

Evaluating Basic Level School Certificate English Language Examination of Khartoum State (2017-2018): Teachers' Perspectives

Dr. MUAWIA OSMAN ELHAG ABDALLAH
Garden City University, Sudan

Abstract

The aim of this study is to Evaluate Basic Level School Certificate English Language Examination of Khartoum State (2017-2018) suitability and appropriateness for the students at the Basic Level in Khartoum State. The research method adopted is the descriptive-analytical method. The data are quantitative, and are collected with a questionnaire for 40 teachers and analysed by SPSS. The findings indicate that: The Khartoum Basic Level School Certificate Exam 2018 is correspondent to the contents of SPINE 3. Therefore, 2018 Exam is valid, the Basic Level School Certificate Exam 2018 was graded from easy to difficult. The students are also familiar with the layout of the 2018 Exam besides the time allotted was certainly suitable for the test takers, the skills reading and writing are efficiently exploited while the negligence of the skills listening and speaking cause severe defect in learning English. fortunately the 2018 Exam encourages students to study SPINE 3, the environment and the preparations of the exam are not adequate, the 2018 Exam has a negative backwash on both learners and teachers.

Key words: Basic Level School Certificate English Language Examination, Khartoum State, Teachers' Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

Examination is considered as one of essential elements in educational processes with which we can measure the desired

educational goals. Therefore, high quality examination are means of evaluation that can assist teachers to modify their teaching techniques on one hand, and helping learners adjust their way of learning on the other hand. This research attempts to investigate the main characteristics of English examination of Khartoum Basic Level School Certificate Exam (K.B.L.S.C.E) March 2018.

Statement of the Problem

Test is a very important element in assessing learning and its objectives. Many teachers are not able to design and plan tests in proper procedures. So the researcher wants to handle the problems of assessing the tests as a remedial means to overcome troubles relating to setting goals of standardized and proper way of making tests from the teachers' perspectives at Basic Level Schools in Khartoum State.

Aims

To find out the validity of the Basic Level School Certificate Exam, related to the syllabus of Spine Grade 3, reliability of the Basic Level School Certificate Exam and suggest perfect and comprehensive plan of the test.

Questions of the Study

The researcher is expected to answer these questions:

- 1\ How are the concepts of validity applied in (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018)?
- 2\ What are the procedures for making (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018) relevant to SPINE Series Syllabus 3?
- 3\ What are the measurements followed to reach the standards of reliability in (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018)?
- 4\ What are the characteristics of a good test?

Hypotheses of the Study

- H1. The (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018) is characterized as a valid test.
- H2. The (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018) is relevant to SPINE 3.
- H3. The (K.B.L.S.C.E) is considered to be reliable test.
- H4. The (K.B.L.S.C.E) (2018) is distinguished as a good test.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies on:

- 1- It helps teachers to identify the learners' needs, helps them to deal with the objectives of the lessons and assists the learners to answer the tests properly.
- 2- It helps teachers and planners to determine how they are doing and considering the lessons' objectives and the criteria of setting good tests.

Limits of the Study

The delimitations of the study are:

- 1\ This research is limited to Khartoum State Basic Level Examination (2017- 2018) at Khartoum State, the academic year (2017- 2018).

Methodology of the Study

The descriptive research method is used. The data are collected by using questionnaire to Basic Level Schools teachers. The questionnaire will be analysed by SPSS.

Key of Terms

K.B.L.S.C.E / Khartoum Basic Level School Certificate Exam.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Language Testing?

Language Testing is used to assess the students' performance in certain area.

Davies et.al (1968:40) defines test as “a procedure designed to elicit certain behavior from which one can make inference about certain characteristics of an individual.” Sax (1980:13) defines test as “a task or a series of tasks used to obtain systematic observations. Presumed to be representative of educational or psychological traits attributes.”

Types of Tests:

Proficiency Tests

Proficiency tests are designed to measure people’s ability in a language regardless of any training they may have had in that language. (Huges, 1989).

Principles of Tests

Reliability

A test is said to be reliable if it consistently yields similar, or ideally even the same results when conducted multiple times under the same conditions.

According to Alderson et al, (2005 : 87) the correlation between the results of one test administration and another test administration under the same circumstances. Hughes states (1989:36)

Validity

“Does the test measure what it is intended to measure?” (Lado, 1965: 30)

Bachman (1990:146) Argues that validity, then, can be seen as a concept allowing us to endow test scores with meaning.

It concluded that validity means is to test what is supposed to be tested, as for instances, the questions of the tests must be relevant to the content of what have been taught.

Construct Validity

The construct is defined as the abstracted set of abilities we want to infer from the test results. (Alderson et al: 2005: 183). In conducting construct validation; we are empirically testing hypothesized relationships between test scores and abilities. (Bachman 1990: 256).

Content Validity

“A test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned”. Hughes, (1989:22). The systematic investigation of the degree to which the items on a test, and the resulting scores, are representative and relevant samples of whatever content or abilities the test has been designed to measure” (Brown/Hudson 2002: 213). Bachman identifies two aspects of content validity: "content relevance and content coverage." (Bachman, 1990: 244)

Face Validity

According to Hughes, Test is said to have face validity if it looks as if it measures what is supposed to measure. (Hughes, 1989:27)

Usefulness

Usefulness for Bachman and Palmer (1996:17), the most important consideration in designing and developing a language test is the use for which it is intended. Hence, for them, usefulness is the most important quality or cornerstone of testing.

Backwash

Washback is generally defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning. Bailey,(1996: 259). The effect of testing on teaching and learning is known as backwash. (Hughes,

1989:1).The concept of washback is therefore part of what Messick (1995) calls consequential validity.

Other principles of language testing are authenticity transparency practicality and security.

Previous Studies

1} Unpublished M.A. “The effects of English Language Tests on English Language Teaching and Learning” by Ali Mattar Gumma Mohammad, (sept 2006)

He found that:

- 1- There are other methods of evaluation rather than testing such as observation and interview.
- 2- Testing is the best method.
- 3- Tests must have clear objectives.
- 4- It has been found that, tests differ from exams in their design, formality, objectives, length and level of students and period of time.
- 5- Testing is of vital importance to the teaching/ learning process as it motivates and leads students to better achievements.
- 6- Progress tests, that are held at any time during the school year, to test students in a specific area or generally, are equal of importance to final tests which are held annually at the end of the school year.
- 7- The goal of the test is not to seek for failures and the testers should not play the role of the leader to the frustration among students.
- 8- The quantity of the material that students learnt can be the key solution to how long should the test can be in any testing occasion.
- 9- Tests variation takes place at the levels of questions and their design so that the tester can involve all students in answering the tests questions.

10- It is very important for the tester to vary the items of the test in terms of eliciting behavior from candidates which will tell teachers about their language abilities what needed are the techniques which help the testers to find the way to elicit those behaviors.

The method of the previous study was: Descriptive content analysis .

Subjects: English Language teachers. They are selected randomly from North Kordofan State. Instrument: A structured questionnaire; closed. Data are analyzed statistically.

2} Unpublished M.A. “Teacher’s views and Practice of Language Proficiency Testing”, by Abbaker Ibrahim Babiur Haggar, (2011).

He found that:

- 1- Teachers always adopt approach or more approaches when designing a test.
- 2- Teachers are sometimes follow stages and methods of language tests.
- 3- Teachers sometimes use language on tests as compared to language used in real life.

Method of the previous study was: Descriptive and analytical.

Subjects: Are teachers in Najran Province – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Instrument: The questionnaire.

3} Unpublished M.A. “Investigating Reasons of Unsatisfactory Performance on Vocabulary Tests in Sudanese Secondary Schools”, by Majda Babiker Ahmed Abdul Kareem (2012).

She found that:

- 1- She found the English receptive vocabulary size of Sudanese secondary school students as measured by 1,000 words test falls within 1,000 frequency level.

2- The students who obtained higher marks in 1,000- word level also obtained higher marks in 2,000-word level and vice versa. These results confirmed the high correlation between the two tests which hits, 76.

3- There is statistical difference between means scores of Sudanese secondary school students in both tests (VLT 1,000-words: 23.24), VLT 2,000 words: (18.32). The differences are due to T.value which hits (6.65), 1,000 word level was better than in 2,000-word level.

4- Students vocabulary knowledge is relatively low at the 2000 word level, indicating that they will struggle to understand an average text.

5- The percentage of the words students remembering really low.

Method of the previous study was: Descriptive content analysis approach.

Subjects: They are teachers and pupils; from Almohandeseen secondary school, Omdurman.

Instrument: Nation's Standardized Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) and the teacher learning strategies questionnaire (TVLSQ).

4} A published paper "The Impact of Test Content Validity on Language Teaching and Learning." by Ahmed Gumaa Siddiek (2010)

He found that:

- 1- Teachers focus on teaching the examination techniques to help students collect as much marks as possible rather than doing real teaching to change the students' behaviour towards language learning.
- 2- Students did not refer to their textbooks but focused their efforts in learning how to do the exam rather than learning the language to use in real life situations.

- 3- The educational aims were not secured by the teaching of the syllabus imbedded in the textbooks. The result of this practices yielded poor attainment of national and personal pedagogical and educational goals.

Method of the previous study was: A critical and analytical approach was used by going through the examination samples, and then inferences will be made from the general discussions and interpretations of the work.

Subjects: Teachers and students.

Instrument: Table specifications.

Procedure

The selection of English language teachers at Basic Level Schools is made randomly in Khartoum State to answer the questionnaire which will be analyzed by SPSS to attain suitable results and findings.

Reliability of the Study

N of Cases = 40.0

Inter-item Correlations

Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
.0791	-.5031	.8230	1.3261	-1.6356	.0692

Reliability Coefficients 20 items

Alpha = .5489 Standardized item alpha = .6321

Analysis of the Study

The result of the questionnaire analysis indicated the following outcome.

Statement	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1- The 2018 Exam tests what is supposed to be tested which is correspondent to SPINE 3	Agree	37	92.5%
	Not sure	1	2.5%
	Disagree	2	5.0%
2- The 2018 Exam promotes the abilities of students' learning.	Agree	13	32.5%
	Not sure	8	20.0%
	Disagree	19	47.5%
3- The 2018 Exam is representative of true samples of the language skills in SPINE 3.	Agree	7	17.5%
	Not sure	5	12.5%

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	Disagree	28	70.5%
4- The 2018 Exam helps students to learn English in the future.	Agree	7	17.5%
	Not sure	5	12.5%
	Disagree	28	70.0%
5- The 2018 Exam promotes English Language teachers to modify ways of teaching.	Agree	12	30.0%
	Not sure	2	5.0%
	Disagree	26	56.0%
6- The 2018 Exam tests the achievement of the objectives of SPINE 3.	Agree	36	90.0%
	Not sure	1	2.5%
	Disagree	3	7.5%
7- The 2018 Exam covers all the skills of language in SPINE 3.	Agree	6	15.0%
	Not sure	5	12.5%
	Disagree	29	72.5%
8- The 2018 Exam is graded from easy to difficult.	Agree	37	92.0%
	Not sure	0	0.0%
	Disagree	3	7.5%
9- The 2018 Exam is consistent with the content of SPINE 3.	Agree	32	80.0%
	Not sure	6	15.0%
	Disagree	2	5.0%
10- The 2018 Exam encourages students to study SPINE 3.	Agree	26	65.0%
	Not sure	1	2.5%
	Disagree	13	32.5%
11- If the 2018 Exam was administered again, the students would get the same marks.	Agree	11	27.5%
	Not sure	11	27.5%
	Disagree	18	45.0%
12- The environment of the 2018 Exam was well prepared.	Agree	20	50.0%
	Not sure	10	25.0%
	Disagree	10	25.0%
13- The 2018 Exam time was enough to answer all the questions.	Agree	39	97.5%
	Not sure	0	0.0%
	Disagree	1	2.5%
14- Some teachers lack training in language testing.	Agree	33	82.5%
	Not sure	1	2.5%
	Disagree	6	15.5%
15- The markers of the test are well trained.	Agree	25	62.5%
	Not sure	10	25.5%
	Disagree	5	12.5%
16- The 2018 Exam had positive effects on teachers and learners.	Agree	22	55.0%
	Not sure	7	17.5%
	Disagree	11	27.5%
17- The 2018 Exam was fair for all test takers.	Agree	28	70.0%
	Not sure	8	20.0%
	Disagree	4	10.0%
18- The 2018 Exam procedures were well organized by the administration.	Agree	31	77.5%
	Not sure	5	12.5%
	Disagree	4	10.0%

19- The students were familiar with the layout of the 2018 Exam format.	Agree	34	85.0%
	Not sure	4	10.9%
	Disagree	2	5.0%
20- The 2018 Exam had provided teachers with a realistic picture of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses.	Agree	24	60.0%
	Not sure	3	7.5%
	Disagree	13	32.5%

Findings of the Study

- 1- The Basic Level School Certificate Exam 2018 tests what is supposed to be tested and it is correspondent to the contents of SPINE 3. Therefore, 2018 Exam is valid and the procedures of validity are ensured, fostered and applied adequately in the exam papers.
- 2- The Basic Level School Certificate Exam 2018 was graded from easy to difficult. The students are also familiar with the layout of the 2018 Exam besides the time allotted was certainly suitable for the test takers.
- 3- The receptive skill reading and productive skill writing are efficiently exploited while the negligence of the skills listening and speaking cause severe defect in learning English in the future and that will affect negatively in their competency in language knowledge and use.
- 4- Fortunately the 2018 Exam encourages students to study SPINE 3 and it is fair to all test takers but it doesn't promote English Language teachers to modify ways of teaching.
- 5- The environment and the preparations of the exam are not adequate; they need more efforts to be in a convenient and relaxed condition to enhance successful results.
- 6- The 2018 Exam has a negative backwash on both learners and teachers. Teachers lack training in language testing because teachers are not able to provide learners with clear and realistic picture about the students' strengths and weaknesses.

- 7- The 2018 Exam is comprehensive that covers the whole textbook of SPINE 3 Syllabus.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following suggestions:

- 1- It is very important to practise the language to test oral skills. This will encourage the pupils to practise the language.
- 2- The test should encourage the pupils to learn the language in the future and the syllabus of SPINE needs some modifications and additions to be adequate and cover the productive skills.
- 3- Teachers should be aware of the language testing and should have enough training to know how tests are designed.
- 4- Teachers insist on and stick to follow the same ways of teaching and didn't modify their ways of traditional teaching methods may be it is due to the similar formats of the test which are repeated several times every year. Hence, teachers should modify their old ways of teaching and substitute them with new modern methods while teaching.

Appendix (1)

Statement
1- The 2018 Exam tests what is suppose to be tested which is correspondent to SPINE 3
2- The 2018 Exam promotes the abilities of students' learning.
3- The 2018 Exam is representative of true samples of the language skills in SPINE 3.
4- The 2018 Exam helps students to learn English in the future.
5- The 2018 Exam promotes English Language teachers to modify ways of teaching.
6- The 2018 Exam tests the achievement of the objectives of SPINE 3.
7- The 2018 Exam covers all the skills of language in SPINE 3.
8- The 2018 Exam is graded from easy to difficult.
9- The 2018 Exam is consistent with the content of SPINE 3.
10- The 2018 Exam encourages students to study SPINE 3.
11- If the 2018 Exam was administered again, the students would get the same marks.
12- The environment of the 2018 Exam was well prepared.
13- The 2018 Exam time was enough to answer all the questions.
14- Some teachers lack training in language testing.
15- The markers of the test are well trained.
16- The 2018 Exam had positive effects on teachers and learners.
17- The 2018 Exam was fair for all test takers.
18- The 2018 Exam procedures were well organized by the administration.
19- The students were familiar with the layout of the 2018 Exam format.
20- The 2018 Exam had provided teachers with a realistic picture of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

Appendix (2)

..... : الاسم : رقم الجلوس :
 English Language : المادة : المدرسة :

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 Republic of the Sudan
 Khartoum State
 Ministry of Education

Basic Level Certificate Examination * March 2018

Subject : English Language Time : 2 ½ hours

Instructions

- 1- Write your name , index number and school in the spaces given above .
- 2- No extra paper will be given to you beside that you have .
- 3- Read the questions carefully before answering .

Q. No.	Marks	Marked by	Checked by
One			
Two			
Three			
Four (A or B)			
Total			

Question One : Language

(A) Put the verbs in the brackets in their correct forms :

- 1- Look ! The teacher (come)
- 2- My brother (go) to London two weeks ago.
- 3- Milk (be) white.
- 4- While we (play) , Ali fell down and broke his leg .
- 5- Our uncle (visit) us next week.

(B) Find the missing letter and write the word correctly.

- 1- It is very hot in sum__er . (.....)
- 2- English is my favourite s__bject .(.....)
- 3- Bicycles don't need fu__l . (.....)
- 4- The weather is very n__ce . (.....)

-1- Turn Over

Do not write inside this rectangle

(C) Match (A) with (B). No. 1 is done for you .

(A)	(B)	Answer
1. clean	a) building	1. f
2. winter	b) dangerous	2.
3. lion	c) disease	3.
4. modern	d) shirt	4.
5. malaria	e) food	5.
6. cook	f) dirty	6.
7. white	g) season	7.

(D) Choose the correct answer : a , b or c

- 1- Can you give a book, please? [a. my b. me c. I]
- 2- The river runs through a country. [a. rock b. rocky c. rocky]
- 3- Do you like stories? [a. reading b. read c. reads]
- 4- They go to work by car, they? [a. didn't b. don't c. aren't]

(E) Complete the questions to match the answers .

- 1- were you born? I was born in Khartoum.
- 2- old are you? I am 13 years old.
- 3- did you go to hospital? Because I was sick.
- 4- car is that? It is Ali's car.

(F) Join these sentences using the following words .

but - or - Although - and

- 1- It is hot sunny today.
- 2- Is your sister tall short ?
- 3- he was clever , he failed.
- 4- She tried to climb the wall , she fell down.

(G) Fill in each of the spaces with a suitable word from the list below :

at - on - through - by

- 1- The cat jumped the window.
- 2- We come to school foot.
- 3- Look the board, please.
- 4- They will travel bus.

Question Two : Comprehension

Read the following passage and then answer the questions below :

If you put some milk in a cup and add a spoonful of yogurt to it, the whole milk will turn into yogurt. And if you take another cup full of milk and put it in a warm place for a day, it will become sour. The question is that: what does make milk turn into yogurt in the first cup and sour in the second one? The answer is , bacteria. But what are bacteria?

Bacteria are the smallest living organisms. They are so small that they cannot be seen by the naked eye. If you want to see them , you must use a microscope. If you put one thousand bacteria together , they will be as big as a dot on a page.

Bacteria are found everywhere: They are found in oceans, rivers, the soil, dust, the air, our bodies, the bodies of animals, plants and in all living organisms. They are also found on the top of mountains and under the sea. Some bacteria are found in hot water at 75°F and other in ice.

There are two types of bacteria: useful and harmful bacteria. Useful bacteria turn milk into yogurt and do many good things for us. Harmful bacteria make milk and food go bad and cause many diseases in man, animals and plants.

(A) Give short answers :

- 1- What will happen to milk if you put it in a warm place for a day ?
.....
- 2- What makes milk turn into yogurt?
- 3- What must we use if we want to see bacteria?
- 4- According to the passage, how big is one thousand of bacteria?
.....
- 5- Are bacteria found in ice?

(B) Choose the correct answer a , b or c

- 1-The milk becomes sour because :
a. the place is hot. b. of bacteria. c. of yogurt.
- 2- Bacteria can be found in places . a. cold. b. hot. c. cold and hot.
- 3-The underlined word useful means :
a. helpful. b. careful. c. beautiful.
- 4- According to the passage there aretypes of bacteria.
a. four. b. five. c. two.
- 5- This passage is about : a. diseases. b. bacteria. c. yogurt.

(C) Mark the following statements , True (T) or False (F) :

- 1- Bacteria are the biggest living organisms. (.....)
- 2- Bacteria are found everywhere. (.....)
- 3- All bacteria are useful. (.....)
- 4- Some bacteria are found in hot water at 75°F. (.....)
- 5- Useful bacteria do many good things for us. (.....)



Question Four : Answer question (A) or (B) .

Question (A) Supplementary Readers

A Tale of Two Cities

(1) Choose the correct answer a , b or c :

- 1- Jerry Cruncher was a : a. robber. b. messenger. c. driver.
- 2- There was a Tellson's bank in: a. London. b. Paris. c. London and Paris.
- 3- Doctor Manette was in prison for: a. 8 years. b. 18 years. c. 80 years.
- 4- The author of 'A Tale of Two Cities' is :
a. Alexandre Dumas. b. Charles Dickens. c. Stephen Colbourn.
- 5- At the end of the story, who saved the life of Charles Darnay?
a. Sydney Carton. b. Mr. Lorry. c. Doctor Manette.



(2) Complete the gaps using the following words :

Monsieur Defarge - Mr. Barsad - Charles Darnay - Mr. Lorry - Gaspard

- 1- was the father of the dead child.
- 2- didn't have a family.
- 3- was tall and handsome.
- 4- was the owner of the wine shop.
- 5- had a crooked nose.



The Black Tulip

(3) Match (A) with (B) : No. 1 is done for you.

(A)	(B)	Answer
1. Cornelius De Witt	a) Jailer	1. e
2. The prize	b) servant	2.
3. Van Systems	c) prison	3.
4. Gryphus	d) Flower Society	4.
5. Lovenstein	e)gave Rosa a book	5.
6. Craeke	f) 100,000 guilders	6.

(4) Answer the questions :

- 1- What was the capital city of the Seven States?
- 2- What will the beautiful flower be called?
- 3- Who taught Rosa about reading?
- 4- Why did Isaac buy a telescope?
- 5- Were The De Witt brothers really good or bad men?





Question (B) Language

(1) Rearrange the following words to make meaningful sentences :

- 1- hard / work / I / very
- 2- speak / can / I / English
- 3- road / cross / Don't / the
- 4- a passport / have / You / must
- 5- tall / he / How / is / ?

(2) Cross the odd word like this (X). No. 1 is done for you :

- 1- malaria / disease / mosquito / ~~cat~~ .
- 2- travel / bus / shop / ship.
- 3- wheat / bread / flour / sugar.
- 4- chicken / meet / meat / egg.
- 5- engineer / teacher / school / lesson.

(3) Give the opposite of the following words:

- 1- big 2- good 3- dirty
- 4- beautiful 5- quiet 6- strong

(4) Letter writing :

Your name is Ali / Amal and you live in Medani , Al-Guba street.

Write a letter to your friend 'Rajab Oglue / Zahra Elsa' who lives in Turkey, Istanbul, 23 street , thanking him/ her for his/ her last letter to you and invite him/ her to visit you in Sudan. Tell him/ her that you will take him/ her to beautiful , green places in Gezira and many other interesting, historical places in Sudan.

Don't forget to sign your name at the end of the letter .

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