
DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH LANGUAGE CURRICULA: A CASE STUDY OF SUDAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM OF ENGLISH

Dr. Da'oud Mohamed Gubair

Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, Jouf University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, University of Khartoum, Republic of Sudan

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this paper is to investigate Sudan National Curriculum of English (SPINE) for the themes and thematic areas with the potentiality of developing intercultural competence among learners. The study adopted a descriptive and analytical approach in the analysis of the content of the curriculum. The data were collected from three books of the series. The findings indicate that the series included a reasonable number of themes and thematic areas with varying degree of quantities and qualities. The findings also alluded to a number of factors that contribute to the inefficacy of these themes in developing intercultural competence among learners. These include the quantity and quality of the themes, their distributions across the series, the teacher's attitude and the question of training on how to interculturalise teaching. Recommendations for fixing these deficiencies were suggested.*

KEYWORDS: intercultural competence, language curricula, Sudan, national curriculum of English.

INTRODUCTION

In the advent of the telematics era, people from different cultures seem to live side by side more and more often. Therefore people need to understand each other and not simply communicate information. Understanding one another requires that language and culture learning has to be more complex and richer and the emphasis should extend the communicative competence in foreign language education to intercultural competence.

Statement of the Problem

Research on language learning has recognized the close relationship between language and culture, Ando (1997); Brown (1994). Languages are means through which thoughts and cultures travel among and between nations. Education plays a pivotal role in transforming the cultural set up of any social group to the better. It is also regarded as a essential tool for developing, promoting and inculcating values, beliefs and habit of peace into youngster generations and encouraging them to embrace a culture which promotes peace and stability. Halliday and Hassan, (1989) have acknowledged the role of language in building and shaping our consciousness. Among the many stakeholders, the bigger burden of making the youngsters embrace the culture of peace and raising their awareness of the destructive consequences of the culture of violence falls upon the shoulders of educators in general and language teachers and syllabi developers in specific as education plays a crucial role in learners' development as human beings. The current research paper investigates the themes and the thematic areas potential of promoting students' intercultural competence in the Sudan Practical Integrated National English (SPINE) taught at secondary schools.

Research questions:

The research paper tries to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent does the existing English Language curriculum taught at secondary schools in the Sudan have the potentiality of promoting learners' intercultural competence?
2. What changes does we need to make so that the existing curriculum of English can contribute to promoting learners' intercultural competence?

Research Assumptions

Language teaching is one of the effective tools for spreading and promoting the targeted cultures among learners who in turn help in promoting it in their societies. However, in the existing curriculum of English language taught at secondary schools in Sudan, it is assumed that there is little room spared for the components required for intercultural competence- a component necessary for promoting the culture of peace. Moreover, injecting such components into language curricula is an urgent need necessitated by the prevalence of the culture of violence throughout the country and the world at large. Incorporating cultural components in the curriculum of English language and adopting appropriate approaches and methods for teaching them in the classroom can help in developing intercultural competence.

The Significance of the Study

In spite of the durable, protracted conflicts that the Sudan has experienced, the question of peace promotion and maintenance has always been out of focus in the research in language learning for very long time. The important role of education in peace promotion and peace maintenance has always been recognized and emphasized by many educators at both national and international levels, Wells (2003, p.2). However, the rising phenomenon of violence in the institutions of education in the Sudan in general has put the question of peace in focus. In response to the phenomenon of violence among schools and university students in the Sudan, some academicians and educators have published some essays alluded to the causes of the phenomenon and its effects and have proposed some solutions in the daily local press. Also, a number of seminars and workshops have been held in some Sudanese universities on students' violence. All these "shy" attempts didn't go further than dealing with the symptoms of the problem. The present research tries to address the phenomenon from within our system of education in which promoting of the culture of peace seems to be missing. Hence, the significance of the present research comes from the fact that it attempts to fill in the gap in research in this respect.

Rationale for the Study

In language education literature, there is a tendency towards redefining the objectives of learning a foreign language. Some linguists and educators suggest even broadening the scope of the objectives of language learning to go beyond communicative competence to addressing social problems. Sercu et al.(2005,p. 2) suggested refining the objectives of language learning in terms of acquiring competences other than communicative competence in a foreign language. Many linguists and educators also call for reconsidering the role of languages in social problems, (Wertsch, 1987; Connor-Linton et al., 1987; Urban, 1988; Mehan and Wills, 1988 and Halliday, 1990). This paper tries to find out about the position of our national curriculum in the current global tendency towards considering the role of education in social problems.

The Scope of the Study

Culture of peace is a complicated and contested issue. A lot of activities and procedures can be said to contribute to promoting the culture of peace. The present study is confined to investigating the cultural themes which have the potentiality of developing the intercultural competences required for promoting the culture of peace in the SPINE series and the changes that need to be done so that the series contributes to developing intercultural competence as an essential element required for promoting the culture of peace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In successful education students' development is a central theme and goal, (Sanford, 1969). The development of the students can be processed through inculcating intellect, practical competence, and affective dispositions such as moral, religious, emotional, social, and aesthetic qualities of the personality, Bowen, (1977). Personal development is beneficial to students' lifelong development and quality of life (ibid). Research evidence suggests that the factual materials which students learn during college last for a relatively short time (Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Terenzini et al., 1995). Successful education requires long lasting skills such as intercultural competencies. The current paper investigates the contents of the curriculum of Sudan Practical Integrated National English (SPINE) to find out about its potentiality of promoting such capabilities among learners.

Goals of intercultural competence

Intercultural education serves different goals and purposes for improving life quality in multicultural countries. In the USA, for instance, the "intercultural education" aimed at describing educational programmes for integrating of different ethnic groups in North American society, Doye (1999:p.15). Similarly, the concept was introduced in Germany in the 1970's to soothe tensions between the native population and foreign workers (see Larzen, 2005:p.19). In culturally homogeneous societies, intercultural education is principally concerned with the education for global citizenship and multiculturalism.

The global movement towards socially responsible teaching has encouraged language educators to use global issues to develop language and social skills. Intercultural education aims to "enable students effectively acquire a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills and commitment required by world citizens to solve global problems" (Cates, 1990:p. 41). Developing the learners' intercultural competence is a basic task for education to be successful in a diversified global society. Bowen (1977) outlined three educational goals for individual students related to intercultural competence. These include intellectual tolerance, human understanding, and adaptability, (ibid:p.78). Intercultural competence is intently associated with the three domains of the goals of teaching. Intercultural education as used in the current paper refers to a mode of teaching, where the process aims at acquiring some kind of intercultural competence. Although the current study focuses on institutional practices only, and more specifically on the cultural contents of the curricula, both formal and informal, inside classroom and outside classroom learning situations are also relevant.

The research community has also emphasized the importance of intercultural pedagogies. Working with current issues such as environmental problems, war and peace, population explosion, inequality and the dangers of the new information and communication media and their use in foreign language teaching are considered very relevant as newer approaches that examine the learners within their social and natural environments, Klafki (1997: p.47-61). Intercultural skills help students to focus on current issues by guiding classroom interaction towards social awareness in world problems. Developing the Learners' empathy, critical thinking and argumentative skills represents an important tools for a more humane and democratic society. Despite the increasing intercultural encounters, our ability to deal with differences seems to be limited. Difference related Phenomena such as racism, stereotypes, prejudices and their various manifestations seem to have become increasingly prevalent. and they need recognition and considering urgently, (Seelye, 1988; Jensen 1995 and Larzen, 2005). Foreign Language Teaching may be a suitable arena for considering and combating such social problems. It provides opportunities for training in respecting otherness and developing a non-ethnocentric perception and attitudes.

Conceptualizing culture

Culture is one of the most complicated terms in the English language [William,1981). Over time, researchers in various scientific disciplines have tried to formulate definitions for the term. Two distinctive forms of culture are identified: "Capital-C culture" which refers to outstanding works of art and music, buildings and monuments, literary and philosophical achievements and "small- c culture", which refers to products of everyday life and the conditions of its production, Doye (1999:p.19). Brogger (1992), distinguishes between 'culture' as an elitist and aesthetic concept in the humanities and as an anthropological concept referring to collective assumptions and norms which people adopt and share, due to upbringing and socialization, Brogger (1992:p. 31-32). Brislin (1990:p.27) defined culture as widely shared ideals, values, formation and uses of categories, assumptions about life, and goal-directed activities sub-consciously accepted by members of a society. Another similar view comes from Hannertz (cited in Larzen, 2005: p. 23) which views culture as a way of living and thinking, not necessarily connected with an ethnic or national foundation, or be considered superior or inferior to something else .

Robinson (1985, 8-12) distinguishes between behaviorists, functionalist, cognitive and symbolic definitions. In behaviorist anthropology, culture mirrors various forms of behaviour, such as customs, habits and rituals that are linked to specific situations and certain social groups. Such a view of perceiving culture appears to be outdated today. Functionally oriented anthropologists define culture in terms of the structures and the various forms of social behaviours, and their roles in society. Both approaches (behaviorist and functionalist) represent a product perspective of culture, which tend to dominate FL instruction. Robinson, (1985) however, points out several flaws in both types of definitions. Culture according to cognitive definitions is a continuous process of memorizing, associating and interpreting incoming data. Robinson regards this view of culture as a valuable contribution to the behaviorist and functionalist approaches. The complexities of grasping and researching feelings are some of the limitations of this definition. Culture is also seen as a dynamic system of symbols and meanings, stressing the significance of continuous change. Every individual is taking part in a process, in which previous experiences influence the interpretation of new phenomena, and previous interpretations influence new experiences .

Hundreds of different definitions of culture were counted as early as fifty years ago (see Larzen, 2005: p. 25). However, in the 1990's, researchers began to view culture as something that is constantly re-created. Bruner (1997) points out that cultures have always been in the process of change, but the rate of change has increased due to increasing contacts through both real and hypothetical migration, trade and the rapid exchange of information.

In her analysis of teaching materials and Swedish curricular texts between 1962 and 2000, Tornberg (2000) has developed three different analytical perspectives of culture in language teaching: "culture" as a fact fulfilled, "culture" as a future competence and "culture" as an encounter in an open landscape. All of the above, indicates the impossibility of agreeing on a single definition of culture that would be applicable in all contexts. Similarly, all the above indicates the intricate between culture and language. The definition of culture adopted in this paper is influenced by most of the perspectives discussed above. The language influences the way in which we think and perceive the world around us.

Culture and language

The relationship between language and culture is a very unique one. Language can be seen as an integral part of culture and a means of expressing the culture. In other words, language is both the substance and medium at the same time. Agar (1994) states that "Culture is in language an language is loaded with culture" (Agar, 1994:p.28). At the beginning of the 20th century, Sapir and Whorf proposed that language determines

perception and shapes our world view and our culture, rather than reflects it. Today, however, the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also named linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism, has few believers, Brown (1986:p. 46). Most linguists today are concerned with the interaction between language and culture. Over time, people have preserved their cultures from generation to generation through oral traditions. Bruner (1996) connected the existence and evolution of the human mind to the development of a way of life, where "reality" is represented by a symbolism share, conserved, elaborated, and passed on to succeeding generations by members of a cultural community .

Due to the cultural nature of language, and the fact that languages can in many respects be understood as products of their culture, diverged languages naturally differ from each other. Risager recognized three perspectives on the relationship between language and culture, which are often mingled: culture as embedded in the pragmatics and semantics of language; culture as the macro context of language usage, and culture as the thematic content of language teaching. Halliday and Hasan, (1989) set apart "the context of situation" and "the context of culture". Fairclough (1992) asserted the connection between language usage, discourse and social structure.

Foreign Language Teaching Objectives

The closing ten decades have witnessed a shift in emphasis in the general objectives of FL pedagogy. According to Brogger, (1992) language learning was closely linked to the field of philology. An interdisciplinary approach to the study of texts emerged. Such an approach was missing during 1930's and the 1960's when the formalist and structuralist modes of thinking were dominant and the importance of sociocultural context for the understanding and acquiring the language was neglected. General structural rules were thought to ensure the necessary Linguistic Competence (LC), the target of every FL teacher. After the 1950's, two main disciplines emerged within FL studies at universities: linguistics and literary study. According to Brogger (1992, 12) both fields were highly professionalized and kept strictly separate. The four language skills were highlighted and every pupil was to acquire. Interestingly enough, these are still today often listed as objectives in curricular documents.

The twenties century have witnessed a shift in the overall aim of FL instruction from LC over Socio-Linguistic Competence to Communicative Competence (CC). Teachers realized that pupils need not only be able to produce grammatically correct phrases, but also the skill of using these phrases in real communicative contexts The term Communicative derives from Hymes, 1972, but it is above all van Ek who has applied CC to FL teaching. The "communicative turn" in language teaching, particularly in EFL, has been criticized by Byram, among others, for emphasizing speech act and discourse competence, rather than cultural competence The understanding of culture regained recognition as an important component of foreign language studies, intended to contribute to the pupil's CC (Brogger, 1992: p.12). Many attempts to teach culture followed an approach focusing on folk-dances, festivals, fairs, and food (Moore, 1996: p. 597). Gradually, the study of culture changed its focus from historical, geographical of socio-political bits and pieces about specific nations to a deeper analysis of ideas and values shared by the members of a society or social groups. Intercultural Competence (IC) as a guiding concept for the overall aim of FL education emerged in the 1990's. The term was introduced by Michael Byram, a professor at Durham University in the United Kingdom. His research on intercultural skills together with his contribution to the formation of the language programme of the Council of Europe is recognized worldwide. The sociocultural, social and strategic competences presented by van Ek were extended by Byram to IC. In their first paper on this theme (1997), Byram and his colleague Genevieve Zarate defined acting interculturally as bringing two cultures into a relationship. They stressed that the outcomes of teaching languages should be the ability to see how different cultures relate to each other in terms of differences and similarities, and to act as mediators between them, or rather between people socialized into

them. This mediation, according to Byram and Zarate, also means being able to look at oneself from an "external" perspective when interacting with others, and to analyse and adapt one's own behaviour as well as underlying values and beliefs. Persons with the ability to take a double perspective by bringing into contact two sets of values, beliefs and behaviour are called "intercultural speakers." Byram and Fleming, (1998: p.9) defined the intercultural speaker as someone who has a knowledge of one or more cultures and social identities and capable of discovering and relating to new people from unfamiliar contexts, Chambers (2001: p. 52). Byram and Zarate challenged the long-standing assumptions of imitating the native speaker as the authority and the ultimate goal to target. They saw the imitation of the native speaker as neither desirable nor fully attainable. Moreover, it implies abandoning one's social identity in favour of another. In addition, native speakers knowledge of their culture is not any more than their knowledge of their language. Other prominent language researchers (Phillipson, 1992, Kramersch, 1993, Risager, 1998, among others) had previously begun to question the fruitfulness of having the native speaker as an ideal to strive for. Kelly, (2001:p.129) represents a similar line of thinking when pointing out that maintaining the aim of producing native (or near-native) competence is no longer realistic. What is required today is teaching that will enable the learner to function effectively in contexts where other languages and cultures are in play.

As outlined above, the past two or three decades have seen a number of developments leading to a fundamental rethinking of the objectives of language teaching, and have resulted in a more deliberate focus on cultural issues. The move away from the traditional language teaching was not an easy one, since theories of L2 acquisition and successive methods of language teaching tended to underestimate the cultural dimension. As pointed out by Chambers, (2001:p. 50) research into the role of culture in language learning was necessary to underpin the new directions which language learning was taking. This successive development was most certainly influenced by the transforming social and historical context in our modern world. Abdallah-Preteuille (2001) distinguished two significant shifts in language training currently taking place: a shift from historical, geographical and institutional knowledge to cultural learning in a broader sense and a shift from cultural competence to IC as a tool for understanding the stage management taking place around us. Culture today is no longer seen as something external to the activity of language learning itself. It should always be in the background, right from day one, Kramersch, (1993: p. 1). The ongoing research into Political and Cultural Education is now of great importance as a means to clarifying the objectives of FL teaching and how these objectives are implemented in the classrooms. The present study may be regarded as a contribution in preparing classroom activities.

Jiang, (2010) from China has carried out a research on culture in College English teaching in China. His study aims to examine the extent to which textbooks help intercultural learning. He used four methods: questionnaires, interviews, content analysis and content-based analysis. In his study 200 students and 41 Chinese teachers of English from eight universities and five provinces have completed the questionnaires. Twenty-three of the teachers were interviewed. His findings have shown that the Chinese teachers and learners all agree that the teaching of culture is very important in English teaching and learning, but it seems that the teachers do not really know how to teach culture, and they normally rely on textbooks for guidance and instructions. A content analysis method is applied to determine the varieties of culture taught through textbooks, and a content-based analysis was used to investigate how textbooks teach culture. The results of the textbooks analysis indicate that the books are not targeted at the teaching and learning of culture; neither local culture nor world cultures are given much attention in the books; tasks are not designed to teach culture, stereotypes are generally not dealt with, and ICC does not seem to be a part of English education in China. All in all, Jian finds that there is a significant mismatch between the requirements of the government and what is carried out in practice, and a mismatch between the needs of English learning and the direction of English teaching in China.

The Current Study

Previous studies have shown that almost all of the studies in the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching were on either teachers' perception of culture in language learning or teachers' cognition. Like Jian (2010), the current study targets the teaching materials. However, although both studies analyze national curricula with the purpose of finding out the cultural contents the national curricula contained, they differ in the parameters for identifying the cultural contents. The current paper sets out to explore the cultural dimension of Sudan national curriculum of English language to find out the extent to which the curriculum contributes to promoting the culture of peace among learners. In the light of the discussion in the theoretical framework of the current study, the cultural dimension can be understood as consisting of three components: the conceptions about what culture in FLT is, the beliefs about the cultural objectives of FLT, and the teaching practices aimed at reaching those objectives. The conceptions about culture and beliefs about the cultural objectives are seen as interacting and together influencing classroom practice. The interest of the study can consequently be geared towards: the potentiality of SPINE to promote the cultural dimension of language learning and the cultural components in the current curriculum that promote the cultural dimension of language learning. These points constitute the very core of the current study, and the researcher hopes to find out about the cultural dimension of the existing national curriculum and its shortcomings so that the findings of the study will be directives for future improvements.

METHODOLOGY

An analytical and descriptive approach was adopted in this study. A quantitative methodology was used. The curriculum of English Language taught at the secondary schools in Sudan, namely Sudan Practical Integrated National English (SPINE) was surveyed and analyzed for themes with the potentiality of promoting the culture of peace.

Tools for data collection

The themes and thematic areas outlined in the peace education program adopted by the international schools Association, Global Issues Network (ISA GIN), were used as a check-list. The three books of SPINE series taught at secondary were surveyed and the frequencies of the themes and thematic areas with the potentiality of developing intercultural competence were counted and their percentages were calculated.

Procedures

A comprehensive survey of book 4, book 5 and book 6 of SPINE series has been undertaken. The survey aimed to finding themes and thematic areas with the potentiality of promoting the culture of peace among learners. Sudan is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Considering the diversity in the country, only the themes and thematic areas which rest upon global principles and reflect universal values were focused upon. Students are expected to develop thinking Skills, communication skills and personal skills. The themes and thematic areas as outlined by the framework can be summarized as: human rights, social justice, development, population concerns, health and habitat, cultural diversity and the environment. These themes are expected to be incorporated and explored at appropriate time in the child's development. These themes might somehow be found in the series of SPINE, nevertheless, their presence in all the books of SPINE series with the same weight and strength is not expected.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RESULTS

The results of the analysis of the series of SPINE

SPINE series is Sudan's only national curriculum of English language. It consists of six books: SPINE one to three for basic school and SPINE four to six for secondary school. The series generally aims at enabling pupils to be linguistically as well as communicatively competent by providing them with what they need in terms of knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and opportunities for use (exercises, activities, games,...etc.). By the end of the series the pupils are expected to be able to listen, speak, read and write. The study investigated SPINE series assigned for secondary school, i.e. book four, five and six for themes and thematic areas in the series which have the potentiality of promoting intercultural competence. Although linguistic competence is very important, students need to acquire intercultural competence if they are to qualify for being national and international good citizens capable of contributing to national and global peace and stability. The series does not claim to promote intercultural competence. It is stated clearly that the SPINE series aims to promote linguistic competence. However, there are some points mentioned in the teacher's book as some of the features of SPINE 4 which may allude to intercultural competence. These include the claim that SPIN "opens windows" to the world outside and especially to English speaking countries and contributes to the education of pupils towards becoming "good Sudanese citizens". Both opening windows to the world outside and becoming good citizens require intercultural skills.

The themes of SPINE series for the secondary

Using the themes and thematic areas outlined by Peace Education Framework, the themes in SPINE Series for the secondary school in Sudan were investigated. The results showed the presence of themes and thematic areas outlined in the framework in almost all three books. However, the presence of the themes was not with the same strength and density in the ' three books alike. There is a strong presence and density for the themes of cultural diversity (16), human rights (8) and the environment (6) in SPINE4. These themes have the highest frequencies in book 4. The frequency of the themes dropped abruptly in SPINE 5 and 6 respectively as follows: the cultural diversity (4 and 2), human rights (4 and 3) and the environment (2 both). This steep decrease in the frequencies of the theme runs contrary to the expected distribution of the themes throughout the series; i.e., the more learners advance in learning a language the more their abilities and willingness to read increase, and there will be grounds for educators and teachers to diversify their reading topics to match the students' level of language and meet their different needs. Variation of reading topics – in turns– may increase the frequencies of the aforementioned themes, the thing which does not happen. On the contrary, the frequencies dropped abruptly in level 5 and 6. The decrease of the frequencies in the advanced level may indicate that the selection of these themes might have been incidental. However, the high frequencies of the themes of cultural diversity, human rights and environment may weaken the hypothesis of the presence of the themes by chance. According to the authors of SPINE, these themes and thematic areas were clearly displayed and distributed in a template accompanying the plan for each book. Nevertheless, they said that the issue of peace per se was not explicitly stated as a focus of attention. The authors wanted the SPINE series to reflect the various aspects of the Sudanese society, such as the cultural diversity of the society. As well, the issues of gender and environment have also been hot issues during the time of writing the series. This explains why these three themes in specific have higher frequencies than the others. However, both the objectives and the teaching plans as outlined in the teacher's books do not reflect the intentionality of promoting the principles underlying the adopted themes, even the ones with the highest frequencies. What is more important in this respect at this stage is whether the SPINE series have themes with the potentiality of promoting the culture of peace. According to the criterion adopted in this study for deciding on the presence or absence of the themes for promoting the culture of peace, it seems that almost all of the themes listed in the peace education framework adopted by the International Schools Association, Global Issues Network (ISA SIN) are found in

the curriculum. Therefore, we could safely say that the SPINE series contains themes capable of promoting the culture of peace. However, the presence of these themes lacks consistency. While there is a strong presence of the themes in SPINE four, the frequencies of the themes decrease in SPINE five and SPINE six. Furthermore, the presence is descending instead of being ascending. This runs contrary to the logical expected distribution where at lower stages small doses of themes capable of promoting the culture of peace are expected and the number and frequency of these themes would increase discretely in accordance with the level of the learners' standard of English which is expected to be higher at second and third year secondary respectively and not the other way round. All these findings make it difficult to exclude the chance hypothesis, i.e. the presence of the themes in the series was by chance. We mean by chance that the authors selected themes to serve linguistic purposes and it happened that these themes also serve cultural purposes. A deliberate selection, on the other hand refers to the situation where the authors select themes to serve both linguistic and cultural objectives. The higher frequencies of cultural diversity, human rights and the environment issues represent might indicate an element of the intentionality of the selection of the themes. Whether their inclusion in the English language curriculum was deliberate or by chance, the mere existence of the themes in SPINE series represents an important step towards promoting the culture of peace through teaching of English language, as the study is primarily set to confirm or negate the existence of such themes in the curriculum .

The Cultural Diversity in the series.

Cultural diversity as a theme is closely associated with human rights, one's self-image, and the recognition of the rights and contributions of various cultures and minority groups to human diversity. Among the principles central to the appreciation of cultural diversity are equality, justice and solidarity. Due to different cultural and social backgrounds, situations may require the recognition of, respect for and empathy with the different ways of interpretation. The issues related to cultural diversity may range from those that influence the daily life of people in their immediate surroundings to global issues that contribute to or threaten world peace. Themes of cultural diversity include: identity, comparisons among cultures, cultures influence on each other, cultural contributions to the world heritage, and cultural contributions to enhancing world peace. In SPINE series, the theme of cultural diversity appears in almost all the books of the series in different forms to serve certain functions. The most noticeable and frequent forms are: stories, dialogues or interviews.

In **book 4** of SPINE series, the first story which reflects cultural diversity is an anecdote of the princess and the pea. The story talks about a prince who went on a journey in search of a partner (a princess), but he did not find her. Desperately, the prince returned home. Then, one night and by sheer chance, a princess, who lost her way home, came to his house in a cool, rainy day. She had every quality of a princess that he liked his partner to have. There was only one thing that prevented the prince from considering the girl the heroine of his dream, the verification that she was a real princess. To that end, they put a pea under her mattress to check the delicacy of her skin, as princesses were traditionally thought to have delicate skins. Although the story exposes the pupils to some of the marriage customs and traditions in a specific social class, it also provides the pupils a chance to review and discuss their own customs, traditions and bride specifications followed in selecting a partner and the extent to which these customs, traditions and measurements conform to human rights.

A second story, which reflects the theme of cultural diversity, is "Loch Ness" on page 79. It is a myth story from Scotland. The story is about a monster living in a Loch (lake). It looks like a fish and can only be seen very early in the morning. Such a story raises the pupils' awareness that myth stories are common to all societies. The story also triggers the desire of the pupils to discuss local myth and ghost stories and the need to find out about the motives of telling such stories. Beliefs in ghosts have been common since early times and were reflected in folklores and folktales throughout the world. They were based on the notion that the

spirit is separable from the body and can continue its existence after the death of the body. Ghosts are believed to inhabit the netherworld and to be capable of returning to the world of the living, appearing as living beings or in a nebulous likeness of the deceased. They are thought to be especially like to haunt places or people.

In the Sudanese community, unlike other communities, the stories of ghosts are associated with certain ethnic groups whose members are thought to be capable of returning to the world of the living immediately after their death and burial. Therefore, in a society as such, the ghost stories are in one-way or the other related to stereotyping and prejudice. So, exposing pupils to samples of ghost stories from around the world will put end to the erroneous beliefs that only people of certain ethnic groups are capable of returning to the world of the living when they die and hence, stop passing on such a myth from generation to generation. Most of the examples of cultural diversity follow the traditional way of presenting cultural materials which aims at supplementing learners with information about specific culture(s). Examples of these are: a) "Merowe" on page 79, which provides historical information about living styles of people in the past, "A journey to Karima" on page 83, which talks about two boys, David and Sulieman who had been on a journey to Karima. The story sheds light on the means of transportation in Sudan and some of the Sudanese dining customs. b) "A friendly letter" written by Erisa Samuel after spending 10 days in Sudan, relates her impressions and memorable experience in Sudan on pages 179-180. c) "A supper in a restaurant" on Pages 188-189, which talks about John who decided to have a meal in a restaurant. The story reflects how food is served in a Sudanese restaurant. d) "Houses in Sudan" on pages 5-6, in which different people from different parts of the Sudan talk about their homes. It provides an example of a direct provision of cultural information.

The second form in which cultural themes are reflected is dialogue. The series contains lots of instances of dialogues which serve various purposes. One of these purposes is comparing and contrasting different customs and traditions with regards to certain issues. The dialogue between Halima from Sudan and Jenny from Britain on pages (49-54) on the issue of the wedding seems to serve the purpose of contrasting wedding customs in the two societies. The dialogue exposes pupils to the different customs and traditions in wedding ceremonies in both countries.

Another example of a dialogue which encourages comparing and contrasting different cultures is the dialogue between Natale and Micheal Johnson, a British secondary school teacher in Malakal on pages (158-159). The dialogue informs about how people in the two countries prepare for and celebrate Christmas. A third dialogue, which also inspires comparing and contrasting different customs in celebrating birthday occasions is a talk among a number of girls in "Birthday Surprise" on pages (56-57).

Astonishingly, the contents of the dialogue do not directly lend themselves to contrasting and comparing cultures. They require the teacher's intervention for guidance. The other dialogues which feature cultural diversity are "Ramadan", a comparison between a Muslim's daily life in Ramadan and a Muslim's normal life on page 163 and the dialogue between "Mahasin", a mother and "Sawsan", her daughter in "The Good Old Days" on page 206. The dialogue contrasts going to school at different eras. Mahasin shows her daughter how going to school in the time when she was a little girl differs from going to school nowadays.

In **SPINE 5**, the theme of cultural diversity takes only one form, i.e. a story. In the topic "Rural and Urban life", pupils were exposed to two different modes of life: a day in the life of a mechanic and a day in the life of a nomadic family. At the noisy workshop of the mechanic which is located in a busy crowded area in Omdurman, the pupils feel and experience the living style in cities with all its complexity and fast rhythms. On the contrary, pupils feel and live the simplicity of the rural life in the story of the nomadic family. While the mechanic story features one of the aspects of the urban lifestyle, i.e. the relative individuality of the city

life, the nomadic family's story reflects the collective or the communal aspect of the rural life. Although the discussion questions (p. 26) which follow the story can hardly be said to direct pupils' thinking to these ends, the contrast between the urban and the rural lifestyles is further emphasized by the folk story (book 5, p. 27) which talks about a man who has been living in the countryside since his early childhood and has never been to a city or a town before because he thought he needed nothing from towns. When he finally decided to visit a town, he was surprised by the scene of the people coming out of the town in cars loaded with goods, passing by without even greeting him. This was for him an altogether new behaviour which he had never experienced in his simple community in the countryside where people, no matter how busy they might be, never pass by without saying a word of greet. Consequently, the man thought something bad might have been happening in the city which has haunted the people's minds and as a result they were busy escaping the city. The man decided to return back to the village before even reaching the town. The discussion questions following the folk story are meant to point out this line of thinking.

A contrast between what people do for entertainment or how they spend their leisure time in rural and urban areas has been made on page 128. In towns, people go to parks, theatres, cinemas or might prefer to stay at home and watch T.V. In rural areas, people in different villages might gather together at weekends to entertain themselves by dancing, wrestling, racing and many other exciting activities. Through the "International Sport" topic, pupils can discuss, comment on and contrast the international relations. While the countries of the world often find it difficult to agree with each other on political or economic issues, in international sporting events, people try to forget the things which divide them and come together to enjoy competing with each other peacefully.

In **book 6**, there are only two topics which lend themselves to the theme "the cultural diversity". In the book the theme of cultural diversity takes two forms. The first is a radio interview with a Sudanese expert on eating habits in Sudan (Food and Nutrition). In the Family programme in Radio SPINE, the interviewee Professor Faiza Zumrawi talks about the Sudanese various dining customs. The second form is a group of extracts from around the world on various cultures and customs (A world of difference on Pages 119-126). For example, the extracts present a variety of ways of greetings from all over the world. The extracts expose pupils to greetings in Sudan, Britain, China, Japan and Iceland. The extracts also talk about punctuality in Sudan, Britain and Brazil. Furthermore, they also contain information about superstition in different countries such as Sudan, Britain, the USA and Italy. The discussion Questions highlight the cultural differences throughout the world. Pupils are asked to contrast ways of greetings in Sudan and Thai, time to arrival when invited to a party in Sudan and Brazil and the advantages and the disadvantages of being punctual. It seems that the goal behind these contrasts is to raise pupils' awareness of these cultural differences and prepare them to tolerate differences. Pupils are also encouraged to discuss superstitions as a step towards criticizing bad customs .

From the above discussion of the theme of cultural diversity in the three books of SPINE series, it is clear that quantity wise, book 4 has the most topics which deal with cultural diversity. However, the way in which the theme was presented is not effective. In that, in almost all of the topics, pupils were exposed to two or more than two contrasting modes of culture in ways that do not require any deep thinking or deduction. For instance, book 4 follows the traditional way of teaching culture which aims at providing pupils with plain cultural information. Books 5 and 6, on the other hand, in spite of the paucity of the topics which reflect the cultural diversity, the topics included and the discussion questions following each topic enable pupils to discuss the theme of diversity in depth. Hence, the ways in which the theme was reflected seem to yield the objectives of teaching cultural diversity, i.e. bringing about tolerance, empathy and the recognition and respect for the others.

To sum up, the SPINE series designated for secondary schools have themes and thematic areas with the potentiality of promoting the culture of peace. The presence of the themes is not the same in strength and quantity in the three books alike. While there is strong presence of the theme in book four, the number of the topics reflecting the theme decreases abruptly in book five and book six. Also there is some presence for themes that are in contradiction with the culture of peace. In spite of the presence of the themes potential of developing intercultural competence, it is hardly to notice any significant reflects on students actual performance. A number of factors have contributed to the inefficacy of these themes in developing the intercultural competence. These include the quantity and quality of the themes, their distributions across the series, the teacher's attitude and the question of training on how to interculturalise teaching, and the institutions preparedness to adopt the goal of developing intercultural competence as a priority These factors need to be addressed and fixed so that the current curriculum can contribute to developing intercultural competence among learners.

CONCLUSION

The focus of the research has been on finding out about the potentiality that the existing Sudan's National Curriculum of English language has for developing intercultural competence, an essential element for promoting the culture of peace among learners. A comprehensive survey of SPINE, using content analysis method was conducted. Eight themes were targeted for investigations. The findings have shown that SPINE series for secondary included almost all the themes outlined in the peace education framework which indicates the potentiality of developing intercultural competence. These findings will be of interest to whoever interested in integrating cultural components into the language curricula so that they can be capable of promoting the culture of peace. The findings may also be of relevance to designers of teaching materials and textbook authors, since textbooks continue to play a central role in foreign language education, especially at beginner and intermediate levels. Although the presence of such themes is essential, other factors such as the teachers' roles, the teachers' perceptions and the institution perception of cultural contents are decisive in promoting intercultural competence among learners. Training on how to integrating culture and maximize its positive effects on learners is also essential. Training is needed for both textbook writers and language teachers alike. These remarks are required for improving the current national curriculum so that it can develop an intercultural competence among learners.

The reasonable amount of the cultural themes included in the series indicate the potentiality the curriculum has for promoting the culture of peace. In order for the Sudan Practical Integrated National English (SPINE) series to contribute to intercultural competence a required for promoting the culture of peace among learners, a number of amendments have to be carried out. These required amendments include: (a) redistributing the current themes included in the series so that they look balanced and graded. This can be done by assigning smaller doses of cultural contents to learners at earlier stages and increasing the doses as the learners' standards of English improve. (b) Narrowing the scope of the broader themes outlined by peace framework by selecting sub-themes that provide grounds for addressing the direct problems of the society such as prejudice and stereotyping. (c) Supplementing the curriculum with more cultural themes of direct relevance to the learners' specific problems. Three ways were suggested for carrying out these amendments: supplementing the current curriculum, reshaping it or producing an utterly new curriculum in which all the recommended amendments will be considered. Each of the three ways has its advantages and drawbacks

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