The Relevance of Sociopolitical Factors to Communicative Course Design

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Abstract — It is essential for syllabus designers and materials writers working in Third World countries to appreciate the importance of sociopolitical factors to course design. Materials design projects in certain Third World countries should be seen as educational-language-policy solutions to educational-language-policy problems. More specifically, the task of the materials writer is to produce materials that can work within the system for which they are designed. Although an institution may officially be English-medium, the students' competence in English may preclude its exclusive use as the medium of instruction. Thus, course designers must know how the institution is supposed to operate (the formal system) and how it actually operates (the informal system) in order to write appropriate materials. Furthermore, given that educational institutions in developing countries are often undergoing rapid structural change, materials writers must evaluate what change is likely in the foreseeable future. In this way, they can build an element of survivability into their courses, which ensures that the materials will not become obsolete when the projected changes are implemented.

Introduction

It is essential for syllabus designers and materials writers to appreciate the importance of sociopolitical factors to course design. The range of the factors to be considered varies with the specific situation in which individuals are working. In my experience, the factors that must be addressed are more numerous in developing than in developed countries. Third World countries tend to have structural problems in their educational systems that are much more severe than anything that obtains in Western countries. Therefore course designers working in developing countries must familiarize themselves with these problems, so that the courses they produce can function within the system whose needs they are meant to serve.

These reflections derive from my work with a British government educational-aid project at Khartoum Polytechnic (KP), Sudan. My brief was to produce English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials for students in the College of Engineering and Scientific Studies. When I began surveying the learners' needs, I was struck by how difficult it was to understand information without knowing something about the sociopolitical background that conditioned the respondents' answers. For example, although the Polytechnic was officially English-medium, teachers in fact used Arabic extensively as a supplementary medium of instruction. Thus, if I wanted to know whether listening was more important than reading, I had to take the complicated language situation at KP into account when interpreting the replies. I needed to understand how the two languages were used in the classroom, and why they were used as they were. Only then would I
know whether I was asking students to do activities in English which they normally did in Arabic.

Contrary to the position advocated in Munby (1978, p. 217), I maintain that sociopolitical and other factors are not mere constraints on syllabus design, to be examined after the syllabus specification has been drawn up. As M.O. Beshir (1977) points out, education in the Third World is explicitly viewed as an instrument of social change and national development. This being so, it cannot be argued that the fundamental purposes of such education are simple constraints, which need be considered only once the task of producing a syllabus has been completed. Furthermore, in the specific context of aid, the stated purpose of materials-writing projects is to contribute to the recipient country’s economic development. This again can hardly be dismissed as a low-level constraint on syllabus design. The explicit linking of English language instruction at KP to national development needs in the project’s rationale obliged me to view my materials-development project in its national and institutional contexts. This meant broadening the initial scope of the needs analysis to include three areas. First, I needed to have a background knowledge of the language situation in Sudan; I wanted to know how the country coped with multilingualism and what the official role of English was in the education system. By comparing official policy with unofficial practice, I hoped to understand why Arabic was used as a supplementary, and in some cases, the sole medium of instruction at KP. Second, I needed to understand the Polytechnic’s true structure and goals; these were unclear because the British Council and the Polytechnic viewed them differently. The British Council described the Polytechnic as an institution training middle-level technicians. However, when I arrived in Khartoum, it became clear that this was not how my Sudanese colleagues perceived the Polytechnic’s aims. While the British Council stressed the vocational character of education at KP, the Sudanese had academic aspirations. Clearly, I needed to know how the Polytechnic was really structured, in order to understand why the two sides disagreed about its goals. This would affect the kind of materials I wrote. Lastly, I needed to understand, in sociolinguistic terms, the uses of English and Arabic at the Polytechnic, so that the materials I produced did not run counter to them.

The education systems of developing countries often suffer from various structural problems, including large classes, insufficient numbers of well-trained teachers, and inadequate facilities. Often, it is the rapidity with which these systems have expanded since independence that causes these difficulties (Gorman, 1975); these are often compounded by the use of a Language of Wider Communication (LWC) as the official medium of instruction (Andrews, 1984). The problems encountered by students who studied in Arabic at secondary school when they switch to an LWC are the result of what Gorman calls planned and unplanned change. The former may be defined as the foreseeable results of official policy, the latter as the unforeseen results of policy or the lack thereof. I therefore maintain that communicative course design must be sensitive to the educational priorities and realities of developing countries. ESP in certain developing countries is therefore best viewed as an educational-language-planning solution to educational-language-planning problems.
This solution is directly relevant to course designers working in countries which have only recently obtained independence from a former colonial power, and which still mandate the ex-colonial language as the medium of instruction for tertiary education. This situation typically obtains in multilingual societies where the learners' native language is not an LWC, as is the case in Sudan.

Background Information

Khartoum Polytechnic

The Polytechnic is an English-medium tertiary level institution; its primary function is to train the middle-level technicians (i.e. foremen and supervisors in various trades) needed to staff the modern sector of Sudan's economy. It is primarily a vocational institution, awarding for the most part technical diplomas, with one or two departments in one college awarding BSc's. KP is made up of five colleges: the College of Engineering and Scientific Studies (CESS), with which I worked; the College of Business Studies; the College of Agriculture; the College of Fine and Applied Art; and lastly, the College of Further Education. This last college functions only during the evenings and duplicates some of the courses offered by CESS and the College of Business Studies.

Because of its technological orientation, KP is a typical example of what the British government's Overseas Development Administration (ODA) calls a "key institution." Such institutions are defined as directly contributing to a developing nation's economic development. KP was therefore eligible for aid under the Key English Language Teaching (KELT) scheme.

The Key English Language Teaching Scheme

The KELT scheme, which was set up in 1977, is funded by ODA and administered by the British Council; it operates in some forty-four Third World countries. This scheme seeks to promote economic development in host countries by sending language-teaching experts to work in key institutions. Typically, these are the Ministry of Education, universities, polytechnics, teacher-training colleges, and so on. KELT projects usually focus on materials development, teacher training, test development and other such activities.

The KELT project at KP was set up to service the specific language-related needs of a technical cooperation package also financed by British aid. This package involved an academic link between KP and a comparable institution in Britain, the North-East Wales Institute (NEWI). NEWI's task was to develop technical syllabuses, advise on their implementation, provide equipment, and send visiting consultants to assist KP in upgrading the quality of courses offered by CESS. The materials-development aspect of the KELT project was thus designed as an ancillary to the KP-NEWI link. Its goal was to upgrade the language skills of learners to enable them to follow the revised syllabuses produced by NEWI.
Methods

When I first began gathering information on the students' needs, I intended to rely exclusively on formal survey instruments. However, I soon realized that such an approach would lead to misleading conclusions. This is because a survey can only provide answers to questions that have been asked. Thus, if I asked questions on the students' needs that assumed the use of English as the medium of instruction (as official policy dictated), then I would get answers informed by that assumption. While such information is important, it is by no means the only information that should be gathered; just as importantly, the materials-writer must understand how English is actually used, as opposed to how it is supposedly used, in an institution. Gathering such information is a delicate task, however, for which survey instruments are not necessarily well-suited. Respondents cannot be expected to make potentially controversial statements which might be used against them later. I therefore decided not to limit my options by relying exclusively on formal instruments; instead, I decided to supplement this information with library research and data gleaned during the course of informal discussions with the teachers and students. In this way, I could check the different kinds of information against each other, eventually synthesizing a profile of needs derived from many sources in a variety of formal and informal settings.

In all, three formal instruments were developed. Following Mackay's example (1978), I preferred structured interviews to questionnaires as data-gathering instruments whenever possible because they allow the interviewer to clarify unclear answers on the spot. These instruments were used to gather information on the needs of CESS, the structure and goals of KP, and the students' union's attitudes to the potential Arabization of the Polytechnic. These three surveys or interviews were carried out at different times during the first year I worked at KP. The number of respondents in all the surveys was strictly limited for a number of logistical and political reasons. The CESS survey consisted of structured interviews with the Deputy Director of KP, the Dean of CESS, and the heads of department of that college. This first survey was not extended to more junior teachers because many departments were heavily dependent on part-time teachers to cover all their classes. Since these teachers also held other part-time jobs at other institutions spread around Khartoum, they were only on campus to give their classes. They were, therefore, not available as respondents. Students were not formally surveyed (although it would have been highly desirable to do so), partly because I did not have the means to carry out a large survey, but also because as a new arrival, I was not sure that this would be supported by the KP hierarchy. This was reinforced by the fact that a predecessor at the Polytechnic English Language Unit (PELU) had tried to do this already, and the authorities' response had not been enthusiastic.

The second instrument consisted of a series of questions regarding the structure of the Polytechnic which were submitted to the Deputy Director, who then responded to these in writing. This questionnaire was carried out in deference to the Deputy Director's crowded schedule.

The last instrument consisted of a structured interview with the president of the students' union regarding that body's official attitude to the possible Arabizi-
The Language Situation in Sudan: the Implications for Education in the Northern Region

The name "Sudan" can be used to refer to the modern political state of that name, or to the vast swathe of sub-Saharan savannah that stretches from the Atlantic to the mountains of Ethiopia (Holt and Daly, 1979). So many languages are spoken in this enormous geographical area that it is known as the Fragmentation Belt of Africa (Tucker, 1978). The political state of Sudan lies at the heart of this greater geographical and linguistic entity; it is no surprise to find that the First Population Census carried out by the newly independent Sudan in 1956 identified over one hundred languages spoken within the country's borders. This fact is important for two reasons. First, languages in contact are potentially languages in conflict (Haugen, 1966). Therefore, the selection of one language rather than another as an official language is politically of great importance to the different language groups in a country. Thus, the work of language-materials writers cannot avoid being controversial. Second, the degree of linguistic diversity that exists in Sudan has important implications for the country's economic development, since it is thought that extreme multilingualism correlates with underdevelopment (Pool, 1969). The fact that Sudan is one of the twenty-five poorest countries in the world (M.O. Beshir, 1977) supports this hypothesis.

Sudan (henceforth exclusively used in its political sense) may be divided into a Muslim/Arab northern region, and a Christian-pagan/African southern region. For reasons of expediency, these two regions were administered separately during the colonial period. Consequently, the political, economic and educational policies of the northern and southern regions of the country were, and still are, different (Holt and Daly, 1979); for this reason, the North and South must be considered differently. I shall consider only those issues pertinent to education in the northern region, since that is where I was working.

Although multilingualism affects all the major regions of Sudan, including the North, Arabic is by far the dominant language in the northern region (Thelwall, 1978). At the national level, according to the First Population Census, it is the mother tongue of fifty-one percent of the population. The present dominant position of Arabic in northern Sudan (and indeed the whole country) is the result of a gradual Arabization process, which has been in progress since the tenth century AD (Holt and Daly, 1979). S.H.A. Hurreiz (1968) therefore argues that the designation of Arabic as Sudan's sole official language is justifiable not only because it formalizes a natural process of language spread, but also because it promotes nation-building and economic development. This point is perhaps overstated, since overzealous attempts at nation-building can lead to civil war. It is undeniable, however, that the twin tasks of nation-building and economic development require that the number of official languages be restricted.

From the perspective of nation-building, Sudan's language situation is complicated by the lingering effects of British colonial policy, which installed English as the official language of government, media and secondary education. Postcolonial
policy has retained English at the tertiary level in the North as a language of special status (Thelwall, 1978); it is a bridge during the transition to the full Arabicization of the education system. Thus, while secondary education was partially Arabicized in 1965, and fully so by 1969, English is still the official medium of instruction for most subjects in most tertiary institutions.

Recognition of the importance of language as a carrier of cultural values led to the Arabicization of secondary education, and was part of a process of self-definition in Arab terms which could be used to confront the colonial norms of cultural inferiority and dependence. Its necessary and desirable corollary was to simplify the language situation within secondary education.

The continued use of English as the official medium of instruction at the tertiary level is anomalous if the nation is to fulfill its Arab destiny: English is perceived as an inappropriate vehicle for transmitting Arab national and cultural values. One option is to Arabicize higher education, as in Egypt and Syria (Clifford Prator, personal communication). This is immensely controversial, however, because it is unclear what effect this would have on Sudan’s catastrophic economic performance. Bluntly, is Arabic a suitable medium for teaching undergraduate science?

Conventional wisdom holds that it is not, because little or no original scientific research is published in Arabic. Fishman (1971) shows that English is the world’s foremost lingua franca. Mackay and Mountford (1976) note that in the engineering field 82.3% of all abstracts published internationally are written in English. These same authors (1978, p. 6) therefore maintain that “there can be no disputing the need for English by students of scientific disciplines” at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Such considerations are therefore thought to disqualify Arabic as a viable medium of instruction for science teaching.

Senior administrators at KP have used similar arguments to justify retaining English as the medium of instruction. However, de facto Arabicization has already occurred in many Sudanese tertiary institutions. This has been mainly triggered by the decline in students’ entry standards in English, caused by the official Arabicization of secondary education (Andrews, 1984). However, everyday practice at KP also demonstrated that Arabic supplemented by English technical terms is a perfectly adequate medium through which to teach undergraduate science.

We may regard science at this level as intermediate. It is a relatively static body of knowledge that the students are required to learn. They are not expected to challenge its assumptions nor to expand its limits as graduates are. This has awkward implications for materials writers. While it is in our interest to promote the idea that English is essential to science education, this is clearly not the case; undergraduate science students who do not know English may be disadvantaged in relation to their peers who do, but they are not thereby disqualified from studying science. As Mackay (1978) notes:

> there exists the danger that because foreign language teachers make their livings from teaching foreign languages, they exaggerate the importance and the need for their particular language for given groups of learners. This results in frustration for both the teachers and the students. (p. 23)

I initially assessed the situation as follows. The use of English in tertiary education was declining due to the Arabicization of secondary schools; this was
instrumental in promoting a *de facto* Arabicization of higher education. In itself, this was not necessarily bad, since it made education more accessible to the learners. However, Arabicization, whether official or otherwise, clearly has an unsettling effect on ESP course design. If English is merely desirable for, and not crucial to, academic success, we cannot produce courses based on current needs only. Such an approach yields ever-decreasing returns. If we base our materials on the assumption that English remains the sole medium of instruction, we are ignoring what is *already* happening in many Third World science classrooms. Conversely, in acknowledging *de facto* Arabicization, we may be analyzing ourselves out of a job.

This typical dilemma illustrates the fact that course designers often operate in a climate of chronic uncertainty. Our task is therefore to ensure that our courses have a certain “survivability” built into them, so that they may endure the impact of such phenomena as formal Arabicization. Thus, while courses should have a high face validity in terms of current needs, it is more important for them to address more general educational needs.

Assessing the Polytechnic’s structure was another prerequisite in ensuring the courses’ survivability, as this would affect the definition of KP’s current and future goals and needs. This information would be useful in deciding whether external pressures for Arabicization would be counter-balanced by the pressure to transform KP into a technological university. This possible upgrading was an important variable because I was confident that the Polytechnic’s administration would use such a status change to justify the retention of English as the official medium of instruction.

**The Structure and Goals of KP**

The British Council defined the Polytechnic as an institution training *middle-level technicians*. NEWI also used this definition. However, Professor El Tayeb Ibrahim, the Deputy Director (personal communication), considered KP’s structure and aspirations to be an indication that it was “nothing less than a technological university, destined to follow in the footsteps of Loughborough or MIT.” These aspirations were being actively promoted when I arrived by the planned introduction of a Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.) course in CESS.

That the donor and recipient of aid should have had such different conceptions of the structure and goals of KP is not altogether surprising. It can probably be explained by the fact that the initial negotiations to set up the KP-NEWI link began shortly after 1975, the year that Khartoum Technical Institute was reconstituted as a tertiary level polytechnic. Thus, the different conceptions were due to different historical perspectives.

A much more important question to resolve was how the Polytechnic saw itself. It is useful here to draw on the distinction made in Graves (quoted in Swales, 1980) between the *formal* and *informal* orders or systems of an institution. Based on his experience in South India, he notes:
of the formal order are strongly at odds with the private and social objectives of the members. (p. 64)

In the context of the Polytechnic, the formal system includes the structure of KP as a technological university; this is strongly associated in the official view with the use of English as the medium of instruction. The informal system includes firstly the dissatisfaction felt by teachers and students regarding their inferior status vis-à-vis their University of Khartoum peers, and secondly the informal use of Arabic as a supplementary medium of instruction at the Polytechnic.1

Thus, KP was in the process of transforming itself from a Polytechnic to a fully fledged technological university. This had both positive and negative implications for the learners. As Dudley-Evans and Swales (1980) point out, Middle Eastern students prize academic education more highly than vocational education. The upgrading of the Polytechnic would thus have been a positive development for KP teachers and students because it would have enhanced their social status. In sociolinquistic terms, however, this upgrading would have required learners to have a higher level of communicative competence in English than they currently had. The social benefits would therefore have been accompanied by considerable educational drawbacks.

The implications of these factors for course design were truly byzantine; I had to juggle with contradictory pressures for change at both the national and institutional levels. At the national level, pressure for linguistic change by such influential groups as the Muslim Brotherhood tended towards the elimination of English as the medium of instruction and its formal replacement by Arabic. At the institutional level, there was a strong movement among key members of the KP hierarchy to maintain English as the formal medium of instruction. Both the Deputy Director and the Dean of CESS maintained that Arabicization was incompatible with the teaching of science, which reinforced the position of English within KP. However, these arguments were also affected by the linguistic aspects of the informal system, which strengthened the case for Arabicization.

With respect to the materials development project, therefore, should it be assumed that English would continue to be the official medium of instruction? In addition, should the materials be geared to the needs of KP in its current incarnation as a polytechnic or to its future needs as a university?

Clearly, it was impossible for me to be certain that the solution I adopted was the correct one. This is the kind of dilemma that course designers working in developing countries must regularly face. In any event, I decided that the materials would have greater survivability if they were geared to the needs of KP defined as a technological university. I also made the following assumptions regarding the likelihood of linguistic change occurring within the Polytechnic: While the current Deputy Director and Dean of CESS were still in control of policy formulation at KP, Arabicization was likely to make little headway; English would therefore probably continue side by side with Arabic as a medium of

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1 Swales (personal communication) questions whether I have overplayed "the issue of the substantially greater divergence between educational appearance and reality in the developing countries." I do not mean to imply that educational appearances reflect reality in Western universities; grade inflation and other problems effect even the most prestigious universities in the United States.
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instruction for several more years, even if the Polytechnic were formally Arabi-
cized.

The design of the materials therefore assumed that the structure of the
Polytechnic was likely to undergo rapid change. At the same time, it also took
into account the possibility of Arabicization. However, this possibility was of
secondary importance. Not only were key administrators opposed to Arabiciza-
tion, but an overwhelming number of science textbooks are written in English.
Books are also expensive and in short supply in Sudan, so that even if there were a
switch to Arabic as the medium of instruction, it would be a long time before
references written in Arabic became available. Thus, the best way to ensure the
survivability of the materials was to treat English as a library language and write
a reading course.

A reading course would broaden the educational experience of KP’s current
intake of vocational students. These learners were hardly ever required to read
for information; a reading course would therefore complement, not duplicate
their technical courses. This represented a shift from concentrating on situation-
specific needs to more general educational needs. The materials would also be
relevant to the needs of future academic students, who *would* need to read for
information. By designing materials that anticipated the probability of structural
and/or linguistic change, the survivability of the courses would be enhanced,
making them more cost-effective.

My assessment of needs had to be balanced against what the clients said they
wanted — the traditional area of concern of ESP needs analysis. The matching of
solutions, which are the outcome of sociopolitically defined needs on the one
hand, and more traditionally defined needs on the other, can be difficult. This is
because what the clients say they want is often different from what is suggested
by a sociopolitical analysis of needs. This was the case at KP. In theory, the
official status of English as sole medium of instruction indicated a need for an
intensive all-skills course; in practice, the ambiguous status of English both in and
outside the Polytechnic mandated a more selective approach. In reconciling the
desirable with the possible, it is necessary to distinguish between the needs
relating to the two systems, and to decide what importance to assign to each.
Once this has been done, course designers can make a preliminary decision to
write a particular kind of course. They then have to choose a model of course
design whose implied methodology is appropriate to the situation. For reasons of
focus and space, I will discuss this last issue elsewhere (Markee, forthcoming).
For the present, I will discuss why it was important to both faculty and students
that KP should retain English as the official medium of instruction, even though
Arabic was widely used as a supplementary medium. Then, I will characterize the
different uses of the two languages in the two departments of CESS with which I
was primarily involved. This will complete the sociopolitical profile of English at
the Polytechnic.

The Status of English at KP

The difficulties involved in determining the status of English at KP may be
summarized as follows: While there was political pressure to diminish the status
of English in the country, there were other pressures to maintain or even increase it within the Polytechnic. Such pressures were motivated by a mixture of educational and personal considerations. The educational considerations included the acknowledged importance of English in science and technology, most particularly in engineering, and the desirability for students to be able to gain access to information at source. The personal considerations involved the social status of both faculty and students.

Although the degree of commitment to English among faculty and students differed, both groups had a stake in maintaining its status. Among faculty, individuals who had graduated from secondary school before Arabicization began in 1965 tended to value English more highly than their younger colleagues. This was particularly true of the forty-five-and-above age group, who comprised the upper echelons of the KP hierarchy. This group included the Deputy Director and most of the Deans, who had been educated either during the colonial or immediate postcolonial period; they were thus fluent speakers and writers of English. The younger the faculty members, the less their commitment to English; indeed, the less confident they were in their ability to function in English, the less committed they were to it. However, knowledge of English was still a prerequisite to membership of the educated elite. All faculty members, therefore, had a vested interest in maintaining the official status of English as a means of protecting their own social positions and privileges.

As learners, students had substantial problems with using English, so they might be expected to favor a reduction in its status. However, as prospective members of the educated elite, they too had an interest in maintaining the status quo. During an interview, the president of the students’ union explained that while there was a measure of student support for Arabicization, a switch to Arabic in all colleges and departments, irrespective of specialization, was rejected. This would jeopardize scholarships for graduate study in Britain or the United States. The status, if not the calibre, of English within the Polytechnic was therefore still remarkably high, despite the fact that few of the students attending KP had even been born at the time of independence. This reinforced the impression that any planned implementation of a policy of Arabicization at the Polytechnic would be lengthy and incomplete; furthermore, it confirmed my projection that institutional change was more likely to be significant in the foreseeable future than linguistic change.

The Extent of the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction

During the informal conversation that developed after the structured interview concerning the needs of CESS, the Dean frankly estimated that English and Arabic were used with equal frequency in his college. His own teaching strategy consisted of lecturing in English and answering questions in Arabic. For their part, the students would use English when they had no alternative. I therefore needed a detailed picture of how English and Arabic were used as media of instruction and the extent to which the faculty still used English to teach. This would indicate how strong the informal linguistic system was in relation to the formal one.

These were sensitive questions. I knew that the Dean’s frankness concerning
this delicate matter was based on the strong personal commitment to English typical of his age group; I also knew that because they were younger, his heads of department were likely to be less personally committed to English than he was. They might therefore feel defensive about answering questions which were undeniably politically loaded. Thus, unless they volunteered information of this type, I decided not to request it. This meant that I had to rely on informal conversations with teachers and students, supplemented by my own observations, to gain access to this kind of information.

With respect to how English and Arabic were used at KP, I had to define language choice in terms of their domains of use (Fishman, 1971) and in terms of the learners' communicative competence in English. This would define the extent to which English was used as a medium of instruction.

Although there was considerable variation in the manner and extent of English use in different colleges, there was less variation within each college. Thus, while CESS and Business Studies still used English quite extensively, Fine and Applied Art was exclusively Arabic-medium. Within CESS, the situation was quite stable, particularly within the departments of Surveying and Civil Engineering, which were the main targets of my materials development efforts. In the case of the latter department, the way and extent that English was used was doubtless influenced by the fact that this had been the Dean's department in the past. The language situation that is described below is therefore based on these two departments.

English emerged as a partial medium of instruction; in addition, it was the sole medium of formal evaluation (i.e. tests, laboratory reports, and final examinations). Typically, teachers would present material orally in English, reinforcing it with notes, diagrams and tables on the blackboard, written or labeled in English. Thus, although there was individual variation with respect to how comfortably a teacher manipulated English, teachers actively used the four skills in this language to teach and prepare for class. Students, on the other hand, because of their low competence in English, used English only to listen to lectures, to write and read notes, and answer test and examination questions. In addition, when they were engaged in various problem-solving activities, students would code-switch from Arabic to English to quote material as a means of demonstrating their knowledge.

Arabic, on the other hand, was the language of everyday communication outside the classroom, as well as a supplementary medium of instruction. In the surveying and Civil Engineering departments, it was typically used by teachers to check on students' understanding of material presented in English, and to answer questions. It was therefore not used to present material, nor as a medium of formal evaluation. With the exception of occasional code-switching, students uniformly used Arabic to address their teachers and peers.

The Advantages of Incorporating Sociopolitical Factors as a Variable in Course Design

I have shown that treating ESP as a language-policy solution to language-policy problems has several advantages. Most importantly, it forces the course designer to recognize that educational institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They
are subject to external societal pressures which can clash with the internal dynamics of academia. Recognizing this enables the course designer to produce materials that not only meet the needs of a particular institution, but that are also congruent with the aims of a country's education; such aims typically address the twin issues of nation-building and national economic development. In some ways, these aims are in conflict, particularly with respect to the language question in tertiary level education. This implies that expatriate course designers should understand the limitations of what is proper and possible for them to do. More specifically, the task of nation-building is something that is most appropriately left to the nationals of the country in which the ESP program is functioning. As much as possible, expatriate course designers should limit themselves to writing materials that address the issue of economic development only, since it is in this area that their skills are most relevant.

Conclusion

I have argued that syllabus designers and materials writers, particularly in Third World contexts, must treat ESP as a language-policy solution to language-policy problems. Specifically, they must familiarize themselves with the sociopolitical factors that affect course design, and therefore the survivability of courses produced for a specific institution. In the case of KP, this involved trying to reconcile the contradictory demands of national and institutional interests, further complicated by contradictory linguistic pressures at the national and institutional levels. Although there is no guarantee that the solution I eventually adopted was correct, I believe that course designers working in such difficult conditions must not diminish the importance of such conflicts. To do so puts the long-term success of materials development projects at risk. Contrary to Munby's (1978) position, therefore, it is essential to view sociopolitical factors as more than just implementational constraints on the design of courses. These factors lie at the very heart of communicative syllabus design.

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