

**The impact of the integration of “content - based
and structure - based” syllabi on the enhancement
of the students’ English proficiency
-Case study: SIU first year MLS students English text book-**

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Abstract:

This paper is a portrayal of an integration of content - based syllabus and theme - based one into mainstream English course as the students study ESP courses which provide them with their basic vocabulary terms. The integration of ESP EAP and general English textbook which is designed by the researcher is supposed to build the language components and academic skills around the ESP context. This will help the students enhance their English proficiency as the study proposed.

The first year students of SIU at the faculty of medical laboratory sciences represent the population of the study. Sixty students in each group are chosen to represent the experimental and the control group.

The two groups were administered the reliable and valid pretest post - test.

The results of the test have shown that those who studied the integrative course achieved a significant progress in their English proficiency and this prove the hypotheses that the integration of the content - based and theme - based syllabus enhances the students’ English proficiency.

Key words: integration, proficiency, Structure based, content based, Sudan International University, Medical laboratory sciences.

Introduction

English, as it is known, is a required course in Sudanese universities wherein the most cases the students are taught ESP course in order to get them formalized with the basic key terms in their specialties or majors.

But still, the problematic issue is how do these ESP courses help in the enhancement of the students’ language competence.

ESP is not considered as an area of development separate from the rest of the English Language Teaching. This is why the researcher specifies the ESP domain of the medical laboratory sciences by consulting the content teachers to provide him with a medical corpus for their chosen discipline which represents the materials of the text book. Then the researcher draws language components around the materials he collected to meet the students needs.

The SIU English programme designed by the researcher had units devoted to both General English and English for academic specific and communication needs. By studying General English the students are expected to acquire the structure of the language and how to use it properly in the writing and speaking.

The organization of the units could help them to get used to the vocabulary of this particular area for them to be able to read journal articles in their specialty in such away as to identify the most newsworthy information (Swales, 2000).

To achieve positive academic results, a communicative integrated methodology was developed mainly based on cognitive aspects directed to favoring comprehension and the production of academic texts in the tertiary level

The objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate and find out how the integration of ESP (content – based) and general English course enhances the learners’ proficiency.

The question of the study

1- To what extend does the integration of content – based and general English, into mainstream English language programme is expected to enhance students’ language proficiency.

The methodology of the study

The researcher selected the most available, suitable and powerful instruments, he administered a pre-test and post - test for the students

LITERATURE REVIEW

Designing language Course

Dudley & ST John (2011) argues that there are many parameters syllabus designers need to investigate before they start their job. They have to consider whether the course is intensive or extensive and how are the learners going to be assessed in the end. They have also figure out that if the course deals with immediate needs i.e. what the students have to get by the time of the course or delayed need i.e. where the students become more significant.

More over the position of the teacher in the whole process; is he a facilitator or a provider and this depends mainly on whether the course has abroad focus as the range of the target events covered or a narrow focus where the focus is on the few target events. Are the materials having a common core or specific one?

The learners are the core issue in designing a language course so they have to be identified in terms of being

homogeneous or heterogeneous. Finally, the course should be designed by working out by language teachers with the consultation with the learners and the institution as well as the course has to be subject to a negotiation with the learners.

Graves (2000) adds that; to design a course, depends on different factors: firstly, the course content, the goals and objectives of it, the designer and the learners past experiences as well as their beliefs and understanding. Beside the method followed in designing and forming the texts and context of the course.

Halim (1976) goes on the same track proving that there are many aspects syllabus designers should consider when designing a course; some are linguistic which they concern with the language elements that are to be presented in the syllabus then the other ones like the social factors, the economical, the technological and above all cultural.

Those considerations are very significant as they identify to what extent the course will be easily and effectively implemented and how the objectives will also be achievable. After the plat form of the course is decided , the course should go through the basic steps of courses designing as they are stated by .Those stages are the :assessing the needs of the learners , the formulation of objectives, the development of the materials selected, the organization of content , the selection of learning activities , the organization of learning activities ,and finally the decisions about what needs evaluating and how to evaluate. Graves (ibid)

Content-Based instruction (CBI) approach

CBI is "...the integration of particular content with language teaching aims...the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills" (Brinton et al., 1989, p. 2).

CBI approaches "...view the target language largely as the vehicle through which subject matter content is learned

rather than as the immediate object of study" (Brinton et al., 1989, p. 5).

So it refers to the substance or subject matter that we learn or communicate through language content rather than the language use to convey it.

It also aimed according to Wesche, (1993) to develop the learners’ skills by leaning a specific content and related language used skills.

From the above definitions, it is clearly that the CBI approach is teaching organized around the content or information that students will acquire, and not around the linguistic or other type of syllabus. More over it is built on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. It helps the Classroom needs to be filled with real and meaningful communication where information is exchanged.

Genesee (1994) in his suggestion that content ‘...need not be academic; it can include any topic, theme, or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners’ (p. 3).he clarifies What qualifies as ‘content’ in CBI.

This significantly support the notion that People learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in it. This principle reflects one of the motivations for CBI noted earlier that it leads to more effective language learning. Because what we teach in any kind of content-based course is not the content itself but some form of the discourse of that content. Thus, for teachers the problem is how to acculturate students to the relevant discourse communities, and for students the problem is how to become acculturated to those communities. Eskey, (1997).

Furthermore, it is not so much the content itself, in terms of factual knowledge, but some form of the discourse of that content.

Structure based approach

This syllabus is based on Classical Humanism approach. In classical humanism tradition, the content is a cultural heritage that is knowledge which has been identified and agreed to be universal, unchanging, and absolute.

The purposes of this syllabus are to transmit knowledge of the language system to the learners and to ensure that they master the grammar and vocabulary of the language.

The teaching procedures and learning experiences will include drilling of grammatically correct sentences, explanation of theory and memorization of lists of vocabulary.

The content of language teaching is a collection of the forms and structures, usually grammatical, of the language being taught. Examples include nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses, and so on.

Description of the medical Laboratory Sciences Textbook

The book is organized into twenty units each with particular thematic medical and scientific focus. The twenty themes are:

Theme1 our body

Theme 2 our body 2

Theme 3 the passage of air

Theme 4 inside the body

Theme 5 blood circulation

Theme6 digestive system

Theme 7 fitness bill

Theme 8 transfats

Theme 9 medical suffixes and prefixes

Theme 10 lab safety

Theme 11 chemistry in our life

Theme 12 medical supplies and tools

Theme 13 organic food

Theme 14 lab instruments

Theme 15 Dimensions and properties

Theme 16 physics in our life

Theme 17 fitness

Theme 18 in the lab

Theme 19 in the lab 2

Theme 20 in the lab 3

Within each theme there are six integrated sections, listening, speaking, reading and writing dealing with discrete skills while vocabulary, language focus, and skills corner deal with the enhancement of the students’ linguistic competence.

This book aims to equip the students or learners of MLS with the basic linguistic components within the frame work of their discipline in order to enhance their language competence as well as their critical thinking. The content of the book provides a good balance of the four skills in an integrated way. The style of the textbook considers the learners cultural background, age, interest and above all purpose in acquiring the second language.

This is why the topics and the types of activities chosen are all relevant to the students’ medical and scientific field in order to enrich their medical vocabulary so that they can use them in every situation communicatively.

Vocabulary:

The first section in each unit introduces the vocabulary items according to the theme of the unit e.g. unit one (our body 1). the words in this section are about the parts of the body where the students will get familiarized with some basic anatomical terms that will consolidate and help them to understand their anatomy course which is one of their basic subjects in semester one.

The vocabulary items are recycled by providing different exercises to help students use them. Those exercises are

considered to contribute to the student’s language acquisitions because they are all balanced in their format and contain both controlled and free practiced. Moreover, they are progressive as the students move through the book as well as they are challenging and varied.

For example one of the exercises at the vocabulary section is mind mapping game i.e. students choose set of words with their collocations in order to associate them. For Example the word blood; students try to write the verbs, nouns, and adjective s that can be collocated with the word blood and so on with the rest of the vocabulary items.

There are many other vocabulary exercises in the book such as the completion, matching, sentence building, and unscrambling the letters and cross the odd word out. As it is clearly seen the vocabulary exercises tend to reinforce the students mastering and development of the vocabulary of their chosen discipline.

Language focus (grammar)

This book is not organized on a grammatical syllabus and does not focus on grammar only rather than it aims to indulge the grammatical structures with the rest of the academic skills to enable the students to apply the grammatical rules they studied.

In this section we need to ensure that students can understand and produce compound and complex sentences correctly in order to help them to write a good paragraph.

There are two parts of language focus in the book. The first part is located after the vocabulary section to pave the way for the learners to use the vocabulary in their communication. Consequently, it is a communicative based grammar. For example in section one the grammar section is about using the verbs to be in grammar focus one and the present simple tense in grammar focus two. For this reason the book first ensure

that students can understand and produce SOV patterns and then gradually, can understand and produce expansion of the S and O and the combinations of SVO sentences in various ways. This is clearly presented in the writing section.

Some of the grammar items that are covered in this book are:

The verbs to be

The verbs to have

Present simple

Past simple

Future simple

Present progressive

Present perfect.

The determiners

The pronouns

The adjectives

The noun phrase

The prepositions

Prepositional phrase

The independent and dependent clauses

The conditionals

The passive

Medical prefixes

The comparison

The statement of comparison

The intensifiers

Listening and speaking

In these two sections the students practice some of the daily spoken dialogues which contain key functional language that has to do with their major discipline for instance greetings, introducing someone, apologizing, showing the directions and asking for and giving opinion.

Reading

The reading texts are scientific and medical based as they recycle the vocabulary the students encounter in the first section, thus the students will apply the reading strategies and answer different comprehension questions.

Writing

In the writing section, the students will experience the sentence construction that leads them automatically and gradually write a good paragraph and then in the end a good academic essay.

Skill corners

There is a key feature of the course. In every theme there is at least one academic skill. The naming of this feature is significant. It is assumed that the students will have heard about most, if not all but cannot make practical use of them. Thus, a test-teach-test approach is used. This is quite deliberate and even more will be sensitized to the particular point before being asked to understand it intellectually and effectively.

Some of the skills in the book are: Reading strategies Taking notes and Presentation

Background information and statement of purpose

This study describes a course which, while taking place in an academic setting, is designed by the researcher to equip undergraduates with general skills training in language structure as well as English for academic and Occupational Purposes to meet students’ future communication needs after graduation. The main feature of this course is that it does not rely on any one single approach to syllabus design, but takes an eclectic approach by drawing on elements from a structure-based syllabus, a text based syllabus, and a theme-based syllabus for the design of the programme, types of syllabi which

can be considered as more established and traditional ones. However, the course is not solely designed with the aim of preparing students for their academic demands only; it also attempts to address some of the more critical approaches to pedagogy whereby students are gently encouraged to develop a critical awareness of their discipline as well as workplace practices in order that change might be implemented, where possible.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results of the tests for both groups are presented below.

Table (4.1): Experiment Group: Paired Samples Statistics for Reading

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Reading	4.05	60	2.119	.274
	Post Reading	6.35	60	1.867	.241

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 2.119 vs 1.867.

Controlled group

Table (4.3): controlled Group: Paired Samples Statistics for Reading

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Reading	3.97	60	2.139	.276
	Post Reading	4.28	60	2.322	.300

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 4.28 vs 3.97

Discussion:

The above tables show the experimental and the control group’s performance of sixty Sudan international University students in reading after the prescribed period of experiment. They show statistically significant development at the end of the period, when the significant scores .000 which is > 0.05 and the mean is calculated. The experimental group achieved a score of development for the mean $4.05 - 6.35 = (2.5)$, which is much higher scale than the control group’s development of $3.97 - 4.28 = (.257)$. These findings are parallel to the hypothesis, which suggests that the integrated syllabus of International Sudan University has positive effect on reading comparing with traditional general syllabus.

This also significantly proves that the students who studies the integrative course shows a significant process in their reading comprehension as most of the reading texts are from the medical laboratories sciences domain.

The designer asked the content teachers to provide him with the terms and texts that represent a solid base knowledge of the key terms of the students’ basics of their chosen discipline. This will create a good and ideal English language instruction environment.

Table (4.5): Experiment Group: Paired Samples Statistics for vocabulary

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Pair 1	Pre Vocabulary	4.23	60	2.645	.341
	Post Vocabulary	6.28	60	2.164	.279

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 6.28 vs 4.23.

Table (4.7): control Group : Paired Samples Statistics for vocabulary

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre Vocabulary	3.58	60	1.844	.238
Post Vocabulary	4.18	60	1.568	.202

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 4.18 vs 3.58.

Discussion:

The above tables show the experimental and the control group’s performance of sixty Sudan international University students vocabulary competence, after the prescribed period of experiment. They show statistically significant development at the end of the period, when the significant scores .000 which is > 0.05 and the mean is calculated. The experimental group achieved a score of development for the mean $4.23- 6.28= (2.55)$, which is much higher scale than the control group’s development of $3.58- 4.18= (.6)$. These findings are parallel to the hypothesis, which suggests that the integrated syllabus of International Sudan University has positive effect on vocabulary competence comparing with traditional general syllabus.

The students’ vocabulary improved as the focus of the book they studied addressed their vocabulary needs. The content teachers provide the designers with the basic terms the students encounter during their basic subjects in order to reinforce what the students study in their basic subjects and then helps them to understand their basic medical courses and at the same time enrich their vocabulary as most of the activities in the text book are based on collocations and word formation.

Statistics in Ps

Table (4.9): Experiment Group: Paired Samples Statistics for grammar

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Grammar	4.38	60	2.179	.281
	Post Grammar	6.17	60	1.586	.205

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 6.17 vs 4.38.

Table (4.11): control Group: Paired Samples Statistics for grammar

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Grammar	3.78	60	1.552	.200
	Post Grammar	4.90	60	1.115	.144

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 4.90 vs 3.78.

Discussion:

The above tables show the experimental and the control group’s performance of sixty Sudan international University students in grammar competence, after the prescribed period of experiment. They show statistically significant development at the end of the period, when the significant scores .000 which is > 0.05 and the mean is calculated. The experimental group achieved a score of development for the mean $4.38 - 6.17 = (1.79)$, which is much higher scale than the control group’s development of $3.78 - 4.90 = (1.12)$. These findings are parallel to the hypothesis, which suggests that the integrated syllabus

of International Sudan University has positive effect on grammar competence comparing with traditional general syllabus.

The students had a considerable knowledge of grammar and the course they studied enhanced this knowledge because grammar has been designed around integrative skills. In other words, the grammatical structures are all allocated to the medical corpus where the students deal with scientific facts. Therefore, they need to consolidate the use of present simple, verbs to be, passive and active voice, the adjective or the description in general, comparative and superlatives, beside, all the basic grammatical elements that help the students to construct a good English sentence and speak fluently.

Table (4.13): Experiment Group: Paired Samples Statistics for listening

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Listening	5.18	60	1.722	.222
	Post Listening	7.22	60	1.668	.215

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 7.22 vs 5.18.

Table (4.15): Control Group: Paired Samples Statistics for listening

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Listening	3.93	60	1.376	.178
	Post Listening	4.60	60	1.108	.143

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 4.60 vs 3.93.

Discussion:

The above tables show the experimental and the control group’s performance of sixty Sudan international University students listening skill, after the prescribed period of experiment. They show statistically significant development at the end of the period, when the significant scores .000 which is > 0.05 and the mean is calculated. The experimental group achieved a score of development for the mean $5.18 - 7.22 = (2.04)$, which is much higher scale than the control group’s development of $3.93 - 4.60 = (.67)$. These findings are parallel to the hypothesis, which suggests that the integrated syllabus of International Sudan University has positive effect on listening comparing with traditional general syllabus.

The course book gives a consideration for the listening skill therefore the whole listening situation are graded from general into specific. the listening situations tend to in force the students to practice every day language they need whether in the campus or in their various daily situations to empower them to meet the challenges in their future career.

The listening scripts are designed and demonstrated by native English teachers used to work in the university in the English language department so they were very aware with the objectives of the text book.

Table (4.17): Experiment Group: Paired Samples Statistics for writing

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Writing	2.93	60	2.342	.302
	Post Writing	4.88	60	1.958	.253

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 4.88 vs 2.93

Table (4.19): Control Group: Paired Samples Statistics for writing

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Writing	2.65	60	1.716	.221
	Post Writing	3.88	60	1.166	.151

This table provides the descriptive statistics for both variables. The mean, the number of observations, the standard deviation, and the standard error mean. The post-test mean is higher than the pre-test mean: 3.88 vs 2.65.

Discussion:

The above tables show the experimental and the control group’s performance of sixty Sudan international University students in writing skill, after the prescribed period of experiment. They show statistically significant development at the end of the period, when the significant scores .000 which is > 0.05 and the mean is calculated. The experimental group achieved a score of development for the mean $2.93- 4.88 = (1.95)$, which is much higher scale than the control group’s development of $2.65- 3.88 = (.12)$. These findings are parallel to the hypothesis, which suggests that the integrated syllabus of International Sudan University has positive effect on writing comparing with traditional general syllabus.

The course book addresses the writing skill thoroughly and the students showed progress because they found it applicable.

The textbook provides the students with many basic writing activities from the basic elements of the English sentence to the paragraph writing. All the activities are related to their medical field e.g. writing summary, descriptive and narrative paragraphs, compare and contrast paragraph, definition paragraph as well as the noun phrase and the types of sentences.

Summary of the findings:

The study proves that the portrayal of an integration of content - based syllabus and general English into main stream English course is practical and challenging for the teachers to support him to design his own course or supplement it at least to meet the student’s actual needs.

The results depicts that the integration of structure based and theme based into English language programme enhances the students’ language proficiency and critical awareness of their chosen discipline.

It is also found out that the students understand and interact with other classes effectively and even they improve their critical thinking and the way they consult the references.

The students’ English proficiency is improving and they break the psychological fears and then they engaged in English activities and situations easily.

Recommendations:

- 1 - The study encourages the Teachers to design the materials of the English courses so that they meet their students’ needs.
- 2- The study encourages the teachers to develop a unit of language materials using a natural integration based on criteria derived from different approaches of syllabus design and to identify the advantages and challenges of the integration of the ESP with the main stream of English language courses
- 2- The study also draws the teachers’ attention to discuss and describe how the curriculum should be developed, and how to integrate the four skills as naturally as possible.
- 4- It is advisable that English teachers should make use of the corpus based genre approach to supplement the ESP text book they teach.
- 5- English departments in the universities should teach the text book that addresses their students chosen discipline.

6- Text books taught at the university level should be relevant to the students’ major specialty so that they can take considerably.

7- Universities should encourage the students to deal with the English language as a main course rather than just a university requirement.

8- The content teachers should be involved in the process of the ESP text book design so that it creates a good English instruction environment.

9- As there is always room for improvement, the English language text books should remain under constant check and scrutiny by experts and the teachers.

10- English teachers should be provided with opportunities for developing in depth knowledge and experience.

11- The faculty members should share expertise and research interest.

12- The textbooks taught in the tertiary level should be based on the cognitive aspects directed to favoring comprehensions and the production of academic texts.

13- English text books should be designed align with the academic skills that taken from the students corpus of their chosen discipline.

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