

FRENCH LANGUAGE AND THE SUDAN; MISSED APPOINTMENT

* Dr. Mahmoud Adam Daoud

* Humanities, sociolinguistics. University of Nyala

Abstract

This article aims to project some light on the evolution of the presence of French language in Sudan and draws some lines of its history and its presence home. It turns out that despite the coincident that were about to make of Sudan, or at least any of its parts, a francophone country and its neighborhood with many Francophone countries and the efforts deployed to develop its teaching and learning, there is still a great work to do.

KEYWORDS: SUDAN. LANGUAGE. FRENCH .EDUCATION. EVOLUTION.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

It's been a considerably long time French is present in Sudan and there are facts and circumstances, as the neighborhood with Francophone countries, which are supposed promote the teaching of French in this country. We shall explore in this article the evolution of the French presence in the country and the facts that influence the teaching and learning of the language. We first discuss some historical elements involving France and its language in the country and take stock of what has become, in time, the teaching of this language in Sudan.

The first French influence on Sudan, although it was indirectly, constituted a point of radical change in the country's modern history as noted Attaalsid (2001:1):

"The modern history of Sudan owes much to Napoleon. It is the victory in 1797 in the Battle of the Pyramids which destabilized the power of the Mamelukes, the Caucasian ruling class in Egypt, and opened the way to access the power of the soldier of fortune Albanian Muhammad Ali. " This Mohammed Ali, in search of gold and men to strengthen his power and to secure the southern border of the state, occupied the Sudan and it is this occupation that brought together the maximum territories that make up the present-day Sudan.

When the Egyptian campaign to occupy the Sudan has started and began its work, the French presence was felt there too. Indeed, it was accompanied by the French traveler, Frederick Cailliaud (to whom the French Cultural Center in Khartoum is called) and it was he who was the first to publish a work with drawings of archaeological sites of Nubia in 1826.

After the establishment of the Turkish-Egyptian power in Sudan in 1821, France was the first country to open a consulate in 1839, and have installed nationals (including 20 families remained until the end of Turkish-Egyptian rule) (Abousalim 1979).

After the fall of the Turkish-Egyptian rule, which coincides with the colonial expansion in Africa, the Sudan was a major point of interest for the French. They wanted to link their colonies in Central Africa with that of Djibouti in the east. The Berlin Conference of November 1884 granted the French territories extending to the west of Darfur in Sudan, but they stopped at Wadaye. Dar Masalit had chosen to join the Sudan in 1922 after the agreement Golani. In Southern Sudan, for cons, they occupied the lands extending to Kadok (current Fashoda) in July 1899 but the English considered this part as part of their expansion areas, they arrived, too, at Fashoda in September 1899 to pop a crisis between the two colonial powers (the Fashoda incident). The resolution of this crisis by withdrawing French led negotiations on many issues and ended the third Anglo-French Entente Cordiale of 1904-1914 (Bahil 1997).

As for the teaching of French Sudan, it was introduced for the first time, according to Bashir (1970), in 1846 when a missionary school has taught it to the children of foreigners residing in Khartoum, the same date where the educational institutions began to teach foreign languages in a systematic way in Europe (Porcher 2004). But this teaching was interrupted in 1885 with the arrival of Mahdi to power and restarted again with the arrival of the Anglo-Egyptian and the return of the missionaries in 1899. This language continued to be taught in missionary schools and schools of foreign communities without being in public schools, but being taught by other schools present in the country, the educational authorities had recognized it as regards to qualification for admission to higher education. The Khartoum University College (University of Khartoum since 1956) required for admission to the Faculty of Arts, a Sudan School Certificate or Cambridge School Certificate, Certificate Greek or Egyptian Certificate with at least an average of 70% in three subjects chosen among nine. French was among these materials. (University of Khartoum 1970).

Another institution that taught French was the Egyptian educational mission in Sudan. As French is taught in the Egyptian system, these schools also teach it in Sudan.

When the Egyptians have opened a branch of Cairo University in Khartoum in 1955, French was taught as a course of two credit hours in the Faculty of Law.

When Sudan gained independence in 1956, France was the fifth country to renew diplomatic relations with Sudan and revive its investments.

On the initiative of French families and the French Lay Mission the Crédit Lyonnais (branch of Khartoum) funded the opening of a French school in 1957. It gradually developed and a French class for those who want learn it was open. Then in 1958 two independent institutions, the French Cultural Center and the French School were created (Elamin 2000) (Abdelgadir 2003).

In 1960, according to Professor A. Altayeb, Dean of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Khartoum at the time (interviewed August 23, 1996), an initiative was taken to the University of Khartoum by the wife of a history professor at the faculty began to give French lessons in the evening to her husband's colleagues. Gradually the group has grown and asked for help from the Embassy of France in Khartoum. Then the idea of introducing the French in the Department of European Languages of the Faculty of Arts was born. But the transition to institutionalization was not easy. A project to this effect was presented to the University Senate for the first time but it was rejected, and then presented for the second time, it was ratified to give birth to a section within the Department of European Languages in 1962. In 1964 the section has grown to become an independent department (Maury 1988).

It should be recalled that in 1963, the Organization of African Unity has recommended that former British colonies introduce the teaching of French in their education systems, and the former French colonies should do the same with English (Anis 1991).

Omdurman Islamic University opened a department of languages (English and French) in 1973; it was divided in 1978 to give birth to two independent departments; French Language and literature and English language and literature.

Then the French departments have succeeded. After the enlargement of higher education in the early 1990s, we now have ten French departments in the faculties of arts and education in Sudanese universities.

This position was supported by UNESCO campaign (organization that actively participates in the financing of education) the democratization of African school systems in much the same years (Ibid.). In these circumstances, The Higher Institute of Teacher Training (created in 1960 and became in 1974 a Faculty of Education and annexed to

the University of Khartoum), which was previously financed and equipped by UNESCO opened a department French in 1966 to train teachers who were to teach this language in secondary schools in Sudan.

An event that was widely served French teaching was the arrival of Arab nationalists to power with Nimeiri in 1969. This regime, anxious to achieve Arab unity, began with the approximation of the educational systems. It began with the merger with the Egyptian system to arrive later to the unification of programs with all Arab systems (Anis 1991). As French was taught in Egypt and that its introduction was supported by UNESCO and the Organization of African Unity, it found the way open to access the Sudanese secondary school.

The National Conference on Education in Sudan of October 1969 (base of reforms of 1970) decided to include in its recommendations the teaching of French in secondary schools. They went further to point to the French-English equality:

"We do not just teach one foreign language. Our relations with African countries and our relations with the world make French and English equal in importance. In high school, there is no problem to learn more English with those who specialize in the field of science and Arabic or English or French to those who specialize in letters" (Democratic Republic of Sudan 1970: 10).

French was thus introduced in the 1970-1971 school year, first in two schools for a trial period of two years.

To start the policy of introducing the teaching of French in secondary education, Mohieldin Saber, Minister of Education at the time said: *"In order to increase the general culture of the people and deepen our relationships with our African neighbors, the second European language introduced in secondary schools is the French language"* (quoted by Anis, 1991: 175).

When the Sudanese authorities have decreed this subject in secondary school, they have advanced the following purposes:

"The French allows Sudan to consolidate its strategic position within the African continent;
- It provides access to technical and scientific progress and openness to the modern world;
- It promotes reading of African writers of French expression, knowledge of Francophone African communities and building relationships with them;
- It facilitates economic exchange between France and Sudan" (Adam 1986: 62).

Two years after the implementation of this policy, the Sudanese press, approving the decision, returned to the subject. Alshafa daily, one of the two newspapers at the time (both governmental) wrote in its issue of November 4, 1974 (quoted by Elamin 1979: 158) that the decision to teach French in secondary schools is due to:

- "The increasingly important role of the Francophone community as a whole;
- The concern for the diversification of training, information; knowledge belongs to everyone and is not only Anglo-Saxon;
- The policy pursued by France in the Middle East;
- The competitiveness of France at the political, industrial and technical level. "

The Ministry of Education continually called for teachers. In 1978 there were 150 teachers for a total of 130 secondary schools in Sudan (Elamin 1979).

This serious beginning has left Sudanese language specialists as Thelwell (1978: 2) write about the linguistic situation in Sudan: *"The French have recently been introduced and could challenge the position of English in the school future."*

Anis (1991) assessed the situation two decades after the introduction of French in the Sudanese secondary school. She sees that this *"decline of French in schools can only be attributed to the delay in the real democratization of education"* and concluded: *"The teaching of French policy appears as a failure, failure due first to the absence of any real status of the teaching of foreign languages, despite the symbolic recognition of the new education policy that combined teaching languages and general culture"* (ibid: 182).

As we have seen in history, the French language has had possibilities to enter the country, now it seems it is still far from finding its place in the educational system and the Sudanese language map. In the Sudanese universities, the departments of French are the least chosen by the students among the departments of languages.

At school, it's even worse, because among 2700 secondary school there are 239, 8.8% only providing teaching French language with 280 teachers (Ali 2012). In the Sudan School Certificate in 2012 there were 24 candidates who have chosen French among the 418,818 students who sat to examination.

regarding reading French writers, one of the purposes declared by the Sudanese authorities in introducing the French language, we asked the teachers of the University of Nyala (a University in a region neighboring two francophone countries) surveyed in November 2012, if they had read a book in French, we found none. And when we've asked if they have read a translation of a book from French, only 6 of the 36 teachers surveyed reported having done so. Among these 6 one had read a text in his or her specialty and the remaining 5 read literary works.

In order not to conclude, more investigation on why the French remains in the outskirts of Sudan without being able to actually access is to be conducted. But what is sure is that accelerating partnership programs and exchanges with neighboring francophone countries fully supported by a political will and economic partners can accelerate understanding and consequently the learning and usage of this language in Sudan

REFERENCES

1. Abdalla Altayeb Almajzoub (Pr), ex-dean of the faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum, interviewed in Khartoum in 23 August 1996.
2. Abdelgadir, H. (2003) : Les besoins langagiers et les objectifs de l'apprentissage du français chez les adultes au Soudan, Ph. D. thesis, University of Khartoum, 263 p.
3. Abousalim, M. I. (1979) : (Tarikh al khartoum) History of Khartoum, Dareljeel, Beyrou, 219 p.
4. Adam, B. M. (1986) : Documents audio-sonores-visuels et l'enseignement du français langue étrangère au Soudan, Ph. D. thesis, Université de Poitiers.
5. Ali, Afaf Ahmed (2012) ; Inspector, Federal Ministry of Education, interviewed on 9 September 2012
6. Anis, A. I. (1991) : Langues et éducation au Soudan ; éléments pour aborder la problématique de l'éducation linguistique, Ph. D. thesis , Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, 446 p.
7. Attaalsid, M. (2000) : www.sudan.net
8. Bahl, G. (1997) : The Fashoda incident, www.cusd.chico.ca.us
9. Bashir, M. O. (1970) : (Tatawur altaliim fis Suodan 1898-1956)
10. Calvet, L.-J. (2002) : Le marché aux langues ; les effets linguistiques de la mondialisation, Plon, Paris, 220 p.
11. Conseil de l'Europe (1993) : Objectifs de l'apprentissage des langues vivantes, Vol. 1, Les éditions du Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg, 91 p.
12. Elamin, Y. (1979) : Le statut de l'enseignement du français au Soudan ; aspects sociologiques, linguistiques et pédagogiques, Ph. D. thesis, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, 367 p.
13. Elamin, Y. (2000) : La situation de l'enseignement du français et son utilisation au Soudan, non-Published article, 16 p.
14. Elamin, Y. et Abdelgadir, H. (1988) : 'La formation des enseignants de français au Soudan', Dialogues et Cultures, No 32, FPIP, pp. 141-147.
15. Elias, Y. (1979) : (*Harakat attariib bijame'at alkhartoum*) 'the movement of arabicisation in the University of Khartoum', paper presented to the conference on arabisation and the problems of the Arabic language in higher education held in the University of Khartoum from 15 to 20 January 1979, 8 p.
16. Elias, Y. (1985) : 'Le français et le monde du travail au Soudan' Dialogues et Cultures, No. 27, FIPF, pp. 195-199.



17. Maury, G. (1988) : '*L'enseignement du français au Soudan et les besoins du marché*', Dialogues et Cultures, No. 33, FIPF, pp. 150-153.
18. Porcher, L. (2004) : *L'enseignement des langues étrangères*, Hachette éducation, Paris, 127 p.
19. Democratic Republic of Sudan (1970) : (Massail assassia an alatfal walshabab) fundamental issues about children and youth, report presented to the UNESCO seminar held in Beirut from 23 to 28 February 1970, document No. 6/12/114 National Archives, Khartoum, 12 p.
20. Thelwell, R. S. (1978) : '*Aspects of language in the Sudan*' in Occasional papers in linguistics and language learning, No. 5, New University of Ulster, pp. 1-23.

Address for correspondence:

Author : Dr. Mahmoud Adam Daoud. Humanities, sociolinguistics. University of Nyala.

E-mail : makudu@hotmail.com , madaoud@nyalau.edu.sd