universitas bandar lampung
EDUCATION FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE

In Cooperation With

INDONESIA

INDIA

THAILAND

THAILAND

SINGAPORE

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

MALAYSIA

2nd ICEL 2014

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

20, 21, 22 MAY 2014
Bandar Lampung University, Indonesia
PROCEEDINGS

Hosted by
Teacher Training and Education Faculty (FKIP),
English Education Study Program, Bandar Lampung University (UBL)

PROCEEDINGS

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

2nd ICEL 2014

20 -22 MAY 2013

PREFACE

The activities of the International Conference are in line and very appropriate with the vision and mission of Bandar Lampung University (UBL) to promote training and education as well as research in these areas.

On behalf of the Second International Conference of Education and Language (2nd ICEL 2014) organizing committee, we are very pleased with the very good responses especially from the keynote speakers and from the participants. It is noteworthy to point out that about 80 technical papers were received for this conference

The participants of the conference come from many well known universities, among others: University of Wollongong, NSW Australia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kyoto University (Temple University (Osaka), Japan - Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India - West Visayas State University College of Agriculture and Forestry, Lambunao, Iloilo, Philipine - Bahcesehir University, Istanbul, Turkey - The Higher Institute of Modern Languages, Tunisia - University of Baku, Azerbaijan - Sarhad University, KPK, Pakistan - Medical Sciences English Language Teacher Foundation Program, Ministry of Health, Oman - Faculty School of Arts and Sciences, Banga, Aklan Philippines - Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Banten, - Pelita Harapan University, Jakarta - STIBA Saraswati Denpasar, Bali - University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta - Ahmad Dahlan University Yogyakarta - Sriwijaya University, Palembang - Islamic University of Malang - IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang - Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia - Universitas Haluoleo Kendari - State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung - Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi - Sanata Dharma University - Lampung University and Open University,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the International Advisory Board members, sponsors and also to all keynote speakers and all participants. I am also grateful to all organizing committee and all of the reviewers who contribute to the high standard of the conference. Also I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Rector of Bandar Lampung University (UBL) who gives us endless support to these activities, so that the conference can be administrated on time.

Bandar Lampung, 20 May 2014

Drs. Harpain, M.A.T., M.M
2nd lCEL 2014 Chairman

PROCEEDINGS

The Second International Conference on
Education and Language (2nd ICEL 2014)
BANDAR LAMPUNG UNIVERSITY
Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
May 20,21,22 2014

STEERING COMMITTEE

Executive Advisors
Dr. Ir. M. Yusuf S. Barusman, MBA
Prof. Dr. Khomsahrial Romli, M.Si
Dr. Lintje Anna Marpaung, S.H.,M.H
Drs. Thontowie, M.S
Dr. Andala Rama Putra Barusman, S.E., M.A.Ec
Mustafa Usman, Ph.D

Chairman
Drs. Harpain, M.A.T., M.M

Co-Chairman
Tissa Zadya, S.E., M.M

Secretary
Helta Anggia, S.Pd., M.A

Treasurer
Tissa Zadya, S.E., M.M

Managing Committee Team
Drs. Harpain, M.A.T., M.M
Helta Anggia, S.Pd., M.A
Tissa Zadya, S.E., M.M
Yanuarius Y. Dharmawan, S.S., M.Hum
R. Nadia R.P Dalimunthe, S.S., M.Hum
Bery Salatar, S.Pd
Kartini Adam, S.E
Nazil Chupra Hakim, S.Pd
Miryanti Feralia, S.Pd

Table Of Content

CAUSES OF PRIVATE TUTORING IN ENGLISH: PERSPECTIVES OF SAUDI SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

Ghazi N. Alotaibi

Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics and Translation Studies
College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University

Corresponding email: ghalotaibi@ksu.edu.sa

Abstract

The current study examined and described the views of secondary school students and their parents on the causes of private tutoring in English. These views were obtained through two group interviews with the students and parents separately. Several causes were brought up during the two interviews. These causes included difficulty of the English language, weak teacher performance, the need to pass exams with high marks, lack of parents' follow-up of student school performance, social pressure, variability in student comprehension levels at school, weak English foundation in previous school years, repeated student absence from school, large classes, as well as English teachers' heavy teaching loads. The study started with a description of the EFL educational system in Saudi Arabia and concluded with recommendations for the improvement of the school learning environment.

Keyword : Private Tutoring, Secondary School Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Private tutoring is a widespread phenomenon in many countries. It is a byproduct and a characteristic of certain educational systems which create an environment for its prevalence. This is the case in the educational system in Saudi Arabia, where private tutoring is on the increase despite government efforts to combat it. Private tutoring affects many subjects in the Saudi educational curriculum, although certain subjects take the lion's share of attention. One of these subjects is English as a foreign language (EFL). This is due, for the most part, to the importance of this language in future studies or work opportunities in Saudi Arabia.

The current study discusses the issue of private tutoring in relation to the subject of English, with a consideration of its causes and impacts on Saudi students' learning. To achieve this goal, the study utilizes two group interviews of students and their parents to find out what makes them resort to private tutoring and what impacts it has on themselves and their learning. The study starts with a review of previous research on the issue and a brief account of EFL education in the country.

Previous Research

According to Bray (1999), private tutoring is tutoring in academic subjects (such as language), is provided by tutors for financial gain, and is additional to mainstream schooling. Tansel and Bircan (2006) define it as education outside the formal schooling system, and they also link its purpose to financial gain. This financial gain, on the other hand, creates a financial burden on the students' families, as is the case in many countries. According to Dang (2007), for example, private tutoring in Vietnam is an essential part of the budget of the family. Ireson & Rushfort (2014) indicate that the degree of quality of public education as well as family income are directly related to the demand for private tutoring.

Many studies refer to private tutoring as part of what is called 'shadow education' (e.g., Lee et al., 2009; Bray, 2010). According to Bray (2010), this tutoring is described as shadow because it resembles a shadow of the mainstream education system in many respects. It exists because of the existence of mainstream education, it grows in size and orientation along with the main stream education, and attention of society is often more focused on mainstream than on the shadow. Private tutoring, or shadow education, is a big industry in many parts of the world, such as in Asia, and is growing fast in other parts, such as in Africa, Europe and North America (Bray, 2005). It is also a booming business in Saudi Arabia, as

suggested by many newspaper reports in the country. According to the Saudi Gazette (2013), private tutoring, including English language tutoring, has become a widespread trend, due to the change in curricula as well as the need of secondary school students to pass standardized and evaluation exams before they are accepted in college. The newspaper claims that it has become a chaotic situation where even non-qualified individuals are offering private tutoring and promoting their services through flyers everywhere. Another Saudi newspaper report emphasizes the fact that the Ministry of Education has clearly stipulated that it is against its laws for school teachers to offer private lessons to their students (Arab News, 2012). The newspaper quotes the spokesman for the Ministry of Education as saying: "This ban is issued because the government is unable to ensure the quality and level of the teacher's educational background." However, private tutors as well as students and their families continue to utilize private tutoring despite the official stance against it.

2. EFL EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

English is given high consideration in Saudi Arabia. It is believed that students need to learn to speak as well as write in English because it is not only an international language, but also an important factor in the development of the country. Saudi Arabia is one of the G-20 (group of twenty) major economies in the world, and it is therefore linked to these major economies by many factors, one of which is English. In order for Saudi Arabia to be competitive in trade, economics, education, and other related fields, businessmen, students, and politicians need to demonstrate a high proficiency in English.

English has been a compulsory course in Saudi public schools beginning from the sixth grade of the six-year elementary school until the last grade of the three-year secondary school. In other words, in public schools, students currently learn English for seven years, starting in the 6th grade and ending in the 12th grade. In each grade level students are taught English for an average of four periods a week, and each period lasts for 45 minutes.

English education in Saudi public schools has generally been considered unsatisfactory. Seven years of English teaching in public schools has almost no effect at all; many students can hardly utter or write a correct sentence, apart from one that has been learned by heart. Several researchers (Al-Ahaydib, 1986; Dhafer, 1986; Zaid, 1993) have reported problems which contributed to the lack of success in teaching English in Saudi Arabia. For example, Zaid (1993) indicated that teachers are given a very high English teaching load (20 to 24 hours per week), which may contribute to their poor performance. Dhafer (1986) also reported that English teachers are pressed to complete the prescribed curriculum in a specified short period of time. This makes their jobs harder, and further compounds the problems of poor performance and productivity, as Dhafer observed. He also found that teachers lacked some skills in English such as fluency, and needed to take advanced courses to help them perform better. This contributed significantly to the students' low level of achievement in the English language in Saudi public schools. Therefore, students and their families may resort to seeking help out of school through private tutoring.

3. METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

Two groups of six students in the third year of secondary school and four parents of those students were separately interviewed to elicit their views on English private tutoring. The sample was purposefully chosen to reflect views of those students who are potential users of private tutoring. Although the group interviews were meant to be open and unstructured, they were generally aimed at the participants' views on the causes and impacts of private tutoring. The researcher suggested the topics for discussion during the interviews, but asked few specific questions. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). During each of the interviews, the researcher recorded the interview and prompted the participants to say what they thought were the causes of their resorting to private tutoring, and what effects private tutoring had on students learning.

Because the format of the group interviews was open, some participants responded with more details, while others simply agreed with what had been said. The students and parents interviews lasted for approximately 40 minutes and 50 minutes respectively. After the interviews were completed, the researcher went through the audio recording and transcribed the two interviews by noting complete thoughts and useful information.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The content of the participants' responses in the two interviews was analyzed and coded. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), "coding is the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered" (p. 238). In coding the interview data, the researcher underlined or circled words, phrases or sentences that caught his attention and that had potential to serve as a category. This procedure enabled the researcher to gather information into categories or central themes, as explained below.

The participants in both the students and parents groups were eager to express their views about the causes and impacts of English private tutoring. Responses from both groups were compiled and central themes, or reasons, for private tutoring emerged from the data. These themes and a few significant responses from the two interviews are summarized and discussed below.

4.1. Students Group Themes

The interview with the students generally revealed three main themes, which included the difficulty of the English language, weak teacher performance, and exams.

4.2. Difficulty of the English language

The first reason for having a private tutor in English, which was clearly emphasized by almost all of the participants from the students' group, was the difficulty of the English language. When the researcher asked why they thought the English language was difficult, the response by most of the participants was that their English teacher "did not explain the lessons well." Another student referred to the difficult exams given by his English teacher, and that the students are unable to do well in these exams. It is evident from these responses that these students are clearly dependent on the teacher in their learning of English. This finding comes as no surprise in this teacher-centered educational environment, where the teacher generally dominates class time and the students are simply passive recipients. If this is coupled with weak teacher performance, as will be discussed next, no wonder why these students find it difficult to have a successful English language learning experience.

4.3. Weak Teacher Performance

The participants in the students' group referred to weak performance of their English teachers as a reason or cause for their resorting to private tutoring. One participant gives a clear diagnosis of this observation: "Our teacher is always exhausted when he comes to our class; he only turns pages in our textbook!" This observation can be explained by the heavy teaching loads that are put on the shoulders of teachers in Saudi schools, as indicated by Zaid (1993) mentioned above. These teachers are under enormous strain and find it hard to cope with these demands that are placed upon them. Therefore, they in turn relay this burden on the shoulders of the students. These teachers are unable to provide quality and carefully planned teaching to their students; they may rush lessons and do not provided detailed explanation. As a result, most of their students leave the classroom without much understanding of the content of their lessons. Consequently, they may develop ways to meet the requirements imposed by their teachers in order to pay off in the classroom situation (Williams & Burden, 1997). A key alternative that students may seek in order to make up for their lack of understanding is private tutoring.

4.4. Exams

The participants in the students' group indicated that their need to pass English exams with high marks makes them look for private tutors. One participant explained that their English teacher would give them difficult exams, and many students would therefore get very low marks. He further added that "the teacher takes this opportunity to offer private lessons to these students, and demand high charges." Another participant commented by saying: "We agree to take private lessons in order to get some idea of the format of the exam." It is clear here that one important cause of private tutoring for these students, which is apparently linked to other causes, as will be discussed later, is the exam-oriented teaching practices in Saudi classrooms. Some teachers, from within the same school or elsewhere, may take advantage of the students' need to pass the exams with high marks and offer private tutoring with high charges.

4.5. Parents Group Themes

The causes of private tutoring that were highlighted the most during the parents' interview included the following: lack of parents' follow-up, social pressure, student-related causes, and school-related causes.

4.6. Lack of Parents' Follow-Up

Most of the parents generally agreed that their not following up with their children's progress at school was a prime reason for their resorting to private tutoring. One parent went even further by stating that he looked for private tutors for their children who performed well in school. It seems that these parents wanted to hire private tutors not only to help students with low achievement, but also to free themselves of the burden of tracking their children's progress. To this effect, one parent stated: "I hire a private tutor in English for my son right from the beginning of the school year." He explained the reason by referring to his own lack of knowledge of the English language. Another parent supported this reason and added that his being too busy with his own business contributed to the lack of follow-up. It is clear again that some parents prefer to hire private tutors to make up for their lack of follow-up and poor communication with their children's school. Continuous parent-school communication helps track the students' performance progress, and allows for timely intervention from both the school and parents whenever needed.

4.7. Social Pressure

The participants in the parents' group referred to social pressure as a cause of hiring private tutors. As one parent put it: "Unfortunately, private tutoring has become a form of social show-off." He further explained that some families hire private tutors only because the other families in their social circle do so, indicating that private tutoring has become an accepted part of social life. According to Davies (2004), parents may use private tutoring as an affordable alternative to private schooling. They may do so with the purpose of gaining a certain social status, which Tansen & Bircan (2006) consider as a factor that influences the increased demand for private tutoring.

4.8. Student-Related Causes

A cause that was mentioned in the parents' group relates to students' classroom performance. One parent brought up the point of variability in student comprehension at school, and that it makes some students go for private tutoring. He explained that this variation is due to the utilization of private tutoring by some students and not all. "The other students take the one who receives tutoring as the norm," the parent added, "and put pressure on their parents to find a private tutor for them." Obviously, this cause is also linked to the social pressure mentioned above.

The parents' group also referred to their children's weak English foundation during intermediate school, and that it made them resort to private tutoring to meet the demands of English in secondary school. They also linked this weak English level to their children's repeated absence from school. It can be said, therefore, that there is an interconnection between all of these factors: the students cut classes, resulting in a decreased English level, and this in turn leads them to look for private tutors. Furthermore, it may also be the case that some students reach a point of thinking that as long as they can find someone to explain the lessons to them and help them pass examinations, they do not need to attend classes, except when they have to do so by school regulations. This is in itself a negative impact of private tutoring, as the students will focus only on examinations at the expense of acquiring useful knowledge at school.

4.9. School-Related Causes

The participants in the parents' group referred to large classes as a negative environment which eventually makes private tutoring an evitable solution. That is because in large classes, teachers cannot give individual attention to students who need additional help in English. One parent so eloquently explained that "if our students are not getting the attention they need at school, there is no point of sending them there. We could just go for private tutoring for them." There is validity in the position of these parents, as they expect a learning environment where the learning needs of their children are met. Obviously, these cannot be ensured in classes with a class size that reaches 30 students or above. Additionally, large class size may inhibit students from classroom participation and resultant learning. One parent explained that his son complained that he did not feel comfortable "raising a question in front of a large number of students." He further added that this student would ask more questions in front of a private tutor only. In a related study of teachers' perception towards teaching English in large classes, Bahanshal (2013) found that students were demotivated as they showed "no interest in either the lesson explained or activities presented by the teacher." (p.55)

Another school-related cause that was mentioned in the parents' group, which contributed to the increase of private tutoring, had to do with the school teachers of English themselves. Supporting the finding from the students' group above, the participating parents explained that the heavy teaching loads of

these teachers make them unable to provide quality teaching to their children. This negative situation is exacerbated if we add the class size factor mentioned above, which deprives students of the needed individual attention. One parent indicated that he would not go for private tutoring for his son had he received the needed attention at school. Explaining the diminishing quality of teaching at his son's school, this parent added that the tutoring his son "receives privately is far more effective than the lessons he gets at school." When the parent was asked why he thought these private lessons were more effective, he responded by referring to the easy-to-study summaries his son received as well as to the high marks he got in the English exams. This exam-focused evaluation of the quality of teaching gives an idea of the kind of learning which occurs through private tutoring. In most cases, this learning is superficial, as it is focused on studying summaries, not whole books, and it clearly enforces the study for exams, not to acquire knowledge of the subject matter.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The current study examined and described the views of secondary school students and their parents on the causes of private tutoring in English. These views were obtained through two group interviews with the students and parents separately. Several causes were brought up during the two interviews. The causes which were obtained from the students' group interview included the following: difficulty of the English language, weak teacher performance, and the need to pass exams with high marks. The parents' group interview, on the other hand, revealed the following causes: lack of parents' follow-up of student school performance, social pressure, variability in student comprehension levels at school, weak English foundation in previous school years, repeated student absence from school, large classes, as well as English teachers' heavy teaching loads.

Analysis of these causes showed a strong interconnection among them. For instance, large classes create a learning environment where individual students do not receive the attention they need for better classroom learning. Consequently, and given the exam-oriented teaching practices in Saudi schools, these students may not do well in English exams, and hence they end up looking for alternative ways to make up for their low achievement. A key alternative that is readily available to these students and is socially accepted is to find a private tutor. However, the results and discussion showed that most of these private tutoring lessons focused on exam-oriented summaries, indicating that only superficial learning occurs.

The results of the study indicate the need for a major intervention plan to rectify the school learning environment in order to make it more conducive to successful English language learning. Given the negative consequences of private tutoring, as obtained in the current study, it is incumbent upon the Ministry of Education, as well as any other educational institutions, to minimize as much as possible the causes of such phenomenon. One crucial factor that needs to be considered is the careful selection of competent teachers of English. In addition to strong qualifications and certifications to teach the language, these teachers should also be given in-service teacher training to equip them with up-to-date language teaching methodology. Schools should also ensure that class size is minimized to allow for more student participation as well as adequate teacher attention to the linguistic needs of individual students. Additionally, English teachers, as well as schools in general, should revise their teaching practices to avoid as much as possible the exam-oriented environment and allow for more real language learning to occur. This can be done through the adoption of classroom learning activities that can develop a liking for English as a language for enjoyment and communication, and not only as a subject that ends with an exam.
Limitations of the Study

The findings and conclusions of this study should be considered with caution. More studies that utilize other data collection methods such as questionnaires with a larger sample may reveal other interesting causes. Additionally, there is a need for more research studies that address other aspects of private tutoring in the Saudi context, such as the extent of this phenomenon, as well as a comparison between its positive and negative impacts on various levels educationally, socially and economically.

REFERENCES

[1] Abou-Rokbah, E. (2002). *Readiness for self-directed learning in Saudi Arabian students.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

[2] Al-Ahaydib, M. D. (1986). *Teaching English as a foreign language in schools of Saudi Arabia.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Kansas, Lawrence.

[3] Bray, M. (1999). The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Planners. *Fundamentals of Educational Planning, 61*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

[4] Bray, M. (2005). *Private Supplementary Tutoring: Comparative Perspectives on Patterns and Implications*. Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.

[5] Bray, M. (2010). Researching shadow education: Methodological challenges and directions. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 11,* 1, 3-13.

[6] Dang, H. (2007). The determinants and impacts of private tutoring in Vietnam. *Economics of Education Review, 26,* 6, 684-699.

[7] Davies, S. (2004). School choice by default: Understanding the demand for private tutoring in Canada. *American Journal of Education, 110,* 233-255.

[8] Dhafer, T. (1986). *A survey of the English language supervisors' and teachers' perception of the English language curriculum in Saudi Arabia.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Michigan State University, East Lansing.

[9] Ireson, J. & Rushforth, K. (2014). Why do parents employ private tutors for their children? Exploring psychological factors that influence demand in England. *Journal for Educational Research Online, 6,* 1, 12-13.

[10] Jeffery, F. (2012). Private tuition becoming an increasing trend among teachers: An Arab News Report. Retrieved March 3rd, 2014, from http://www.arabnews.com/

[11] Lee, C., Park, H., Lee, H. (2009). Shadow education systems. In G. Sykes, B. L. Schneider & D. N. Plank (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Policy Research* (pp. 901-919). New York: Routledge.

[12] Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[13] SAUDI GAZETTE REPORT. *EXPERTS CALL FOR STEPS TO REGULATE PRIVATE TUTORS*. RETRIEVED MARCH 3RD, 2014, FROM HTTP://WWW.SAUDIGAZETTE.COM.SA/

[14] Tansel, A. & Bircan, F. (2006). Demand for education in Turkey: A tobit analysis of private tutoring expenditures. *Economics of Education Review, 25*, 303-313.

[15] Williams, M. & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[16] Zaid, M. A. (1993). *Comprehensive analysis of the current system of teaching English as foreign language in the Saudi Arabian intermediate schools.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, Boulder.