



## INVESTIGATING THE SUDAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ENGLISH EXAMINATION CONSTRUCTION: IMPACT OF THE CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL LADDER

ABDALLA ABD ELRAHMAN AHMED BADAWI<sup>1</sup>, MAHMOUD ALI AHMED OMER<sup>2</sup>,  
SABIR MIRGANI ALI AHMED<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>SUDAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY-College of languages  
Author for Correspondence-Email:sabirmirganiali@gmail.com



### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at investigating Sudan School certificate English examination construction: impact of changes in the educational ladder. The researchers have adopted the descriptive analytical method. Questionnaire has been used for collecting relevant data to the study. The study sample composed of (104) teachers at different Sudanese Universities, which were randomly selected. The results revealed that there are statistically significant differences among students. Most examinees will never succeed unless they are trained on how to answer exam questions. Moreover, formulation of questions in these exams helps examinees succeed even if they lack knowledge of the major feature of writing system, namely spelling feature. The study has recommended that students should be trained in how to construct their sentences syntactically. Furthermore, students should be well-trained in writing to correct their spelling mistakes in constructing well-formed sentences.

Keywords: Educational Ladder, Learning, Teaching

### Introduction

Education is a long-term process. A process is more or less meant for an extremely noble impressive goal, namely developing human life. Achieving such a worth tiring aim entails unbiased planning and far-sighted decisions. Since it is a long-range journey, it is expected to be carried over years, and that learners' transition not only from stage to stage but even from class to class should be decided on scientific and psychological bases. Where the learner's age, curricula, mood, and capacity of mind are taken into consideration. Otherwise the whole process of education will not come up with any gains or contributions in human life development and the whole process will end up in a complete fiasco.

### Aims and Scope of the Study

This study aims to investigate Sudan School certificate English examination construction: impact of changes in the educational ladder. The scope of the study is limited to English language teachers in the Sudan. There are (104) English language teachers at different Sudanese universities.

### Literature Review

#### Learning and Teaching

As is known English is a skill subject and not a mere subject, that is, it is not information and rules to be stored in the mind of the learner but skills that must be practiced.

So learning English is supposed to be based on making learners capable of reflecting what they have learned in a practical use of language. How learners use their knowledge of English in expressing themselves and achieving their goals? Undoubtedly using English as such needs training on both parties, i.e. the teachers and the learners. If learners cram their heads with whatever information about English, without any attempts



to use it practically they won't master it. On the other hand unless teachers scrutinize their students' needs and abilities they won't be able to help them.

Brown and Douglas (2000)) states that: learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, a total physical, intellectual, and emotional response are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second language.

Elhassan (1982) points out that many variables are involved in the acquisition process. Language learning is not a set of easy steps that can be programmed in a quick do-it-yourself kit. So much is at stake that courses in foreign languages are often inadequate for the successful learning of a second language. Few if any people achieve fluency in a foreign language solely within the confines of the classroom.

Learners of English shouldn't confine themselves to knowing English theoretically without the ability to transform this knowledge to perform language functions. And teachers should help their students in mastering this aspect of language.

Adrian Doff (1988) in a background text on structures and functions of English, states that the ultimate aim of all English teaching is for students to 'know English', or at least know enough English for whatever purpose they have in learning the language. In this text we shall consider what 'knowing English' entails – in other words what are the aspects of the language that need to be learnt? This question appears to be fairly straightforward. Clearly, students need to develop skills, e.g. speaking, listening, reading, and writing; how much attention is paid to each skill will depend on the students' needs and interests.

Within the productive skills (speaking and writing), one could say that students need to learn words and phrases to express meanings in English; they also need to be able to produce basic structures correctly. In speaking, this will involve learning the sound system and stress and intonation patterns; in writing, it will involve learning features of the writing system, such as spelling and punctuation. Since we do not speak or write in isolated sentences, they will also need to learn ways of joining sentences together in connected speech or writing. Within the receptive skills (listening and reading) one could say that students need to understand words and structures in their spoken and written forms, and also understand the connecting devices that link them together. (All of this says nothing, of course, about how students learn, and does not necessarily mean that all these items need to be individually taught.)

A student who has learnt all these things, then, would be able to understand connected speech and writing and produce correct sentences in English. But this does not quite amount to 'knowing English'; for language is not merely an abstract system which is used for making correct sentences; it is a way of communicating with other people. 'Knowing English', therefore, must mean knowing how to communicate in English. This involves not only producing language correctly, but using language for particular purposes; for example, being able to give advice in English, make predictions, describe people. All these are called the functions (or 'communicative functions') of language.

#### **The first educational ladder (4,4,4)**

One could say (4, 4, 4) was the first educational ladder in Sudan. It was introduced by the British, the colonialists of the country then. It was implemented during the period from 1900 – 1970, similar to the educational ladder of general education applied in UK. It lasted seventy years. It is a wonder that this system of education was hastily changed though it was established by the Native speakers themselves and proved its success. Being established similarly to the education ladder applied in UK indicates its validity and gives it credit in addition to its other qualities revealed during its implementation. Noticeably the change of this ladder represents the starting point of English decline in Sudan (Elnoor, 2003) .

**The second educational ladder (6, 3, 3)**

In the second year (1970) of his military regime, unexpectedly Gaafar Nimeiry changed the well-established educational ladder of (4, 4, 4) and introduced a new educational ladder of (6, 3, 3), that is 6 years for primary school instead of 4 in the former educational system, 3 years for the intermediate school instead of 4, and another 3 years for secondary school instead of 4 years in the past system. In this new system, the duration of study remained as it was (12 years) unaffected by the new change, but the period for studying English and its standard were both seriously affected. The period of English learning was reduced from 4 years (at the Intermediate School) in the previous system to 3 years (at the same stage) in the new system. From then onwards English learning drop has started. Elhassan (1982) states that, "The new ladder (6, 3, 3) replaced the old ladder (4, 4, 4). The most important consequences were: a) fourth year primary school pupils had stay for another two years (fifth and sixth) at the primary level; selection examinations to the intermediate school were delayed for two years, up to 1972. b), similarly fourth year (third year) intermediate students had to stay for another year at the intermediate level. They sat for secondary entry examination in 1971. Fourth year (third year) secondary students were not affected; they sat for the annual Sudan School Certificate examination in 1970."

**Third educational ladder of (8, 3)**

The third system of (8, 3) that came as a result of a change made in the second educational system of general education in Sudan, was implemented in 1992. It is said that it was modeled on the Malaysian educational system. It is considered by most educationalists an extremely imperfect system. In this system the Intermediate stage has been thoroughly abolished, and the duration of learning in the general education was cut to (11 years) instead of (12 years). It is said that this lost year in addition to the quite confusing curricula applied in this system did not only aggravated the problem of English learning, but had caused new problems in the learning of all other subjects .

**Methodology of the Study**

The researchers have drawn the sample for this study exclusively from Sudanese teachers of English from various universities who responded to questionnaire. A sample of (104) teachers was randomly selected for the questionnaire.

**Tools of the Study**

The researchers have used questionnaire as a tool to collect the information of this paper. The questionnaire was given to the Sudanese English teachers whom were selected randomly.

The researchers have adopted the descriptive analytical and quantitative methods as well as a questionnaire as a tool in the collection of relevant data and information in pursuing this paper. Population of this study is drawn exclusively from English language teachers in the Sudan. The population is English language teachers at Sudanese universities. A sample of (104) teachers was randomly selected for the questionnaire.

**Results and Discussion**

The researchers have used the questionnaire as a tool in the collection of data relevant to this study. The researcher has designed a questionnaire to investigate the hypothesis "Sudan School certificate English examination is not constructed according to the students' future needs. The tables below are going to illustrate what has been stated earlier.

**Teachers' Questionnaire**

This item tries to elicit information from the teachers concerning their views about the teachers play an effective role to develop Sudanese school young learners' writing skills through classroom interaction.

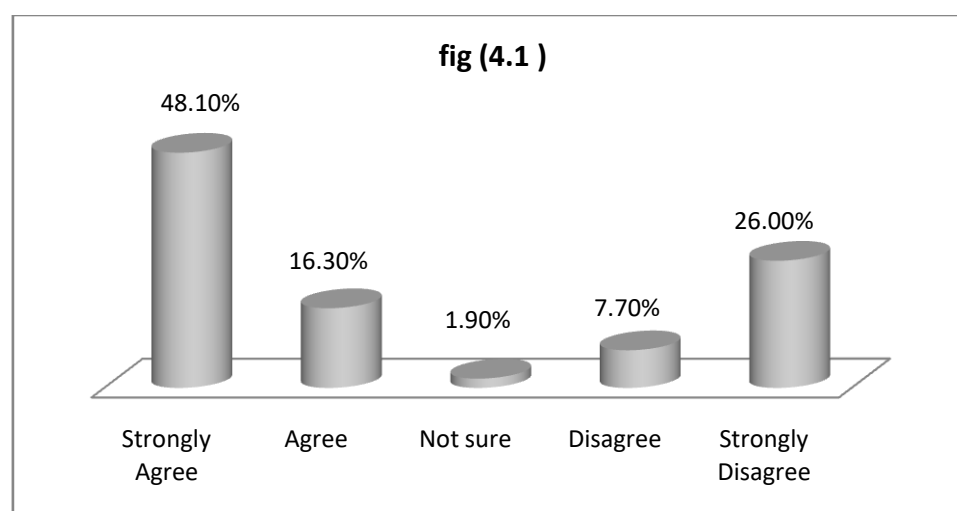


Hypothesis 1 : Sudan School Certificate (SSC) English examinations are not constructed according to the students' future needs

**Statement No. ( 4.1):** Most examinees focus on learning how to answer questions rather than focusing on learning English.

**Table No (4.1) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of item No.(1 )**

Valid	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	50	48.1%
Agree	17	16.3%
Not sure	2	1.9%
Disagree	8	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	27	26.0%
Total	104	100%



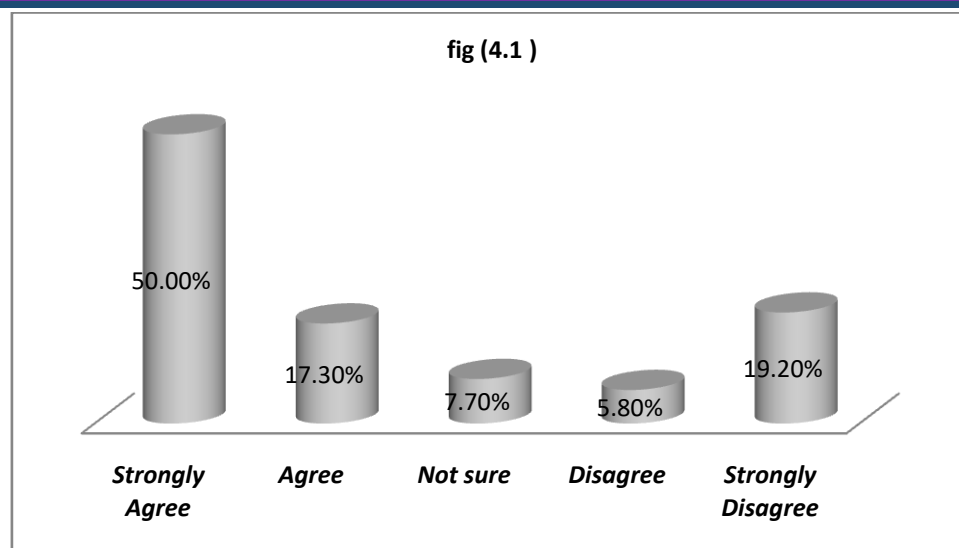
It is clear from the above table and figure show that there are (50) persons in the study sample with percentage (48.1%) strongly agreed with "Most examinees focus on learning how to answer questions rather than focusing on learning English. ". There are (17) persons with percentage (16.3%) agreed, and (2) persons with percentage (1.9%) were not sure, and (8) persons with percentage (7.7%) disagreed, while (27) persons with percentage (26.0%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No. (4.2):** Distribution of marks on the exam paper makes students focus on particular areas.

**Table No (4.1 )**

**The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(2)**

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	50.0%
Agree	18	17.3%
Not sure	8	7.7%
Disagree	6	5.8%
Strongly Disagree	20	19.2%
Total	104	100%

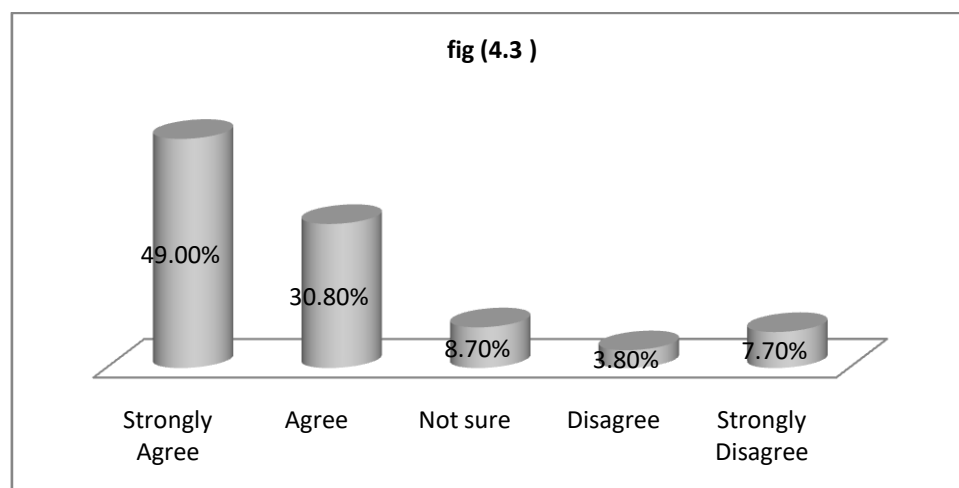


It is noticed from the above table and figure display that there are (18) persons in the study sample with percentage (17.30%) strongly agreed with "Distribution of marks on the exam paper makes students focus on particular areas ". There are (18) persons with percentage (17.3%) agreed, and (8) persons with percentage (7.7%) were not sure, and (6) persons with percentage (5.8%) disagreed, while (20) persons with percentage (19.2%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(4.3 ):** Most examinees will never succeed unless they are trained on how to answer exam questions.

**Table No (4.3 ) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of item No.( 3 )**

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	51	49.0%
Agree	32	30.8%
Not sure	9	8.7%
Disagree	4	3.8%
Strongly Disagree	8	7.7%
Total	104	100%



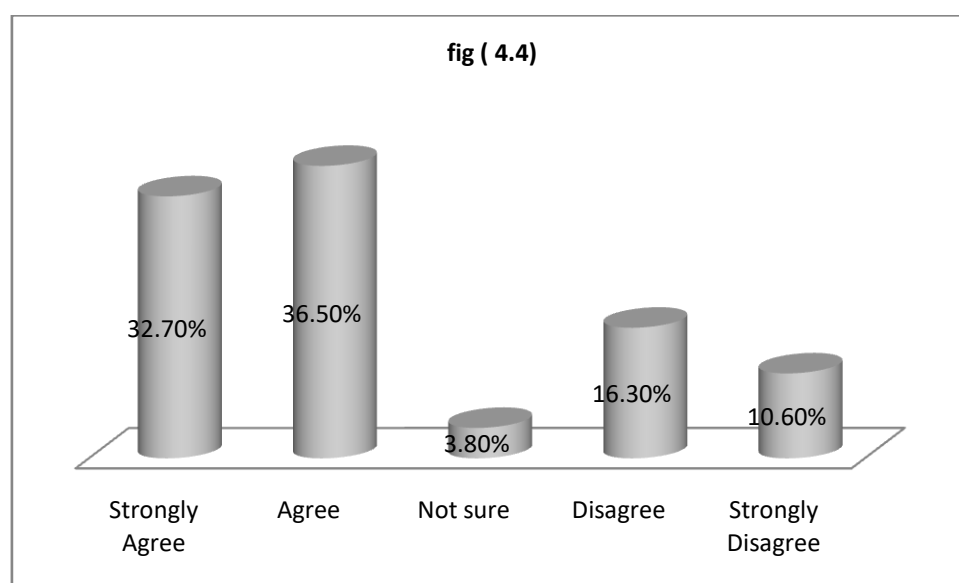


It is observed from table and figure show that there are (51) persons in the study's sample with percentage (49.0%) strongly agreed with " Most examinees will never succeed unless they are trained on how to answer exam questions ". There are (32) persons with percentage (30.80%) agreed with that and ( 9) persons with percentage (8.7%) were not sure about that, and (4) persons with percentage (3.80%) disagreed, while (8) persons with percentage (7.7%) strongly disagreed.

**Statement No.(4.4 ):** A success of examinees in these exams does not mean that they have developed their English.

**Table No (4.4 ) : The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of item No. (4 )**

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	34	32.7%
Agree	38	36.5%
Not sure	4	3.8%
Disagree	17	16.3%
Strongly Disagree	11	10.6%
Total	104	100%

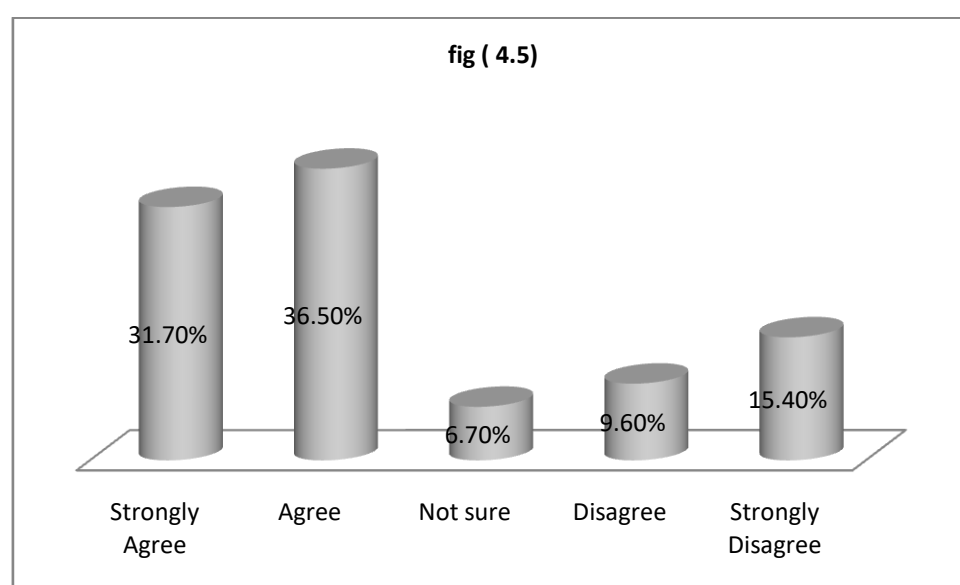


It is obvious from the above table and figure display hat there are (34) persons in the study sample with percentage (32.7%) strongly agreed with " A success of examinees in these exams does not mean that they have developed their English". There are (38) persons with percentage (36.5%) agreed with that, and (4) persons with percentage (3.8%) were not sure . and (17) persons with percentage (16.3%) disagreed , while (11) persons with percentage (10.6%) strongly disagreed .

**Statement No.(4.5 ):** Formulation of questions in these exams helps examinees succeed even if they lack knowledge of the major feature of writing system, namely spelling feature.

**Table No (4.5) : The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of item No.(5 )**

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	33	31.7%
Agree	38	36.5%
Not sure	7	6.7%
Disagree	10	9.6%
Strongly Disagree	16	15.4%
Total	104	100%



It is clear from the above table and figure show that there are (33) persons in the study sample with percentage (31.7%) strongly agreed with " Formulation of questions in these exams helps examinees succeed even if they lack knowledge of the major feature of writing system, namely spelling feature". There are (38) persons with percentage (36.5%) agreed with that, and (7) persons with percentage (6.7%) were not sure. and (10) persons with percentage (9.6%) disagreed, while (16) persons with percentage (15.4%) strongly disagreed.

The data collection was analyzed in relation to the study hypothesis. The data was collected by questionnaire which had given to teachers who do not know why these took place.

Also analyzing the data collection from the questionnaire was given to teachers exclusively drawn from English language teachers in the Sudan. The population is English language teachers at some Sudanese universities. A sample of (104) teachers was randomly selected for the questionnaire.

The researcher has used the questionnaire as primary tool in the data collection relevant to this study. The researcher has designed questionnaire to identify the role of teachers who can play an effective role to develop Sudanese schools young learners' writing skills through classroom interaction. The marks obtained from the questionnaire for all participants were analyzed and compared statistically by using frequencies and percentages. The analysis showed that the highest percentage which is represented strongly agree and agree is estimated by (88%) in contrast to the percentage of strongly disagree and disagree which is estimated by lesser than this one (7.6%). Accordingly, this justifies that there is statistically significant



difference among the respondents Teachers play an effective role to develop Sudanese schools young learners' writing skills through classroom interaction.

#### Discussion

The changes in educational ladder succeeded in increasing admission of students to school and university, but they have greatly contributed in weakening education standard in general and English standard in particular. In these three educational ladders (4, 4, 4), (6, 3, 3), (8, 3), what is the most successful beneficial one? The answer to this question can easily be inferred from the standard of education during the time of each one. Deciding which one of them is the most successful and beneficial doesn't need expensive conferences or lengthy meetings. It only needs sincerity, and objective assessment. When viewing the standard of education and standard of English language during the time of each ladder, the answer for the above question will be: Undoubtedly, the educational ladder (4, 4, 4) is the most successful and beneficial one. It has achieved what it meant for, because all the basic pillars needed for establishing a successful beneficial educational system are there, namely a progressive system that considers all the students' needs, qualified trained stimulated teachers, and well-designed curricula. Therefore, the recent researcher suggests returning to the first educational ladder of (4, 4, 4) to get rid of the dilemma of English disastrous decline and take a step forward in renewing its flourishing status all over the country.

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