Using local Beja language in English writing achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb City in Egypt

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Abstract

The current study investigated the effect of using the local Beja language in English as a foreign language writing achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb city in Egypt. The study followed the one-group pre-test – post-test quasi-experimental research design was adopted. Participants of the study were (8) eight pupils. They were chosen from Mohammed Fareed School at Abu-Ramad village in Halayeb city, Red sea governorate. The materials of the study included pre-post EFL achievement test, English Language Skills checklist, Quick Neurological Screening Test (QNS)T-test by Sterling et al and IQ test by Wechsler or Slosson. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to collect and analyze data statistically. Results of the study showed that there was an improvement in participants' writing achievement at level (0.5) by using the local Beja language. Recommendations of the study and suggestions for further studies were provided.

Key Words: The local Beja language & EFL writing achievement & learning disabilities.

Introduction

A language is means for communication and an understanding among people, communities, cultures, and nations. It is a medium of communicating and sharing information, desires, ideas, and emotions through uninformed produced symbols. emotions, thoughts, and concepts are related through language. It aims at preparing aspects of mental and linguistic growth and thought of means of memorialization and creativity. Therefore, it's that divine gift and only characteristic which the creator gives a human an exclusive creature.

English is one of the most widely spoken international languages. It is spoken all over the world. Many counters promote and encourage the study of English as a second or foreign language. As a distant language, learning English necessitates the acquisition of linguistic abilities such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening. It is necessary for students to achieve a high level of receptive comprehension. (Brown, 2000). Karn (2006, p.73) stated that English native speakers may sense that English only belongs to them, but honestly, it's become more possessions of the learners who use English and learn it as a second language. Therefore, it has become the primary communication language among most countries within the world. it's been used for the education field, economics, industry, and several other fields in life. English throughout the planet not only has become the primary language which uses for a selected purpose altogether field but also, it's become a lingua franc and therefore the English users throughout the planet became within the number quite speakers who consider that English is their mother tongue.

There has been rising attention and identification of children with learning difficulties in the previous two decades. Despite the growing interest, an accurate estimate of the problem's prevalence is still unavailable. Furthermore, most schools do not listen to their difficulties sympathetically. As a result, these kids are frequently labeled as failures. As a result, teachers should be aware. Menon

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(2016). Tlustošová (2006) The idea that someone has a learning disability does not imply that they are unable to learn. Individuals with learning disabilities, on the other hand, are frequently brilliant, even talented, yet they are sometimes characterized as dumb and foolish, or even lazy. However, they merely learn in various ways. Many people have ordinary or above-average intelligence; their problem is with information processing. Ghimire (2017) refers to "Learning disability" as a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, and reasoning ability. It usually shows up when a child has difficulty reading, speaking, writing, figuring out a math problem, communicating with parents, or paying attention in class.

Regarding writing disabilities, Dysgraphia is one of the common learning disabilities, Raja and Kumar, (2011) define it as a learning handicap that causes difficulties in composition and sentence structure . It is a learning disorder noticeable by primary difficulties

in learning to write, chiefly in forming sequences of words into text and sentences. Graham and Harris (2003)summarize many features and characteristics of it in the following point. First, they have difficulty in generating an idea and selecting their topics. The second point is that there is no advanced planning and engage knowledge telling appeared among them. Third, there is a lack in having important strategies for planning, producing, organizing, and revising the text. The fourth point is they have difficulty with mechanics interference with the writing process; emphasize mechanics over the content when revising and frequently their writing abilities.

Writing achievement for students with learning difficulties is often lower than that of their peers (Forgan & Vaughn, 2000). Writing is a key aspect of literacy, the acquisition and use of writing is important for academic, personal, and social development. Despite its importance, not all students develop competence in writing.

Problems with the acquisition and use of writing may be a characteristic of students who have difficulties in academic learning at school. Those who are described as having learning difficulties in writing may have problems with learning to write, or of writing effectively in different situations. These students may also have problems related to motivation and writing (Wyatt-Smith, Elkins, and Gunn, 2011). Therefore, learning disabilities are a very big challenge for schools and teachers. If the learning disabilities are ignored, unnoticed, and unanswered such children's needs are not met in regular classrooms or special education within the school; we cannot fulfill the aim of universalization of elementary education and equalization of educational opportunity (Shukla and Agrawal, 2015).

The effects of research and literature on utilizing the first language are divided into three categories: some researchers and students advocate for using students' mother tongue, while others advocate for using the primary language. There are however other studies and researchers who advocate the use of the L1 judiciously. Ekmekçi (2018) illustrated that several scholars believe the importance of using the first language and criticize the monolingual approach during which they believe that focus on language dominance creates tension between learners and teachers cause a psychological barrier, On other hand, other scholars are against the utilization of L1 and advocate the target language only policy arguing that monolingual classrooms enhance intercultural competence of scholars and students have the chance of maximum exposure to the target language. They state that separation and distinguishing L1 and L2 cause successful learning and, using L1 in teaching L2 is an obstacle for language learning; hence, it should avoid at the least cost. Additionally, to the students who advocate either bilingual (L1 and L2 use together), other scholars are arguing that flexible and balanced use of L1 in L2 learning contributes to the learning process.

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Using the primary language in an English classroom is one among the present issues on whether to use or not use students 'first language (L1) within the second language (L2) classroom have produced discussions gradually among researchers and language teachers for several years (Adnan et al. 2014). (Cole 1998) illustrated that the elementary use of the L1 is the most assistance for beginners and low-level students who have little or no knowledge about L2. It also contributes, for instance, to the main grammatical characteristics of l2, the main differences between L1 and L2, to save lots of tons of guessing, decrease the students' anxiety, and motivate them.

The Beja language may be a north Cushitic language, (Vanhove 2011) defined the Beja language that's "named bedawije-t by Beja people) is a type of unwritten language that has usually been categorized as sole members of the north a part of Cushitic of Afroasiatic phylums. it's mainly spoken within the Red Sea Hills in eastern Sudan by approximately 1,100,000speakers, also as by many speakers in northern Eritrea and southern Egypt There are various dialects of the Beja language, however, the Beja language is commonly divided into two dialects: one is still used in Sudan and is known as the southern dialect, while the other is known as the northern dialect and is spoken by Beshari people in the Halayeb, Abu-Ramed, and Shalateen districts.

Many benefits and advantages have resulted from integrating and employing local languages in English lessons, which will be outlined using the functional view of language. it is often seen as communicative resources drawn upon by classroom participants to realize some purposes for instance: Ideational functions: Providing basic- target language -proficiency students with access to the TL-mediated curriculum by switching to the students' local languages (LL) to translate or annotate, explain, elaborate, or exemplify TL academic content (e.g., drawing on students' familiar life/world experiences. this is often vital in mediating the meaning of

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educational texts which are written in an unfamiliar language—the TL of the students (Mahboob and Lin 2016). Further advantages of the primary language As an example, (Al-Hinai 2006, P1) highlighted some advantages of using L1 by summarizing researchers' ideas as below: 1. It reduces learner anxiety and creates a more relaxing learning environment, 2. It is a way of bringing the learners' cultural background into the category, 3. It facilitates checking to know and giving instructions, 4. It facilitates the task of explaining the meaning of abstract words and facilitates introducing the most differences in grammar and pronunciation between L1 and L2.

The acceptable use of the pupils' mother tongue to get a high achievement depends on their proficiency, which determines the quantity of English needed within the classroom and when to use or not use their maternal language. In their finding, (Kavaliauskienė, Mažeikienė, and Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė 2010)demonstrated that the utilization of the first language must support by altogether learners, but the quantity of the primary language required depended on the students' proficiency. Consistent with (Sharma 2006) necessity of the first language on the part of the scholars is dependent on their current language competence. Because of this, English as a foreign language contact in the classroom may be high or low depending on the students' proficiency. If the learners' proficiency is high, they should use English most time, and maternal language use does not assist them. Low-proficiency students, on the other hand, prefer to speak their mother language more frequently.

Therefore, the study attempted to use of the Beja language in English as a foreign language achievement, especially writing achievement with primary stage pupils with learning disabilities. It will eliminate ambiguities and misunderstandings, which the learner faces in English learning because of traditional teaching. Also, Local language in teaching and learning of the second language becomes a permanent part of the teaching field in many countries in recent years. therefore, the current research attempts to investigate

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the role of the local Beja language in English writing achievement at Halayeb city in Egypt. many studies illustrate that MT and native languages have a curial role in teaching and learning TL, thus making it easier for students to learn and achieve high levels in English subjects.

1.1. The problem of the study

The problem can be stated as follows:

Some Pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb city lack some of writing skills in English. They use the local Beja language in their classes independently. the problem of the research was identified in Halayeb primary school pupils' poor mastery of some English language skills: writing. Therefore, the current research attempts to improve writing English skills among Halayeb six-year primary stage pupils using a proposed program using their first language (the local Beja language) in English as a foreign language achievement.

1.2. the purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect of using (the local Beja Language) on the writing achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb City in Egypt

1.3. Questions of the study

Based on the above-mentioned problem, the study attempted to address the following question:

A- The main questions of the study:

1.3.1. What is the effectiveness of a program using local Beja language in developing EFL achievement of pupils with learning disabilities in Halayeb city?

B-This main question is divided into one sub-questions: -

1.3.1.1. What is the effectiveness of a program using local Beja language in developing writing achievement of pupils with learning disabilities in Halayeb city?

1.4. Objectives of the study

The current study aims at investigating the effect of Using local Beja language in English writing Achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb City in Egypt.

1.5. Hypotheses of the study

The present study hypothesized the following:

1.5.1. There would be statistically mean difference between the mean scores of the participants in the pre- post testing of English as a foreign language achievement test favoring the writing achievement post-test.

1.6. Delimitations of the study

The study is delimited to the following: -
1.6.1. The language area: Writing achievement skills.
1.6.2. Stage: primary stage
1.6.3. Place: Mohammed Fared School at Halayeb city, Red sea governorate-Egypt.
 1.6.4. participants (one group): the treatment group (primary 6) pupils with the learning disabilities.

1.7. Design of the study

The study follows the one- group quasi-experimental design.

Variables of the study

The variables of the study are :(1) the program using the local Beja language (independent variable), (2) English as a foreign language EFL achievement include writing achievement (dependent variable).

1.8. Instrumentations

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The study utilized the following instruments which designed and adopted by the researcher.

1.8.1. A program using local Beja language in EFL achievement (writing).

1.8.2. An English writing achievement test for pupils with learning disabilities in English (by the researcher).

1.8.3. English language skills checklist (writing skill checklist).

1.8.4. Quick Neurological Screening Test (QNST) (Kamel, M., 1989) to verify the sample.

1.8.5. Slosson Intelligence Test Revised Test (SIT-R) to select sample.

1.9. Procedures of the study

The study follows the following procedure.

1.9.1. Reviewing literature and related studies.

1.9.2. Selecting the sample primary stage pupils 6th year (due to teacher recommendation and   content analysis). Selecting and equalizing the members of the sample through:

1.9.2.1. Administering Quick neurological screening test to verify the sample.

1-9.2.2. Administering Slosson intelligence test Revised (SIT-R) to select the sample (IQ: 90).

1.9.2.3 Designing research instruments:

1.9.3.1. English (Writing) achievement test.

1.9.3.2. Program use the local Beja language.

1Establishing the validity and reliability of the instruments.

1- Pre-testing the study group.
2- Post-testing the study group.

3- Analyzing date statically by SPSS.

4- Discussing the results in the light of the study questions and hypotheses.

5- Interpreting the results in the light of the literature review and related studies.

6- Providing conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

1.11. Findings of the study

1.11.1. The first hypothesis

To investigate the first hypothesis:

"`There would be statistically mean difference between the mean scores of the participants in the pre- post testing of English as a foreign language achievement test favoring the writing achievement post-test.

Analysis of the obtained date using the wilcoxon signed rank test showed that treatment group achieved a higher level of improvement in the post test of English language achievement.

Results confirmed the hypothesis. Table (1) presents the analysis of the date obtained on the post test of the treatment group on the English language achievement test.

(Table 1)

Level of statistical significance	"Z" value	Total grades	Average grades	N	Group
Function at 0.01	2.536–	0.00	0.00	0	Negative grades
		36.00	4.50	8	Positive grades
				0	Neutral
				8	Total

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The following table shows that the value of the treatment group in the pretests in the two parts of the test. The test was found significant; writing test value is (2.539). This improvement may be because of using the local Beja language in English writing achievement.
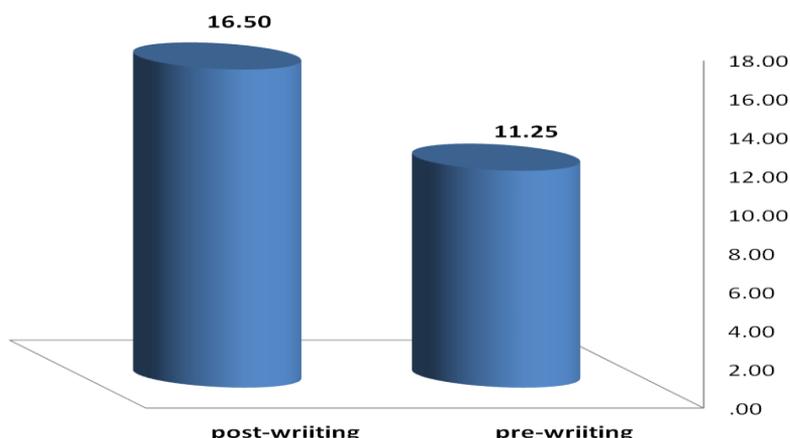

Figure (2) Differences between treatment group in the writing pre-post testing on using the local Beja language in EFL achievement.

The above table shows that there is an improvement in the level of the treatment group in the post test due to the use of the local Beja language because the mean of the post-test is (16.50) and the mean of the pretest is (11.25). The mean of the post test is higher than that is the pre-test. Indicating a "z" value of (2.539), this is proving that there is a statistically significant difference at (0.01).

Discussion

The main aim of the present research was to investigate using the local Beja language in English as foreign language writing achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities at Halayeb city in Egypt. Researching mother tongue's uses in English

classroom has been a topic for various studies such as (Phillipson 1992), (Tang 2002), (Cook 2001), (Samadi 2011), (Cook and Hall 2012), (Laguarda and Woodward 2013), (Sali 2014), (Ohyama 2018), (Mansor 2017). A key resulted obtained from the English language achievement test by using the Local Beja language is the general development of the two skills of the test (Reading and writing). This result highlighted the value of the first language use (The local Beja language) in developing language achievement.

In general, the previous results point out that the use of the local language program is highly effective, this is consistent with studies that showed and emphasized the importance of the use of the first language in teaching and learning the English language in the classroom, such as (Atkinson 1987), (Wells 1999), Cook (1991), (Auerbach 1993), Tang (2002), (Butzkamm 2003), (Miles 2004), Sharma (2006).

The result agrees with studies, For instance, (Alshammari 2011) conducted a study that investigated the use of native Arabic in English classes at two Saudi technical colleges. results of the study indicated that balanced and careful use of Arabic in the EFL classroom seems not to affect the students" exposure to the target language. It can also be beneficial in the learning process and may be needed to increasing comprehension. The finding of the study conducted by Huerta& Kephart (2009) indicated that although the first language use was uncommon in the classes observed, it can serve as an important pedagogical tool.

(Hussein 2013) conducted a study to investigate and analyze the actual reasons, attitudes, and purposes for using the mother tongue (Arabic) in teaching English-as-a-second language to Arab students enrolled in English courses as a university compulsory requirement for the study of English language and literature at Jordanian private and government-aided universities. The results reveal that virtually all the respondents believe that using Arabic in the English classroom is necessary since it aids students in understanding new or complex terms, explaining complicated

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grammatical principles, and saving time. The study also reveals that denying kids the ability to use their mother language will hinder them from having some chances.

Such line with various other research, pointing to First language functions which included convey meaning, explaining grammar, organizing class, explaining the meaning of words, and giving instruction especially for beginners and low achievers learners to confirm that most learners understand what is required of them(Cole 1998), Cook2001, Tang2002, Atkinson 1987) and to offer definition, clarify complex ideas and also to present a translation from mother tongue to the target language. (Morahan 2010), (Tang 2002).

In another study, (Koucká 2007) examined L1 use by teacher trainers. Her study indicated that teacher trainers used the L1 too frequently. She also determined that the teacher trainers used L1 in fourteen different situations such as, introducing the aim of the lesson, introducing the next activity (transition), explaining the meaning of some phrases, practicing the use of some phrases, doing translation, explaining some grammar points, explaining some complex concepts, asking questions, checking pupils´ understanding, giving instructions (organizing, Management), giving suggestions on how to learn more effectively, motivating and evaluating, and providing feedback. The study also indicated that the L1 was employed more when giving instructions and translating new words than in any other situation.

Sharma (2006) conducted a study of the usage of the Nepali language in Nepal's secondary schools. The study focused on the frequency of L1 use as well as the attitudes of teachers and students about L1 use. The study showed that students used their L1 more commonly than teachers (ranging from 52-64%). Only one percent of the students desired their teachers to use their L1 frequently throughout class. Due to differing points of view, the investigation produced some conflicting results among students. The L1 should

be utilized in around 5% of class time, according to about 46% of the students. Nonetheless, the study found a negative correlation between the learners' desires and their actions, as they tended to use their native language more than they had wanted. The study also revealed that many respondents prefer to use their first language in an English language classroom on occasion for a variety of reasons, including clarifying the meaning of difficult words, explaining grammar, establishing close relationships between students and teachers, and more. It also revealed that students learn English more effectively when they use their first language.

This study, consistent with other studies suggests that there is a connection between the L1 learner's proficiency levels and the usage of the language classroom. As Cole (1998) asserts that L1 is particularly suitable at the beginning and low levels, if students have little or no familiarity and knowledge of the target language, L1 can be used to introduce the main distinctions between L1 and L2, and the main grammatical differences of L2 that they should be aware. And the lower-level students can use it in translating individual words, explaining grammar use, and facilitating complex instructions can save time and anguish, especially for mature students. Sharma (2006) also highlighted that learners' need for L1 is dependent on their current language proficiency and reveals that students at government-aided schools have a greater desire for their mother tongue than students in private boarding schools.

(Norman 2008)conducted a study in Japan with university students, and his findings revealed that proficiency in the L2 affected the sight of L1 use in the classroom. He found that while most participants preferred some L1 use and desire to speak their mother tongue in EFL classroom and teachers need to look more carefully at the EFL level of the students in their classes when contemplating what amount of mother tongue to use, there was variance in preference with more advanced learners preferring less L1 use than less of lower levels. The less advanced groups revealed a greater desire for teachers who shared their L1, while the opposite

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was true for the more advanced learners. The study also points out that with learners of limited proficiency, the learners' L1 is useful to introduce differences between the L1 and the TL, drawing attention to and raising awareness of L2 grammatical features. However, it was also suggested that this may have the negative effect of encouraging learners to become lazy, to make little effort in learning the TL, losing teacher L2 input, and risk-reducing the chances of developing learners' listening skills.

(Al-Nofaie 2010) investigated Saudi instructors' and students' views on using Arabic as a supplementary language in English classrooms. the study's findings suggest that participants prefer to use Arabic with pupils who have a poor level of competence. this method was typically effective, when defining new vocabulary items, clarifying grammatical concepts, and providing test directions. The findings also indicated that the teachers' and students' views about utilizing Arabic were usually favorable. Instances and for various reasons, the participants chose to use Arabic. Miles (2004) also emphasizes the need of using L1 to teach grammar, especially to lower-level students, to prevent a potential lack of comprehension on the side of the students.

The findings of the study conform with the results of many previous studies, which show that the amount of mother tongue use in English classes is determined by the subject of the lessons. (Bateman 2008)and, the lesson content provided to students in the English classroom is a variable that can impact first language use in the English classroom, according to (Duff and Polio 1990). As a result, instructors must utilize more L1 in some types of classes, such as reading and writing lessons, which need more LI than other skills, and must use it by their responsibilities or instructional objectives.

(Algazo 2018) suggest that lessons in which the teacher has both the role of providing explanations and are also the main source of information (e.g., grammar lessons) need more L1 use than

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lessons in which the teacher has less of a role as the main source of information (e.g., listening and speaking lessons). This is because the former type of lesson requires the teachers to explain and provide rules, give examples and details, conduct comparisons between the L1 and L2. Teachers may find L1 to be a beneficial teaching tool that helps them to achieve their teaching goals or overcome challenges, e.g., students' misunderstandings. The same conditions prevail during reading lessons, during which teachers strive to ensure that their students understand the texts, comprehend new words and key concepts. Thus, even during reading lessons, teachers may provide some clarifications by translating or giving L1 equivalents for some words and concepts.

(Kim and Petraki 2009) conducted research at a Korean school in Vietnam to evaluate students' and instructors' views on the usage of L1 in EFL courses. In the Asian setting, little research has been doing on English language instruction in multiple language classrooms. He also claims that L1 performs a supporting function in the language classroom, particularly in the early stages and, more importantly, in the advanced stage in reading and writing. While native speaker English language instructors highlighted the necessity of utilizing L1 exclusively, Korean students agreed with Korean teachers on the use of L1. L1 showed to be beneficial for teaching word meanings and grammar explanations, but in pair and group work activities, it was founding to be ineffective.

Overall, the result of the study supports the findings of previous studies that consider the role of the L1 as necessary and tend to use it in English classrooms.

Conclusion

The above findings show that using the local Beja language was effective in improving English writing achievement of primary stage pupils with learning disabilities and in writing achievement. This may be due to various reasons involving the effective design of the program, the appropriate use of the Beja language, and present

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writing lessons content in providing with the local Beja language. All of these motivated the pupils to take part in learning and become more reflective, creative, and responsible for their learning.

1.12. Definitions of the terms

The following terms are interrelated and can be defined as follows: -

1.12.1. Beja language: -

According to (Hudson 1964) the Beja language is classed as a Cushitic, as related to other Cushitic languages include Somali, Bilin, Agau, and Siddamo, all of them spoken in "Horn" of Africa. They related to another language-group including Berber, Egyptian, and Sematic"".

1.12.2. Learning disabilities:

Kirik (1962) defines a learning disability as "a retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, arithmetic or other school subject resulting from a psychological handicap caused by a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbances. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation or culture or instructional factors." (p263).

1.12.3. Local language:

Malone (2016) defines the local language as Language spoken by people (usually their mother tongue) in a limited area and that may not be used or understood by people outside that group. Not usually used in reference to the dominant language.

1.12.4. Achievement:

Johnson (2005) defines that "achievement is accomplishing whatever goals that are set for own self. It is not necessary earning a

lot of money. Achievement is doing what is wanted to do within the bounds of the law"(P.31)

1.12.5. Writing achievement

Al Asmari1 (2013) defines that Writing achievement "as expressing one's ideas in written form in a second or foreign language, and doing so with reasonable accuracy and coherence"(P.132)

1.12.6. The local Beja language:

The term is procedurally defined as a language spoken and used in three areas which are Halayeb, Abo- Ramed, and Shalateen city in the southern part of Egypt. It is considered one of the Beja northern dialects taking in Besharia area in Egypt which differ from the southern dialects spoken in Port Sudan. There are no communication problems between the speakers of these dialects. The speakers of the local Beja language consist of more than 20,000 in Halayeb city in Egypt.

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