

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings that came out of the results and discussions presented in the previous chapter. A list of recommendations is provided as to what actions should be taken based on the findings of the research, this includes the main features for a proposed alternative framework for the English Program for the University of Khartoum. The chapter also includes some suggestion for further research.

This Study was carried at the University of Khartoum (Sudan). The basic problem of the research was the investigation of the English language Program and situation in the University following the 1990 vigorous policy of changing the language of instructions in all institutes of higher education in Sudan from English to Arabic, with immediate effect. Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To evaluate the perspectives of participants on the English Language Program currently taught as a University Requirement at the University of Khartoum. Such investigation includes planning for the course, its objectives, syllabus, materials, funding, administration and so on, to see whether the Program meets the types of needs that have emerged after the introduction of Arabic as a medium of instruction in the University.
2. To investigate participants perspective on Program's effectiveness through surveying opinions on students' level of proficiency in the four language skills, their perspective about the most important language skill and their perspective about the most focused language skills in the program.

3. To investigate the perception towards English versus Arabic as mediums of instruction in the University.
4. To investigate the role of English in performing academic activities at the undergraduate level and the extent of the use of English and Arabic in preparation for exams, assignments and test and in performing other academic activities required in their subject of specialization.

7.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study has been planned to answer the following questions:

1. How do students evaluate their level of English Language in the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing?
2. Which language skill do they think is more important for them than the others?
3. What is the most focused language skill in the current English Program?
4. Were there any clear objectives for teaching English at U. of K.?
5. Was there any planning done before implementing the English Program?
6. Does the syllabus design and materials prepared meet the needs of the students?
7. Are students motivated to study English?
8. Were they instrumentally or integratively oriented to study the different language skill?
9. How do participants evaluate the present English Program?
10. What is the participants' attitude to using English or Arabic as medium of instruction at the University level?

11. To what extent do students use English and Arabic in preparing for Exams or doing research papers?

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Following is a list of summary of findings

1. Objectives and Planning for the English Program

There was a general agreement among the language teachers that, the current English program was started without enough preparation. The vast majority of them agree that there were no conferences, seminars, research projects, discussions or other sorts of planning took place prior to implementing the Language Program. Teachers believed that all decisions regarding the position of English were taken at higher levels, and they were never consulted on the role English should play in the University. Teachers also confirmed that there was no need analysis of any kind conducted to take the opinion of students and teachers on the type of English needed or the skill required. The results also showed that teachers were not aware of the objectives of the English program. The majority believed that the program has no clear objectives at all.

2. Syllabus

Investigations into the course published syllabus showed that over that past ten years three types of syllabi have been implemented in the University. The First was an ESP syllabus, followed by a four-year common-core course, then a two-year common core course. The last two syllabi put as their premier goal to raise students' competence in the four language skills and train them in translation from Arabic into English. Both objectives were found unrealistic if we consider students' immediate needs to study English at the university level and the time and facilities constraints. A purely common

core English course was also found unsuitable, especially for Science students as the specialized terminology and use of language are of great essence. An EAP (English for Academic Purposes) was suggested as an alternative.

3. Materials

The vast majority of English teachers believed that the materials used for teaching students were not effective enough to meet the stated goals of teaching English at the University. The program was meant to be a common core course, but the teachers are still using ESP materials. The teachers rejected the materials that have been provided by the University, and started to use material of their own compilation. A committee was set up to prepare materials years ago, but it produced nothing so far.

4. Funding of the Program

Almost all English teachers reported that there was no financial support for the program and it severely suffers from the lack of funds. The Department of English, which manages the program, is still pleading to get essential facilities such as a telephone line, a computer set and a photocopy machine.

5. Class size and classroom situation

English teachers complained that they have to deal with very large classes. Sometimes the number of students per class exceeds 200 students. The largest class was reported to have 350 students. This is coupled with constant electricity blackouts, extremely hot summer and lack of microphones or acoustic system in most of the classrooms. There was also a lack in teaching aids.

6. Administration of the Program

Most of the English Teachers supported the view that the English program would be better off if it is separated from the Administration of University Requirement. They believe that English should be managed by an independent language center or unit.

7. Language level of Proficiency

The majority of students rated themselves very high in the four language skills. They evaluated themselves the highest in listening followed by reading, writing and then speaking. The English teachers, on the other hand, rated them far below that; they evaluated students' abilities the highest in reading, followed by listening, writing and then speaking. There was a rivalry between reading and listening on the first position, and both groups of respondents ranked speaking abilities as the lowest.

8. The most needed language skills

The results obtained from teachers and subject lecturers responses revealed that the teaching staff believed that reading is the most needed and important language skill for success at the university level. Responses from students, on the other hand, gave equal weight for reading and speaking skills in terms of importance. Logically speaking, the staff's judgment seems more acceptable given the fact that English is spoken neither in lecture halls nor on campus at the moment.

9. Most focused language skills

Both English teachers and students believe that reading is the most focused language skill in the Program followed by listening, though with different rating. This result is consistent with the instructors' ranking for the most important language skills.

10. Attitude towards English and Arabic as mediums of instruction

The majority of students have a positive perception towards English language instruction and they preferred the return to English as a medium. They believe that their level of English qualifies them to study their subject of specialization in that language. Most of them think that the university was not justified in changing the medium of instruction to Arabic. The majority of English teachers and lecturers, on the other hand, were against reversing the Arabicization policy and returning to English instruction, they also think that students are not proficient enough to study their subject in English. However, most of the English teachers indicated that they were not sure, when they are asked to indicate whether the University was justified to use English as a medium of instruction or not.

11. Worthiness of the English Program

English teachers evaluated the training that their students get from the English Program as below average. Students on the other hand reported a more positive view about the benefit from the Program. These results are consistent with students responses to attending the English classes as they reported that they always attend the English classes.

12. Importance of studying English

All participants acknowledge the role of English language at the University Level. They think that English language plays a decisive role in the success at the university level. It was found that students were very motivated and interested to study English. They even wish to reverse the Arabicization Policy and go back to teaching in English.

13. Students' Orientation

It was found that students were instrumentally oriented in their study of the language skills, except for the speaking skills where the majority of them indicated that they were integratively oriented towards them.

15. Use of reference materials in Arabic and English

Most students were found to depend on lecture notes and handouts in Arabic. Almost half of students said that they refer to textbooks, journals and reference books in Arabic, although their teachers do not think so. Students depend very little on textbooks, reference books or journal in English.

It was found that the library does not have any budget to buy textbooks or reference books in English or Arabic. Most of the books they got came through donations. Still the bulk of books available in the main library are in English. Books in Arabic are rare especially in sciences. The effort to encourage lecturers to translate or write textbooks produced only around 60 books in all fields of knowledge.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Features of a Framework for an Alternative English Program for the University of Khartoum

It was clear from the discussions on the previous sections that the English Program run by the University of Khartoum needs to be drastically modified, or an alternative needs to be pushed through. Figure 7.1 (page 278) and table 7.1 (page) illustrates the main features for a framework that could function as a basis for improving the current English Program. To do so in a scientific way, we propose the establishment of a research project to conduct a large scale need analysis surveys, design new syllabuses and prepare suitable materials. The Project should be a joint effort between the University,

the British Council and any other institution wishing to help improve the English level at the University. From the part of the University both English teachers and subject lecturers should be involved, in addition to experts from Departments of English in the Faculties of Arts and Education. Following are some main features of the proposed Program.

The Role of English

After the full implementation of Arabicization in the University, the role of English changed from the medium of instruction to the language of library, which students need for accessing information written in English. This role becomes very crucial since most of the textbooks and reference books are written and available in English Language. Reference books and journals in Arabic are very rare especially in the fields of sciences.

The Purpose for Teaching English

The change in the role of English changes the purpose for teaching the language. English is now needed for Academic purposes. Students do not use English for conversation or socialization, as there are no native speakers or English speakers around him/her. These academic needs could be achieved mostly through preparing students to be good readers in the English Language. Teaching English should be very closely linked to students' fields of specialization. The basic activity a student needs to perform in English is to visit the library, select a book in his field of study written in English and understand the gist of the text and extract main ideas and write them down in Arabic Language. That is why the focus of the course should be on ESP in the field of Sciences and on a common core course in the field of Humanities.

Teaching of Language Skills

As mentioned above, students need to improve their reading ability to succeed at the university level. Listening, speaking and writing skills are no longer relevant at the undergraduate level as all lectures are delivered in Arabic, all class discussions and seminar are held in the same language, and all assignments, tests and exams are written and answered in Arabic. Focusing on teaching the four language skills would defeat the purpose of teaching English, and would be a waste of time and resources. However, the listening, speaking and writing skills should be taught in the context that is meant to teach reading.

Duration of the Program

English should be taught for 2 hours a week for a period of three years. This duration was chosen because, only in the third year that students go deeper in their subject of specialization, that is the time when they really need to make a lot of reading in English. The two-year course is too short, by the time students get to understand the basics of their fields, they find that English Program already finished and of no help to them.

Materials

As suggested above that there should be two types of courses one is ESP and one a common core course geared towards academic purposes EAP. The Materials of the course should be authentic materials drawn directly from textbooks and reference books in students' field of specialization. The reason for that is to expose the students to the same type of texts that they will meet when they visit the library. The initial selection of stock of topics and texts should be done by the subject lecturers as they know better what is relevant to their students. They could also help in grading the topics according to their appearance in actual course of specialization, so that presentation of the topic in

the English class should run simultaneously with its teaching in the class. This requires some sort of coordination between subject lecturers and English teachers. The role of English teachers here would be making the final selection of texts and grading them according to length, density and amount of new information. In addition to their central role of guiding the students through the texts, negotiate meanings with them, teaching them skills in reading and extracting meaning without understanding every thing. English teachers would then provide the activities for students.

Methodology

To make the reading a more interesting activity for students we need find a purpose for reading. Creating a closer link between subject of specialization and the English class would provide that purpose. Muhammed (1992) opted to use the field subject data as a matrix for language teaching. He justifies his position by saying that the optimum objective through language/subject integration is to give the students the opportunity to discover that English offers a world-wide encoding of scientific knowledge.

The following steps would constitute a good methodological way to make students more motivated to read:

1. As mentioned in materials part above, topics in the English class should be presented in the same order in which they appear in the actual class of specialization.
2. One week earlier the subject lecturer teaches the topic in Arabic, introduces and explains the terminology involved. He/she should assign students to do an assignment that requires them to refer to references in English with a two-week deadline.
3. Bases on the suggested coordination between them, the English teacher already has such activity in their course content the following week.

4. In the English class, the teachers would present that same text assigned by the subject lecturer, help students to distinguish main ideas from supporting details, understanding vocabulary from context, predict meaning, distinguish opinion from facts and so on.
5. Before the deadline students will submit their work to the subject teachers, where more discussion will take place about the topic, but this time in Arabic.

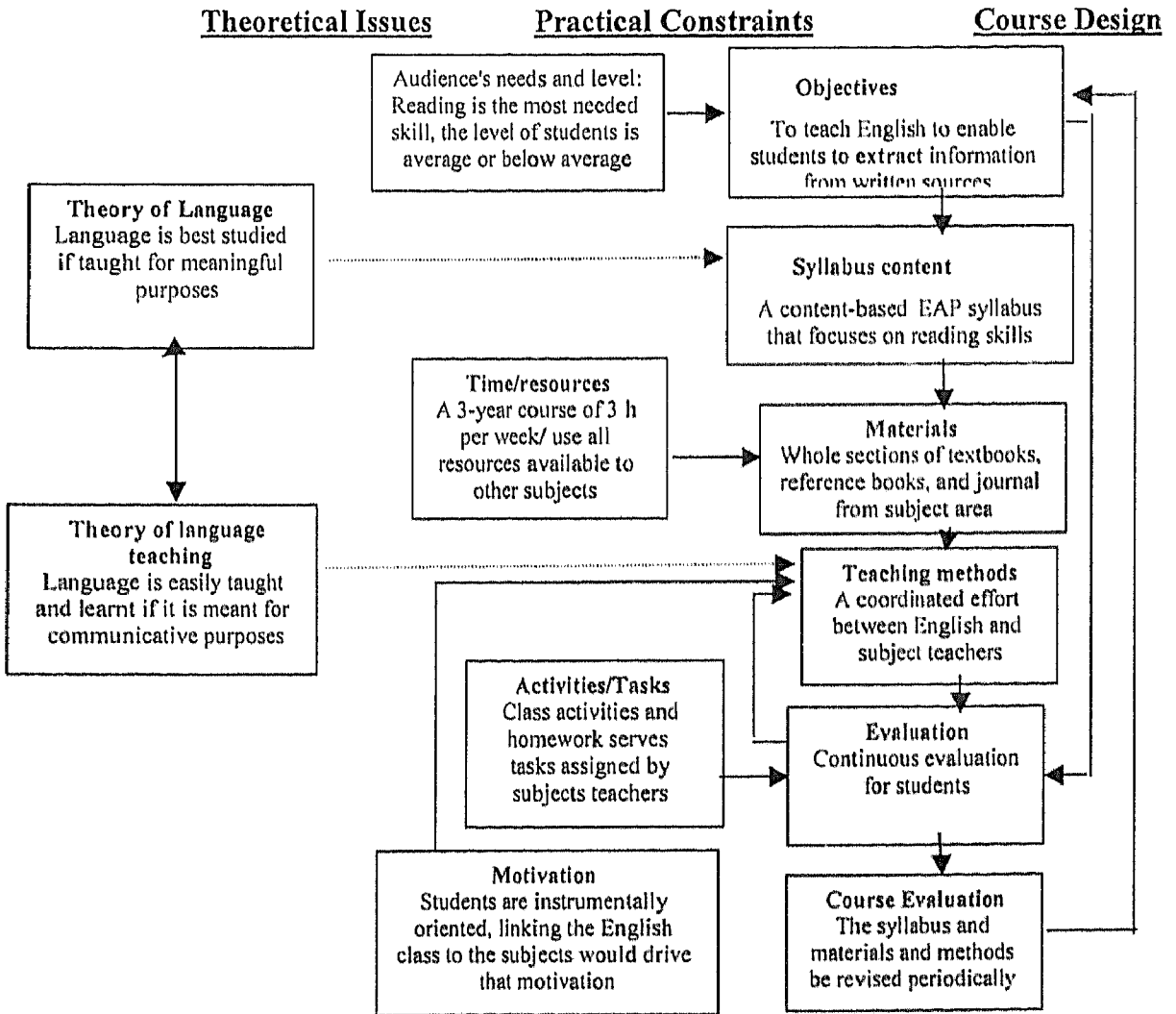


Figure 7.1 A Framework for Course Design for the University of Khartoum (A modification for Candlin et al. (1978) Model.)

Syllabus Content and Activities

The syllabus of the Program should not focus on teaching basic grammatical structures; this should be the role of teaching English in schools. Instead, the teaching should be directed towards achieving global, overall understanding of texts without being hindered with new vocabulary. The syllabus will be meant to develop students reading skills and strategies to be able to read, understand criticize and appreciate texts in English. Students can then transfer the knowledge they get through that reading to support their assignments through paraphrasing the gist of text meaning in Arabic. The content of the course syllabus could be divided into 6 units each unit covers one semester or half a year for Faculties not following semester system.

Unit 1

Part one: Library skills

- Raising awareness: Orientation on the availability of materials in English
- Locating a reference: using catalogue card (classification system)
- Look into table of content to browse topics
- Looking into chapters and section to see subtopics
- Look into introductions and conclusions to get main ideas in a chapter
- Look into graphs and tables to get more ideas

Part two: Developing Vocabulary: Reading for meaning

- Morphology of English words:
 1. Prefixes, suffixes and stems: using stems and affixes to guess meanings.
 2. Word formation processes (blending, coinage, borrowing etc.)
- Guess vocabulary from context: using context clues
- Handling specialized terminology: general meaning and specific definitions

- Semantic relations: synonyms, antonyms etc.
- Structure of English Sentence: clause, phrases: head words and modifiers, where meaning lies.
- Looking for main ideas and distinguishing them from supporting details.
- Tolerating difficult words: focus on the message

Unit 2

Text structure: look at the global picture

- Text structure: Introductory paragraph, body of the text, conclusion
- Paragraph structure:
 - Topic sentences: main idea
 - Supporting sentences: how writers support their arguments: facts, statistics, reasons, contrast and comparison etc.
- Text cohesion: recognizing cohesive devices, recognizing transitions etc.

Unit 3

Reading skills and strategies

- Skimming (global reading to obtain the gist)
- Scanning (reading for specific information)
- Prediction: Anticipating the topic
- Deciding the relevancy of a text: use titles, subtitles, graphics etc.

Unit 4

Critical Reading

- Inference (looking for implicit meaning)
- Distinguish facts from opinion
- Knowing the purpose of writing
- Agreeing and disagreeing with writers arguments

Unit 5

Extracting and presenting main ideas

- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Outlining
- Interpreting graphic presentation

Unit six:

Integration and revision and consolidation for all skills studied in the previous units.

2. We recommend that the Arabisation Policy be retained, but the English Language Programs at the institutions of higher learning in Sudan be given funding from the central government represented by the Ministry of Higher Education. This assistance should continue until such a stage where the programs are well established to support the new policy.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of this study are far from conclusive. There seems to be many areas concerning planning for the issue of language, starting from the political level down to the implementation level. There are many areas remained not researched, and some of the problems investigated in this research still need further research. We would like to suggest the following areas where research is much needed.

1. The issue of students needs need to be studied in more depth. The results of this study revealed that there are many controversial issues and disagreement between the learner and the teachers regarding some fundamental issues such as the most important language skill. We suggest that the University conducts a research project that can handle the issue of needs analysis in a more systematic way.

the book supply policy in the University to assess the University's commitment to the issue of textbooks and reference books both in Arabic and English.

3. The problem of the course materials used now needs further investigation. It seems that the matter is out of the control of the English Department now, as every teacher is using his own material. An in-depth research is needed in the area of material preparation.

CONCLUSION

The Role of English Language under Arabicisation is a very crucial one. That is because the world of today passes through a rapid process of globalization in which English plays a greater role. Sudan has taken some right steps for introducing English from Standard 5 of the Basic Education, but the poor resources and the lack of qualified and trained teachers rendered this policy fruitless. Students pass through seven years of English teaching before they reach the university, yet they arrive there lacking the basics of English grammar and language skills.

At the University Level and particularly at the University of Khartoum, the language of instruction was English until 1990 when a directive was issued to change the medium to the national language, which is Arabic, in what is known as the Arabicisation Policy. Although this decision has solved the problem of duality in medium of instruction between schools and universities, it undermined the position of English in the University. This happened because the university did not prepare for the role of English under Arabicisation. This research revealed that there are many problems facing the development of English language there. Such as the purpose and objectives of teaching English, prioritizing the teaching of language skills, the textbooks and materials, teaching resources, students orientation to study the language, the level of language proficiency, the methodology of teaching and its link to the big class size, and the use of

English for academic purposes. Although English has been made a compulsory subject, the teaching of English would be a waste of time if the points raised above are not addressed properly, despite the fact that the students surveyed show a high level of enthusiasm to study the language.

Ignoring the role of English at the University will definitely affect the educational excellence in that institution. The reason is that most of the information sources available in the University's main library are still in English especially in the field of sciences. The alternative Arabic sources are either not available at all or not supplied to the library because of the lack of budgets. Armed with a poor level of English the students would avoid accessing references materials in English and instead they would over depend on the lecture notes and handouts provided in Arabic Language. This would lead to depriving them from benefiting from the huge bulk of knowledge available only in English. The translation effort the University made to solve this problem produced less than 70 books in all field of knowledge in a period of 13 years. That is why this should not be considered a feasible alternative. Strengthening the teaching of English is the only vital resource that could be provided for the students to enable them to enjoy all sources of information, and enrich their own academic experience.