the experts'

interview the following conclusions were revealed:

1. As a result of lack of listening comprehensions in SPINE series, and the discouragement of students to listen to native speakers or to be exposed to English language spoken by its native speakers and because of the least attention given to listening comprehension in SPINE series, Sudanese secondary school students showed a low and weak ability in the spoken English and consequently, they made enormous errors in their speech.

2. Results also indicated that the spoken errors of Sudanese secondary school students were due to lack in the ability to develop oral communicative competence and to the negligence of concentration on oral communicative competence and it might be because of lack of provision of oral communicative activities provided by SPINE series.

3. It was also found out that lack of trained and qualified teachers of English language at the secondary schools has its impact on the deterioration of the standard of spoken English, which led to the occurrence of the spoken errors made by those students.

4. Results, as could be seen from both teachers' questionnaire and the experts' interview, showed that most of the Sudanese teachers concentrated on the grammatical aspects of English language.

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5. Moreover, conclusions revealed that SPINE series is not integrated, for they give more emphasis to reading and writing and neglected listening and speaking.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study the researcher recommended the following:-

- SPINE series should be changed, modified, reformed, revised or amended.
- A new text book has to be written and should be really integrated.
- Teachers should be professionally and highly trained, equipped with the modern approaches and methods of teaching, with special attention given to Communicative Teaching Approach.
- Students' errors have to be tolerated during carrying out the oral communicative activities.
- Schools must be provided with language lab in which authentic materials are used.
- Teachers of English language are advised to use English as much as possible as a medium of communication inside and outside the classroom.
- Testing listening comprehension should be part of the Sudanese Secondary School Certificate.
- Multimedia should be exploited in teaching and learning English language.

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