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Education



LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE NAIROBI

Taban lo Liyong

This new syllabus, based on the relevance of subject matter to the human conditions obtaining in East Africa, and at the same time bearing in mind the boundary-lessness of the modern world, took three years to overthrow the ogres of Cambridge and Oxford. The coup was not swiftly accomplished, but we have now here the most revolutionary syllabus stressing the centrality of East Africa, and fanning outwards through Africa into other human experiences. We still have to integrate Australia and New Zealand and Latin America among the refined people of the world whose literatures merit discussion in classrooms.

Already, Makerere University has altered its literature syllabus accordingly.

This new species of animal was developed in the workshop of Messrs. James Ngugi, Owuor Anyumba, Taban lo Liyong, and Faculty of Arts, Inc. University of Nairobi.

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE (*English-based Studies*)

The Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi exists as two sub-departments: of English-based studies and of French-based studies. The sub-department of English-based studies offers a syllabus for courses either on the 3-1-1 system (i.e., as one of three subjects taken in the first year, and as the sole subject in the second and third years), or on the 3-2-2 system (as one of three subjects taken in the first year, and as one of two subjects taken in the second and third years). French-based studies are offered in a 3-2-2 scheme of study only.

In English-based studies two lecture courses are given for each of the two papers which are taken at the end of the first year. In the subsequent years two lecture courses are given for each of twelve papers. Students following a 3-1-1 course take eight of the twelve papers, four in each year, of which Papers 1-4 are compulsory, the first two to be studied in the second year and the second two in the third year. The other four papers are chosen from eight available options, and two are taken in each year. In the 3-2-2 scheme, students take four papers, two of them (Papers 1 and 2) being compulsory, the others drawn from the remaining ten. The compulsory papers in both the 3-1-1 and 3-2-2 schemes are examined at the end of the year in which they are studied. All the optional papers are examined at the end of the final year. Course-work written during the two final years is marked and assessed as twenty percent of the final total of marks considered in the awarding of the degree.

The substance of the papers in English-based studies is as follows:

FIRST YEAR SYLLABUS

Paper 1 Language, criticism, and verse

An introduction to language analysis and description, with special reference to problems of style. Elementary principles of criticism and discrimination.

Introduction to oral and vernacular poetry.

A broad anthology of poetry covering African, English, American, Caribbean, and Commonwealth verse.

Paper 2 The Novel and Drama

The novel and short story, with strong African and East African emphasis. An introduction to drama.

SECOND AND THIRD YEAR SYLLABUS (3-1-1 and 3-2-2 degree schemes)

Paper 1 Linguistics and the Theory and Criticism of Literature

An introduction to the study of language as an auditory system of signs, and as a symbolic system. Students are introduced to certain procedures used in the description of the phonological, grammatical and lexical sub-systems of a language and to some aspects of semantic theory. Features of synchronic and diachronic variation are also described.

The second part of the paper deals with significant critical commentaries on the nature of language and its use as the medium of literature; with classical and modern writings and theories (including those of linguistic analysis) which have sought to determine the nature and characteristic features and structural constituents of literature and to determine the principles upon which it can be evaluated. This part also deals with actual description, analysis and evaluation of works of literature, with their different modes, styles, and genres.

Paper 2 The African Novel

A study of the African novel in the twentieth century, mainly in English, and in English translation; with related prose writing, shorter fiction, autobiography and critical and theoretical matter relating to the emergence, contents, and form of this work.

Texts studied include works by the following authors: Tutuola, Achebe, Soyinka, Okara, Ekwensi, Ngugi, Abrahams, La Guma, Mphahlele, Lessing, Gordimer, Jacobson, Mongo Beti, Camara Laye.

Paper 3 Oral Literature

A study of the nature of "oral" literature and its relation to other forms of literature; the cultures, social structures, and systems of belief with which it is associated. An introduction to methodology in fieldwork and analysis.

A survey of African oral literature. Select case studies in East Africa. Field projects.

Paper 4 Drama

A study of drama from the classical Greek to the modern, and to African drama in English; with in particular a study of works that exemplify dramatic conventions at different times; a study of the nature of drama as an art form. The use of dance, song and music in African drama is studied.

Students are also instructed in theater and stage techniques and are required to take an active part in a production.

Paper 5 African Poetry and its Modern Context

A study of representative poetic texts in English from different areas of the African continent, together with an examination of relevant contemporary verse from other continents, and its reception in Africa.

Paper 6 The Classic Novel

A study of major novels in English or English translation; a study of the emergence and development of the novel as a modern literary form.

Paper 7 East African Writing and its Background

A study of contemporary East African fiction, drama, and verse, and of contemporary and recorded oral literature; with a study of the cultural and historical background, including autobiographical and socio-political writings.

Paper 8 Caribbean Literature and Politics

A study of Caribbean poetry, fiction and drama, in English and English translation, in the context of a study of the politics and government of the West Indies.

Paper 9 Afro-American and American Literature

A study of Afro-American literature and culture in relation to the American tradition in fiction and poetry, and to the social and historical context. This involves the study of certain classic American texts, and works of the American South, leading to a survey of Afro-American poetry, novels, and plays.

Paper 10 The English Poetic Tradition, 1350–1940, and its European Context

A study of the development of English poetry from Chaucer to Eliot, involving some study of important influences from the continent of Europe, notably from the Greek and Latin classics, the continental writers of the middle ages and the Renaissance, and the Romantic movement.

Paper 11 Shakespeare and Tolstoy

A study of two major literary cultures in their greatest periods: the drama and lyric poetry of Shakespeare's England and the prose fiction and drama of Tolstoy's Russia. Texts of the major writers of these two periods are studied in relation to the cultural, social, political and economic history of the times.

Studies include Elizabethan lyrics, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Donne, Jonson, Tolstoy, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Chekov.

Paper 12 Oriental Literature

A study in English translation of classics of Oriental literature, Indian, Chinese and Japanese, and of modern writing from Asia.

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND AFRICAN LANGUAGES

The Department of Linguistics and African Languages started functioning in September 1969 following the Report of the Committee of Language and Literature which recommended that such a department should be set up. Administratively, it comes within the Department of Literature, but as from the Academic year 1970–71 it has been a department in its own right.

The new department was set up with three main objectives:

- (1) To accord African Languages their proper place among the teaching and research activities of an African University.
- (2) To improve the quality of language teaching in the schools, not only by giving detailed attention to the structure and usage of the languages under study, but also by deepening the students' awareness of differences between languages, the role of language in education and in society in general, and the form and significance of language varieties, both social and geographical.

(3) To provide a focus for those disciplines in the Faculty of Arts which are concerned to a greater or lesser extent with language as an aspect of social behavior. For example, a sociolinguistic approach to the question of the role of language in social stratification and identification might be of interest to sociologists. The findings of historical linguistics may provide an important source of information for historians and may offer a basis of co-operation with the Department of History. Courses on descriptive linguistics and in contrastive analysis may be relevant to language teaching method courses in the Department of Education. Some aspects of linguistic studies might fruitfully overlap with literary studies—e.g., in stylistic or textual analysis.

Courses will be offered within the 3:2:2 degree structure. The first year examination consists of two papers:

- (1) An Introduction to the Study of Language.
- (2) Introductory Study of an African Language.

Initially, the only African language to be studied fully will be Swahili, although provision is made in the syllabus to deal with the description of other African languages as part of the training in descriptive linguistics. It is hoped that this start will lay the foundation for the full study of other African languages, as and when teaching materials and personnel become available.

The content of these courses will be as follows:

- (1) An Introduction to the Study of Language.
 - The nature and function of language as a social institution and as a vehicle of culture.
 - Spoken and written systems: the development of writing systems.
 - The speech community: language and dialect, social and geographical dialects, standard languages, pidgins, creoles.
 - The pattern and processes of language change.
 - The classification of languages: language groups in Eastern Africa.
 - Introduction to descriptive linguistics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics.
- (2) Introductory study of an African Language (Swahili)
 - (a) The history and development of Swahili. Standard Swahili and the dialects.
 - (b) Swahili Usage: A study of the vocabulary and structure of written and oral Swahili in various registers.

The second and third year examinations will consist of a total of four papers. Papers 1–3 will be compulsory.

1. *Phonological and Grammatical Systems*

- (a) The identification, description and classification of speech sounds. The concept of the phoneme. Other approaches to classification: prosodic and distinctive feature analysis.
- (b) Grammatical categories and relationships (morphological and syntactic). The role of semantics and lexis in grammatical description. (In this paper examples will be taken wherever possible from languages spoken in Eastern Africa.)

2. *The Structure of an African language (Swahili)*

The phonological and grammatical structure of the standard variety of Swahili.

3. *Analytical Study of Swahili Texts*

The course will involve the study and analysis of as wide a variety as possible of modern and old literary and other texts, written and oral. The primary object will be to expose the student to a variety of available language material in Swahili. This should also help to improve the student's own operational competence in the language.

4. *Contrastive Study of English*

The phonological and grammatical structure of spoken English; the grammatical structure of standard written English with reference to a contrastive analysis of Swahili.

5. *Literature in Swahili*

An introduction to classical Swahili literature. Recent developments in prose and verse.

6. *Comparative Linguistics (with special reference to East Africa)*

The bases of language comparison: typological and genetic classification. A comparative study of the Bantu sub-group. Historical implications of such a study.

7. *Socio-Linguistics*

Socio-linguistic implications of multilingualism in East Africa. The correlation of language use with social settings. National and regional language policies.

8. *A Literature Option*

One of the papers 1, 2, 3, 5, or 7 from the Literature Department syllabus.

9. *A Dissertation*

With the approval of the head of the Department, students may carry out an investigation into an aspect of the phonological, grammatical or semantic structure of their own first language.

Students are expected to have at least "O" level in Swahili for entrance to this course, or to pass a qualifying examination.

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE (*French-based Studies*)

La section de français de l'Université de Nairobi a été fondée en 1965. Du point de vue administratif elle est rattaché à l'Institut d'anglais de l'Université.

En ce qui concerne les examens, le système d'études fait partie du "3-2-2 pattern" c'est-à-dire que l'étudiant français en deuxième et troisième année doit choisir une deuxième matière en plus du français. Le B.A. se compose de 4 examens.

Un projet a été mis au point pour remanier cette organisation. Il est à espérer que ce plan entre en application dans les meilleurs délais. Nous allons donc d'abord décrire la présente organisation pour, ensuite, présenter le nouveau système qui sera bientôt mis en place.

A. *Systeme Actuel:*

- (a) A la fin de la 1ère année il y a deux examens
l'un, oral, qui se passe au laboratoire de langues; l'autre, écrit, qui se compose d'une dictée, d'une traduction, d'exercices de grammaire, de questions sur un texte et d'une rédaction.
- (b) A la fin de la seconde année, a lieu le premier examen faisant partie intégrante du B.A.

Paper I—traduction de français en anglais (deux textes) suivie d'une rédaction;

(c) A la fin de la troisième année les étudiants passent 3 examens

Paper II—traduction d'anglais en français suivie d'exercices de grammaire

Paper III—trois questions portant sur des oeuvres littéraires de 17^e au 19^e s. choisies parmi les oeuvres étudiées pendant l'année

Paper IV—quatre questions portant sur des oeuvres littéraires du 20^e s. et sur la littérature africaine d'expression française. Les réponses doivent être rédigées en anglais, pour ce dernier examen. Les étudiants qui sont inscrits en "Education" sont dispensés du 4^e examen (Paper IV).

B. Nouveau Systeme:

(1) L'admission en 1^{ère} année ne pourra se faire que si les étudiants sont en possession d'un "O" Level en français. Les étudiants ayant étudié le français mais n'ayant pas passé le "O" Level seront soumis à un examen de même niveau établi par la section de français de l'Université. Seuls les étudiants qui auront passé avec succès cet examen pourront être admis à s'inscrire en 1^{ère} année.

Les étudiants titulaires d'un "A" Level en français bénéficieront d'un régime spécial en 1^{ère} année (réduction d'horaire).

(2) Deux options seront créées pour le B.A.

Les étudiants auront le choix, à la fin de la 2^{ème} année entre une section langue et une section littérature.

(a) la section langue aura pour objectif principal l'aspect pratique du français et l'effort majeur sera porté sur les traductions orale et écrite. Cette option est susceptible d'intéresser plus spécialement ceux parmi les étudiants qui se destinent aux carrières dans le commerce, l'industrie ou les relations internationales.

(b) la section littérature fera porter l'accent surtout sur l'aspect littéraire du français. Elle visera à donner aux étudiants une bonne connaissance des différentes cultures francophones. Cette section conviendra plus particulièrement aux étudiants intéressés par de futures recherches et se destinant éventuellement à un Ph.D.

Voici, sans entrer dans le détail, comment seront conçues les études.

En 1^{ère} année l'accent sera mis d'une manière égale sur les textes littéraires, les textes de civilisation (articles de journaux, par exemple) et la révision des notions acquises dans l'enseignement secondaire.

En 2^{ème} année, les étudiants seront groupés ("A" Level et "O" Level). Il y aura une étude approfondie de certaines oeuvres littéraires

contemporaines afin de préparer l'étudiant à une meilleure compréhension des problèmes de notre époque.

En même temps, l'initiation à la Linguistique Appliquée aura pour but de fournir à l'étudiant une maîtrise accrue tant des méthodes d'apprentissage que des méthodes d'utilisation, voire d'enseignement du français.

Les séances en petits groupes au laboratoire de langues assureront une continuelle surveillance des connaissances acquises et les renforceront par la pratique.

En 3^{ème} année, les étudiants qui ont choisi la section de langue suivront des cours intensifs de traduction (orale et écrite) et seront invités à participer à des discussions sur des articles de journaux à propos de problèmes économiques ou d'actualité. Le laboratoire de langues sera là encore largement mis à contribution.

Pour les étudiants qui auront choisi la section de littérature ils pourront approfondir leur connaissance de la littérature africaine d'expression française et également s'initier à la méthodologie de la critique littéraire. Ces contacts littéraires fourniront une excellente ouverture sur la culture contemporaine.

En résumé, l'enseignement du français à l'Université de Nairobi peut assurer une excellente préparation à d'éventuelles carrières dans le secteur privé ou bien encore une intéressante introduction à des domaines littéraires variés (grâce aux nombreuses littératures des pays francophones).

L'étudiant trouvera en outre une ambiance particulièrement favorable à un travail fructueux en petits groupes, effectué sous la direction de professeurs dont le français est la langue maternelle. L'étudiant n'aura jamais l'impression d'être "noyé" dans la masse mais au contraire se sentira aidé et soutenu dans ses efforts.

