A CENTURY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SUDAN

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Abstract:

This Article is a historical review about English language in Sudan. The writer gave a detailed description for the syllabuses used, text books and the teaching methods applied in the different eras.

English language learning was started when the British occupied the Sudan. The first syllabus was mainly Egyptian Readers; the teaching method was the grammar Translation Method. Students were motivated to learn English, as with English language they could get governmental jobs.

After the First World War, there was a change in the educational objectives and consequently a change took place in the English language syllabus. The New Method Readers were introduced and the Direct Method was adopted.

When Gordon Memorial College was up-graded from a secondary school to a university college, Cambridge School Certificate was revised and a new syllabus designed which advocated the teaching of the four skills and translation. Latter other developments were made to reinforce the reading skill. The Direct method that was previously used changed to a rather an eclectic approach.

By the late 1930s, the change of teaching/learning theories lead to change to the Oral Approach which concentrated on the teaching of structural patterns and the development of oral skills rather than the teaching of vocabulary. New texts were added to the syllabus and the Audio-Lingual Approach was used.
The complains about the law standard of English never stopped. The call for a national syllabus was also raised after the Independence of the country, as well as, for using Arabic instead of English as a medium of instruction. There was always a search for an appropriate syllabus.

By the early 1980s The Nile Course was introduce as a book written specially for Sudanese learners. The Nile Course, which adopted the Communicative Approach, was used for about fifteen years; and then, and for the first time a national syllabus [SPINE] came into existence. SPINE, which was mainly communicatively written was fairly based on the Eclectic Approach. The book is still in schools.

In 1898 the British occupied the Sudan. As a result, English Language found a foothold in a land that was dominated by the Arabic Language. The teaching of English began with the beginning of the Condominium regime and secular education also began at the cost of Islamic religious education. The British wanted to create an English speaking class who would take minor jobs in the government and to have translators 'who would act as intermediaries between the British and the local people' (Holt 1979). Therefore the use of English was limited to a small section of the educated elite.

Students were highly motivated to learn English as with English Language they could join the Government, have a good chance of promotion and social prestige. The fact that English was the official Language a knowledge of which helped a Sudanese to join the Government led to 'a rising standard of English. Furthermore in the 1950s when Arabicisation was though of, English was also seen as a vehicle for acquiring knowledge. As Durham (cited in Sandell. Ibid.) explained; the first schools had their primary object the production of junior Sudanese clerks for
government service. And they had to know English. This utilitarian need for English has gradually broadened out in the last fifty years and although the desire to get a Government job is a very high incentive to boys to get into the Intermediate and Secondary schools in order to learn English, there is now genuine desire to be in contact with the ideas of the western world through the medium of English. Colloquial Arabic is the Language of the home. Classical Arabic is the language of the inherited culture and religion. English is the language by which a Sudanese can get to know the West and its culture and by which he can meet many ideas, especially in scientific and technical subjects, not available to him through Arabic books.

From the beginning of secular education English was taught at the primary school by Egyptians and Syrians until Sudanese graduated from Gordon Memorial College and started to replace the Egyptians and Syrians. At the College students learned English for six hours a week in the first and second years which was 18% of the weekly time table hours. In the third and fourth years they learned seven hours a week, which was about 21% of the time table hours. English language books taught at the primary schools in the 1920s were:

1. The Egyptian Reader.
2. The Literary Reader - 2nd Primer.
3. The Egyptian Reader - part 11.
5. Egyptian Reader - Part 11.
7. Egyptian Reader - Part 1V.
8. Royal Reader - No. 11 - 1st. series.
9. The primary Grammar (by Smith and Philip).
The syllabus aimed at the teaching of English penmanship reading, recitation (of English verse), dictation, grammar and translation.

However the change of educational objectives after the First World War lead to a change in the syllabus (Bashier, M.1969). A commission that scrutinized Gordon college stated the importance of English Language at the higher studies of the college and the necessity of complete knowledge of English among the students as English was essential for their subsequent Life-works. Accordingly the commission which was dissatisfied with the standard of English at the college made a number of suggestions (Bashier, M. O. Ibid.):

1. Enlargement of student's knowledge of modern English.
2. Special practice in speaking and idiomatic language for teacher.
3. A kind of English according to the career which the pupil proposes, i.e. English for a special purpose (E. S. P.).
4. The use of English as communication, i.e. communicative language.
5. Linking composition with the reading texts.
6. Reading books of modern style of English, i.e. in received Pronunciation (R. P.).
7. Grading the writing activities focusing on paragraph writing instead of essay writing.
8. Appointment of an English master of modern methods of study and teaching of languages.

**In response to the above suggestions the government took a number of measures:**

1. Increase of English Language teaching hours.
2. Increase of English Language marks of the entrance examination for Gordon Memorial College.
3. A special training course for English language teachers at the primary schools was held.

4. Mr. V. L. Griffiths, the head of the English Language unit at the college, was sent to England on a phonetics course.

5. A review of the whole of the English syllabus was carried out and the Michael West series of New Method Readers and composition was adopted.

   According to Sandell (op. cit.), although not all the committee's recommendations were adopted because of different reasons such as lack of the right staff, the most significant change that took place was the implementation of the Michael West New Method Readers and Composition. Those series of readers continued to be used in Sudan schools for almost half a century before they were replaced by other texts. They also created a good reputation among Intermediate school teachers as well as pupils (Abu Shunab, M. H.1982).

   It is not an objective of this essay to give details about syllabuses or their designs, therefore only the major features of the New Method Readers will be mentioned here.

   **The New Method Readers:**

   **Objective:**

   The main objective of the New Method Reader was to teach students to read.

   **Syllabus:**

   The readers comprised a series of seven books Each of the books was divided into chapters which in their turn were divided into sections. Each section was meant to be a class lesson. At the head of each section new vocabulary was introduced in bold type. At the end of each chapter the total number of words covered by the book was clearly stated. On the final pages of each book there were
comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises and some writing activities (composition).

**The companion:**
Each book on the series was accompanied with a companion; a bilingual list of all the new words in the parallel reading text book.

**Supplementary Readers:**
Other accompanying books were supplementary readers which were intended for reading for pleasure and therefore contained no new words.

**Vocabulary:**
The New Method Readers vocabulary was based on the General Service List which was selected by Michael West himself and others in 1936. His dictionary 'New Method Dictionary' comprises the same list.

**Method:**
The method of teaching was the Grammar Translation Method. Grammar was taught and translation, when teaching reading, was allowed specially at the lower stages of school.

**A CHANGE TO UNIVERSITY LEVEL:**
The 1937 committee’s recommendation, a committee which was invited to evaluate the Gordon College, of up-grading Gordon Memorial College from a secondary school to a university college lead to the adoption of a special revision of Cambridge School Certificate and consequently a new syllabus was designed. The New Syllabus advocated:

1. **Reading:** For the study of words and constructions and also for information appreciation and for pleasure. This involved both silent and loud reading.
2. Writing: Composition writing was graded; teaching the student to write a sentence, a paragraph, a composition and finally an essay. Students were also taught note-taking, report writing, petitions writing and précis.

3- Listening and Speaking: Students were given speech drills on common errors in vowels and consonants. They also did dictation.

4- Translation: Translation was done from English into Arabic for the first two years and into both languages at the third and fourth years.

When John Bright was appointed warden of the College in 1939, he introduced many developments into the English syllabus. To meet the changes he made, he wrote some books; of which are:

a. English Composition for Overseas students.
   This was based on his analysis of the kind of composition to help students pass the examination.

b. English Language for School Certificate.
   This was to help students acquire the language content required for the examination.

Bright’s development of the syllabus gave great support to extensive reading. Students were to read class libraries and were expected to perform at the drama productions that were arranged. Students were to do group work on research essays which were to be presented orally as well as in written form.

The Direct Method that was previously used changed to some sort of an eclectic method where grammar became a small part of the syllabus and teachers concentrated on the teaching of reading and on improving the oral and writing skills (expressing skills).

**Direct Method:**
The Direct Method is a method that refrains from using the learners' native language and just uses the target language. Consequently no translation was used and classroom instructions were conducted exclusively in the target language.

**Prominent features of the direct method were:**
- Teaching concrete vocabulary through pantomiming, realia and other visuals
- Abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas.
- Teaching grammar was inductively (i.e. having learners find out rules through the presentation of adequate linguistic forms in the target language).
- Centrality of spoken language (including a native-like pronunciation)
- Focus on question-answer patterns
- Teacher-centeredness
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.
- Oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression, organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- New teaching points are introduced orally.
- Both speech and listening comprehensions are taught.
- Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized

**A CHANGE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES:**
On the other hand Bright criticized the West 'New Method Readers' and introduced Plamer' New Method Practice Books series. The implication of this change was the change of the teaching method to the Oral Approach which concentrated on the teaching of structure rather than on the teaching of vocabulary.

'When we learn to speak or to write a foreign language, we do two things:
1. We learn the words of the language and how to put them together to form sentences.
2. We form the right language-learning habits, of which there are four:
   The first habit is to observe correctly what is said or written. The second is to imitate correctly what is heard or read. The third habit is to associate the words with what they mean. The fourth habit is to form sentences on the analogy of sentences already learnt.

Those Practice Books were designed in such a way as to cause the pupils not only to learn English words and sentences but also to form such language-learning habits.

**The Audio-lingual Method:**

The method is based on the behaviorist theory that certain stimuli create certain response, which when positively reinforced would be likely to happen again and become a habit. Language mastery is represented as acquiring a set of appropriate language stimuli-response chains. According to this method the learning of language entails mastering the elements of the language and learning the rules by which these elements are combined. The primary medium of language is oral: speech is language. Speech has a priority in language teaching; as children generally learn to speak before they learn to read or write. Hence this method focuses on speech and the other skills - reading and writing - come later on the learning process.

**The principles of the audio-lingual method are:**
- Speech before writing.
- Memorization of conversational sentences.
- Establishing the patterns as habits through pattern practice.
- Teaching the sound system by demonstration, imitation, contrast and practice.
- Vocabulary control.
- Teaching the problems; those patterns that show structural differences between the mother tongue and the target language.
- Grading and teaching patterns step by step.
- Practice should occupy most of the student's learning time.
- Immediate reinforcement of successful responses.
- Teaching the meaning content of the target language in terms of the culture in which it has developed.

**Teaching activities:**

Dialogues and drills are the bases of audio-lingual classroom practice. They are used to contextualize key structures, also for memorization. Different kinds of drills are used for straightforward repetition to those which force students to make different kinds of substitution or transformation.

The teacher's role is central and active in this approach. The teacher, usually described as an orchestra leader, is supposed to dominate the learning process. **S/he:**

- models the language
- controls the direction and pace of learning.
- monitors and corrects the learner's performance.
- chooses relevant situations to practice the structures.

The audio-lingual method was criticized because students were often found unable to transfer patterns acquired inside the classroom to real communication outside. In addition, many found
the experience of studying through this method to be boring and unsatisfying.

In order to help students write compositions after starting with an oral activity based on actions performed by the teacher, Bright wrote his book 'Junior English Composition'. For extensive reading a set of supplementary readers was introduced.

The result of all the changes seemed to be a considerable improvement of standards which were reflected in the students' examination result.

That Intermediate school syllabus of English language continued to be taught for a good number of years. In fact it was taught up to the late 1970s when it was replaced by the New Integrated Longman English (NIL E ) Course.

**A CHANGE IN THE EDUCATION POLICY:**

However, the most drastic change that affected English Language in Sudan was the suggestion made by the Sayyedien Committee. This Committee which was assigned to review the educational policy after the Independence of the country suggested that the language of instruction to be changed from English to Arabic. In fact the question of Arabicization was a controversial issue. Some viewed it as 'a national esteem' (Bashier, M. O. op. cit); while others thought it wiser to continue using English at least for some time. Nevertheless, for many different reasons Arabicisation took place only in 1965. Many educators tried to list some of these reasons that delayed the implementation of Arabicization (e.g. Abu Shunab, M. H. op. cit.). The following points are taken from different sources:

1. English was the official language.
2. Most secondary school teachers were British.
3. Secondary education prepared students for either employment or for higher education where English was used.
4. Arabic textbooks on different subjects were neither available nor were they prepared.
5. Many influential educators were against it (Howkes in Sandell).
6. Cuts in educational expenditure.
7. Expansion in education resulting in greater shortage of staff.
8. Exodus of Sudanese teachers to other professions, such as diplomacy.

A SEARCH FOR A SYLLABUS:

After the Independence of Sudan in 1956, the standard of English was questioned again. Concerned people (as in Fadil, H. N. 1975) thought that English standard was unsatisfactory. To overcome the problem of falling standard some measures were taken, among which were to send teachers of English to Britain on training courses. On the other hand the Higher Teacher Training Institute (H.T.T.I.) was established in order to qualify teachers to teach at the secondary school level.

However, complaints about the drop of English standard were still raised, which made some bodies concerned discuss the issue. In 1966, a conference at the Extra Mural Studies of the University of Khartoum (U. of K.) discussed the issue of falling standard, among other issues concerning English. The conference noted the problems of lack of objective, untrained staff, lack of a coherent syllabus, a gap between the intermediate and secondary syllabuses, the irrelevant non-Sudanese flavour books and the change of mood towards English. (Conference Proceedings 1966).

In 1969, another conference was held at Port Sudan. After discussing the different aspect of the teaching of English in Sudan, the conference drew up a new structural provisional syllabus in
which Ronald's books 'A course of English Study' was decided for the secondary schools. The books which followed the structuralism approach contained reading passages followed by explanations of vocabulary as well as structures. Based on the explained structures there were written as well as oral exercises. (Mackin 1975).

Ronald's books were used on the early 1970s; but still by the late 1970s the need for a better syllabus was felt.

Another text book used in the 1970s was 'A Graded Secondary School English Course' by Etherton. (Etherton 1965). Most teachers taught Ronald's on the first year and Etherton's for the second and third years; for 'teachers were left free to teach whatever books available' (Hamed El-Nil op. cit.). Etherton's series contained four books, the main aims of which were (Etherton 65):

1. Interest is awakened by use of suitable and self-contained passages in each chapter. The subjects are varied and stimulating for both boys and girls. This we seek to improve the pupil's spoken and written English.

2. The necessary basic grammar has been covered, with special attention to tenses of verbs, the use of prepositions, common sentence patterns...etc. In addition pupil's are led to appreciate that expression (whether oral or written is a definite craft. A careful study and intention of this craft will lead to an improvement in work.

3. The most common errors of vocabulary and expression made at this level have been dealt with throughout the exercise. ........ and then moves on to deal with all aspects of the school certificate syllabus. In the process, attention has been paid to the needs of pupils who will sit for the Qualifying Test.'
As mentioned by the Ministry of Education (M. of Ed.) circular in 1979 the final year of the secondary school syllabus was:

1. **English Language:**
   b. Hashim Awad: A Background science Readers Multiple Choice Comprehension for school Certificate.

2. **English Literature:** Two of the following (one novel, one play):
   a. George Siminon: Maigret goes to school (Abridged Series).
   b. Paul Gallico: Flowers for Mrs. Hurris (Abridged series).
   c. George Bernard Shaw: Arms and the Man.
   d. Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest.

As its title suggests: 'Objective English Tests' which was written "only for use of the Sudan Ministry of Education" comprises twelve objective tests. The author mentions that they are:

1. Progressively more difficult.
2. Simple to mark.
3. Provide clear guide to the level of attainment of pupil.
4. deal primarily with common areas of students language weakness.
5. Useful guide for teachers to make their own tests.

The book doesn't contain written compositions exercises but the author believed that (Etherton 1968):

'The ability to write a composition depends upon the pupil's knowledge of the structure of English sentences, his skill in using verbs and his mastery of the use of prepositions, adverbs... etc. An
objective test can measure his ability in each of these skills, and if we test the more significant skills in one objective test there will be a high correlation there between score obtained in the whole test and any score obtained from a test of conventional composition. In practice we never find that a pupil who can write a good composition gets low marks in objective tests which are properly constructed. Conversely, we find in practice that the pupil who does badly in an objective test also does badly in composition, it is possible, then, to dispense with composition for testing purposes because an objective test of the separate skills involved in composition brings a result just as reliable as that gained from a test composition.'

The fourth books of Hill's series of 'outline composition book' which the Sudanese secondary school students used had the following objectives:
1. To give students practice in writing composition in accordance with detailed instructions.
2. To set the composition work in realistic and interesting situations.
3. Helping the student to develop correct language habits by writing correct English.

The editors of 'Comprehension, précis and Grammar' when introducing the book mentioned that the aims of the book were:
1. To supply both teachers and students in the high secondary school with some source material for practice and further preparation.
2. To teach précis and composition through comprehension.
3. To help student to be more concerned with sentence building, rather than grammatical analysis, in order to be able to use the language.
The above mentioned syllabus was revised several times. The language books were criticized as they do not help to attain the aims of teaching English. Whereas the literature books were criticized as 'not written for Sudanese' and were thought to be difficult in many classes (EL-Fadil, H. N.)

**The Situational Method:**

The aim of this method was to ensure that the target language is used meaningfully in close association with people, objects and the situation it speaks about. Like the audio-lingual method it is based on behaviorist psychology which assumes that all human actions can be analyzed into stimulus and response.

Through this method the rules of language are learned by means of deduction without the learner being conscious of their forms and without the teacher spending time talking about grammar.

**The main characteristics of the situational approach are:**

- Teaching begins with spoken language.
- The target language is the language of the classroom.
- New language points are introduced and practiced in situations
- Vocabulary is carefully selected.
- Items of grammar are graded from simple to complex.
- Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient grammatical and lexical basis is established.

The objective of the approach is the practical command of all four language skills; but the skills are approached through a graded, structural syllabus. Accuracy of pronunciation and grammar is regarded as highly important.
The situational method continued to be widely used up to the beginning of the 1980s as it was liked by many practically oriented classroom teachers. However this method is believed to be more suitable for teaching children because it involves play-acting and provides great opportunities for oral assimilation.

On the other hand, some disadvantages of this method can be pointed out:
- It is time consuming.
- Its point by point construction makes it difficult for students to acquire a systematic knowledge of a unified whole of the language.
- There is no way of checking if the students have internalized the rules.

A CHANGE TO A NEW EDUCATIONAL LADDER:

The educational policy in 1970s has also introduced a factor of great significance on the teaching of English which was the implementation of the 'New Educational ladder'. The philosophy of the education policy then was to cater for the needs of modern society, particularly in science and technology. Hence the New Educational ladder was accompanied by a quantitative expansion in education i.e. community effort. The New Educational ladder of six, three and three supplanted the old one which was of four, four and four; thus reducing the English language learning years from eight to six. On the other hand the numbers of lessons per week were reduced from seven to six to help accommodate the newly introduced subjects such as French language. While the number of teachers couldn't cope with the expanding number of schools the teaching situation also grew worse for the classes also grew larger and larger.
The Expansion in education that took place in the late seventies and the early eighties was accompanied by falling standard in 'general education as a whole and in single subjects such as English' (Arbab, S. H. 1989). Such a drop in the standard of English language was felt by many concerned people.

In 1975 El-Fadil (op.cit.) investigated the attitudes of pupils as well as teachers towards English. He found that both teachers and pupils were pessimistic about English and about each other. He attributed the drop in the pupils' standard to the 'unsuitability of most of the materials presented and certain inadequacies in the preparation of teachers'.

For the purpose of making the teaching of English a meaningful as well as interesting experience Dr. Hamed El-Nil elucidated the main problematic areas and made the appropriate suggestions as:

**a. A policy for teaching foreign languages in Sudan:**

The teaching of English had lost its direction after Arabicization and the introduction of French. There was an urgent need to define the policy for teaching foreign languages in Sudan.

**b. The writing of an English syllabus:**

There was no well-defined syllabus. To write a syllabus was a necessity.

**c. The Preparation of Teachers:**

Future training must uphold the importance of acquiring day-to-day classroom skills.

It would seem that the main problems of English teaching in Sudan have always been the same since the beginning of secular education in the first years of this century.
A CHANGE OF SYLLABUS:

In 1980 the N I L E course appeared at schools. The book was written for Sudanese learners of English by two British experts who had considerable experience in Sudan. Julian Corbluth the author of the secondary school books outlined the main features of its approach: (Corbluth, J. 1979).

1. The six books are integrated.
2. Each unit is also integrated.
3. The course adopted a story line instead of separate disconnected reading passages.
4. The English Course is related to the Sudanese environment and culture.
5. An active approach has been adopted, stressing the use of English in communicative situations and in actual use.
6. Most of the important structure and patterns introduced are revised in later reading units or at least reincorporated into later reading texts or dialogues. A lot of the new vocabulary is also recycled.
7. Variety in the kinds of exercises, activities and reading matter.
8. Work in groups and pairs is a vital part of the course.
9. There are check tests including tests of reading speed.
10. The book has been made as attractive as possible.

The most significant difference between the N I L E course and the previous one lies in its gradation. It has been carefully graded in 'all its aspects: phonetic, orthographic, calligraphic, lexical, syntactical drills and composition exercises'. (National Conference Workshop 1982). It was not surprising for the writer of this dissertation to have found in a previous study that teachers as well as pupils 'were satisfied with the N I L E Course as a
good syllabus' (Arbab 1989). The researcher, in the same previous study, had found that secondary school teachers believed that book four is the best of the three secondary school books. Because of that conviction one is tempted to have a closer look into book four:

a. The book is divided into twenty units; each unit contains suitable practices for the four skills. The unit starts with a reading passage followed by different types of comprehension questions. It generally ends with a written exercise. Dialogues are also designed as to give students a fair opportunity to practice the speaking skill.

What is obviously missing here is the good model for listening.

The course seems to suppose that the teacher or even a student mate provides this model. But this can not be accepted. The researcher has noticed many teachers who were hardly acceptable as good speaking models.

b. Each unit ends with writing practice. These pieces of writing are fairly graded from controlled writing up to free writing stages.

c. There are enough structural drills for the main sentence patterns. Grammatical rules are also explained, in spite of the fact that the book adopts the communicative approach. In fact this might be convenient for most teachers as they are used to teach through the grammar translation method. On the other hand the provision of grammatical rules and explanations could give some satisfaction to many students who have the false concept that the learning of grammar is the essential element in learning a language.

d. Most reading passages are related to the Sudanese learner's environment.
On the other hand the N I L E Course was criticized as:
1. The Teacher's Books, especially 1, are very detailed and this hinders effective teaching and stifles creativity.
2. Many activities are pseudo-communicative.
3. Many exercises need a lot of adaptation and some are simply not good or helpful at all.
4. The N I L E Course is accused of being biased to central Sudan, especially the Gaziarea area. Pupils in other parts of the Sudan feel that they are neglected.
5. Reading texts are not carefully graded in length.
6. It doesn't provide the teachers with tests which cover all types of testing.
7. It is not accompanied with supporting recorded materials nor with supplementary readers.

Other concerned people have also stated their point of view about the N I L E books. Dr. Ahmed Babiker Et-Tahir who was the head of the English Department at The Curricula and Books Section of the Ministry of Education in 1974 tells: (Personal contact)

'The Head of The English Dept. at The Curricula and Books Section was never convinced or persuaded by the idea of the NILE Course. He felt that it was a venture of a business man who hired native speakers to write books just to make money. That business man was encouraged by the success of another business man, from the same country, who found some luck in The Gulf and sold "The Crescent Series".'

The N I L E Course was used in schools for fourteen years, yet still the standard of English among secondary school pupils did not rise significantly. For lack of a better measure we may resort to Sudan School Certificate (S.S.C.) results of the first seven years

Mجلة الآداب العدد (2)
on which the N I L E Course was implemented. (Information was released at a special request from the researcher). As can be seen from the following table, English compared to Arabic has shown a continuous fall whereas Arabic is rising steadily.

**Percentage of Successful Candidate in Arabic and in English for the Years 1980-87.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arabic Pass = 50%</th>
<th>English Pass = 30%</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>up-graded to 62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>up-graded to 62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>up-graded to 66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>up-graded to 67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>up-graded to 61.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Communicative Approach**

This approach starts from the theory of language as communication. Hence the goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence [the knowledge of language and the ability to use it to perform the different kinds of functions the learner might need]. (Bloam: skill + Knowledge = ability) (Larsen - Freemans 2000).

Classroom activities are unlimited and are designed to enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum through information sharing, negotiation of meaning and
interaction. This implies that the learner contributes as much as s/he gains and that he learns in an independent way. The emphasis in this approach is on the process of communication rather than the mastery of language forms. The teachers' role is to facilitate the communication process, both among the students in the classroom and between each student and the various activities and texts. It is the teachers' responsibility to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities such as games, role-playing, the use of pictures, tapes etc.

Criticisms of the communicative approach are that no coherent syllabus has yet been evolved using this approach. Its focus on fluency rather than accuracy makes it difficult to implement in situations where students must take accuracy-based tests.

SUDAN PRACTICAL INTEGRATED NATIONAL SYLLABUS:

In 1991 a ministerial decree was issued that a Sudanese syllabus should be written. Although that decision was absolutely a political one the experts who were assigned the job "were pleased" (Ahmed Numeri) that the call for a national syllabus which started since the Independence of the country could finally be answered.


1. The book is specially prepared for the Sudan in order to develop communicative competence in learners at both basic and secondary levels.
2. The series is written in an easy way in order to help teachers provide enjoyable learning opportunities.
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3. S P I N E is meant to be used by parents so that they can offer support at home.
4. In order to motivate the learner, learner-centered activities are designed.

Members of the new English Language curriculum committee have defined the aims of teaching English at both the basic and the secondary level as (S P I N E Teacher's Book One 1992):

A. At the Basic level:
1. Listening and speaking:
   a. to enable the learner to listen to understand dialogues and to participate in similar situations as listener / or speaker.
   b. to enable the learner to acquire the appropriate language functions so as to express himself in English.

2. Reading:
   To develop the reading skills and strategies in the learner so that he can interact as a good reader with simple texts.

3. Writing:
   To help the learner acquire the satisfactory writing skills which enable him to construct accurate sentences and paragraphs which lead to writing guided and free topics.

B. At the secondary level:
1. To develop further the four skills acquired at the basic level.
2. To give reading and writing more emphasis as well as to develop self-learning competencies (abilities).
3. To help the learner compensate for the loss of English exposure by reading selected texts from English Literature.
The first two books of SPINE series seem to have 'created a good impression among Basic level teachers' (Ishraga Bashier 1994). In his dissertation Gharieb Alla confirmed that SPINE One is most welcomed by Basic education teachers (Gharieb Alla 1993).

The has now being used for over two decades, never-the-less, the complains about the low standard of English language has not stopped. Several conferences were held to exchange views on the issues. However, it could be fair to mention that the blame of the deterioration of the English language standard should not be attributed solely to the textbook. Most scholars as well as many concerned figures and bodies would agree that a more central factor, among other factors, could be the lack of teachers' training.

Whether the syllabus is to blame or not; the last conference held in 2008 undertook the responsibility of replacing SPINE with an imported textbook. The new syllabus has not yet appeared in schools.
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