CHAPTER 1
AN INTRODUCTION

1.0. Yemen: An overview:

Yemen, the home of Queen of Sheba, or what was known in the writings of the ancient Romans as 'Arabia Felix', in contrast to the relatively barren 'Arabia Deserta' to the north, has been in the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. It is located on the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the southern western part of Asia between latitudes 12 and 20 north and longitudes 41 and 54 east. The total area excluding Alrub-el-Khali, 'the empty quarter desert', is 555,000 square kilometer. Yemen is bordered by Saudi Arabia in the north, the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden in the south and Sultanate of Oman in the east, and the Red Sea from the west.

The resident population of Yemen, according to the official statistics for the year 1998, is 17,707,000 with an over all density of approximately 30 persons per square kilometer.

Yemen has a large number of islands scattered in both Arabian Sea and Red Sea, reaching 112 in round figures. The largest of which is Soqotra, located in the Arabian Sea in a 510-kilometers distance from the main land and with population of about 44,000 distributed in an area of 3650 square kilometer (see Republic of Yemen Map, Appendix 25).

From a historical point of view and due to its key position on the ancient spice routes, Yemen has been severally invaded by different empires like Ethiopian, Persian, Portuguese, and finally the British Empire.

Being a strategic seaport on the crossroads between east and west, the British were attracted by Aden, who captured it on January 19th, 1839, and then they gradually spread their own control over the rest of the whole southern part of Yemen. Since then, the government of Aden was associated to the British Government of Bombay, India, till January 4th, 1937, when the British decided to exclude Aden from being part of their administration in Bombay and declared Aden as British Crown Colony.
directly administered by the Ministry of Colonies in London. Henceforth, they divided the country into three parts: Aden Colony, Aden Western Protectorate, and Aden eastern Protectorate.¹

Southern part of Yemen remained so till November 30th, 1967, when the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) was declared as an independent state.

The northern part of Yemen, partially, remained under the rule of the Ottoman State from August 3rd, 1538 till October, 30th, 1918 when this part of the country was declared as an independent state run by the Imam, a monarch who ruled this part for about 44 years. The Imams' kingdom was overthrown on September 26th, 1962, when a republican revolution broke out and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) was announced as an independent and free state.

The two parts were reunited on May 22nd, 1990 in one democratic and free country under the name of Yemen Republic. Since the reunification the country has been taking serious steps towards the democratization of a free and stable society, and opening up to the outside world, but the country has to go a very long way to secure such a flourishing and developed situation.

1.1. System of education in Yemen:

System of education is commonly known as a set of several types of educational stages, schools, curricula, programs, texts, activities, and teachers. Furthermore, it includes the educational administration, its organization and funding.

It is also defined as the programd education which is recently meant to be a set of interrelated components of the educational process, having its own inputs and outputs (see Ba-Abbad, 1994: 26). The educational system is, however, an integrated part of the whole social system in a particular society, which, naturally, has its own sub-systems such as the system of

¹ Western Protectorate includes: Sultanates and Mashyakhates of Fadhlí, Awlaqi, Mehlí, Qatabí, Aqrabi, etc. Eastern Protectorate includes: Sultanates of Qua'iti, Wahidi, kathiri, and Mahri.
primary education, teacher training, administration, funding, and evaluation system. All these systems are interrelated and can best be understood as a whole entity, viz., the educational system which is interchangeably affecting the entire social system.

As mentioned previously in (1.1), politically, Yemen had been divided into two parts over a long period of time. Even after the break out of the two revolutions and the announcement of the republics in both sides; Yemen remained divided and having two extremely different regimes. This eventually has its own influence on the educational systems. As a matter of fact, it is acknowledged that political factors collaborate with the demographical and geographical factors to shape a certain system of education in a given country.

The educational system in Yemen, however, is no exception in having the same essential components any other educational system has in the globe. Its three components are: Inputs, educational process, and outputs.

**Inputs** of the educational system, according to Ba-Abbad (1994) include:
- Educational philosophy, which is the comprehensive intellectual vision, based on which general objectives that direct the whole educational system and pedagogical activity in Yemen.
- Educational policy.
- General objectives of education.
- Educational ladder, which means the types and stages of the educational system through which the students successfully pass in their education careers. Ladder of education implemented in 1994 follows the scheme of 9 years basic (primary and preparatory) education followed by 3 years as a secondary school education, teacher training programs for 3 years after the basic school and 2 years after the secondary school. Vocational training duration is three years commencing after the basic school. Before 1994, the
scheme of the ladder was (6–3–4) in the northern part of Yemen, while in southern part it was (8–4) years \(^{ibid.:40}\).

**Figure (1.1)**
Educational ladder according to the general education law approved by the parliament on August, 11\(^{th}\), 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Basic Education</th>
<th>Teachers’ Training</th>
<th>Industrial Education</th>
<th>Religious Education</th>
<th>Vocational Education</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-15</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


- Teachers, and
- Students: The number of students in the general education is, however, enormously increasing. The following table shows the figures obtained in the statistical department in the ministry of education, Sana'a.

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\(^2\) 6= primary; 3= preparatory and 4= secondary school.
8= primary + preparatory (Unity School) and 4= secondary school.
Table (1.1)
Indicators of the Students in General Education in the Republic of Yemen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school Students</td>
<td>1057625</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>234383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools Students</td>
<td>231745</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>252828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1289370</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2596711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source:

Outputs of educational system, no doubt, are reflected in the emergence of a qualitative individual and society, and the type of civilization sought. All this goes accordingly with the philosophy and objectives of education planned by experts. In the Republic of Yemen, unfortunately, there is no clear policy or philosophy of education, according to Ba-Abbad (1994:58-9), who asserts that this situation complicated the problem of educational process as well as the outputs of the system. The educational system does not provide good outputs. Compared to the objectives of both the general and higher education, the standard of the graduates spiritually, scientifically, and even physically, is deteriorating. Added to all that is the rarity of jobs for many specialized cadres, which is also a result of imbalance in the educational system policy in Yemen. The stages of education will be looked at in turn as follows:

1.1.1. Basic Education:

This stage is the base establishment of education hierarchy beginning at the age of 6 or 7 years. The enrolment rate in basic education for the age group 6-15 years was around 71% for males and 38% for females. The number enrolled in basic education for the year 1996/1997 was 2,557,329 students of both sexes (see: Yemen Demographic and Maternal and Child Health Survey 1997, YDMCH). The ministry if education has endeavored to
expand basic education through building schools, preparing teachers, providing books and other means throughout the country (Ghanim and Mutahar 1991:60). The number of schools according to the 2000/2001 Results of the Comprehensive Educational Survey reached 9065 all over the country. The great increase of the population of the 6 to 15 age group, in particular, leads to the increase in the demand for education, which in turn requires more modern and integrated school buildings, more qualified teachers, more textbooks and educational equipments on display.

1.1.2. General Secondary Education:

General secondary education attracts the majority of graduates from basic education. Enrolment in this stage constituted 98.2% of the enrolment in the secondary education and its equivalent (Human Development Report, HDR 1998:68). The majority of the students who graduate from the basic education are very much aspired by joining the university. The right path for them to such an objective is the secondary education. The number of students enrolled in the secondary education according to Central Statistical Organization report on YDMCH (1997) was 289,578 for the year 1996/97.

1.1.3. Vocational Education:

Vocational education in its branches (industrial, agricultural, veterinarian, commercial, and health) according to the HDR (1998) is competing to attract graduates from the basic education stages. However, its share is still limited. Indeed, the enrolment rate in technical education reaches only 1.8% of the total secondary education and its equivalent. The reasons for that are, definitely, very many but the most significant one is the belief that university education is better than vocational one and it (university education) gives a social status and better income.

1.1.4. Higher Education:

Higher education in Yemen has witnessed a relatively vast and rapid improvement in terms of both quantity and quality. In 1990, when the Republic of Yemen came to being, there were only two government universities, viz., Sana'a University, Sana'a, and Aden University, Aden. Today, luckily, there are five other more universities that have been
additionally established in different provinces of the country to meet the urgent needs of human resources and the country development as well. These universities are: Taiz University, Taiz; Hadhramout University, Mukalla; Hodeidah University, Hodeidah; Ibb University, Ibb, and Dhamar University, Dhamar. They almost offer admission to different courses both at the graduate and postgraduate levels in several fields. According to the statistical figures of the year 1998, the number of students enrolled in the Yemeni government universities reached 131880. Males are 108440, whereas females are 23440 and the graduates were 9022 males; whereas females were 2134.

According to HDR (1998:72), Private universities, however, are unable to attract sufficient secondary school graduates. Their share did not exceed 6.4% of total enrolment in the academic year 1996/97. The reasons for that are the inabilities of many families to bear the cost of education, and lack of trust in the level and quality of teaching in private universities.

Anyway, it is worth mentioning that the evolution of higher education is marked by low female enrolment in Yemeni universities.

1.2. Woman’s Education:

Education of women in Yemen, as a general fact, is very limited, particularly in the countryside. People in rural areas believe that women’s role in the society is insignificant and they would prefer to send their boys rather than their girls to schools in both basic and secondary stages. According to HDR (1998:66) “expansion of education services has proven to be biased in favor of males. While the male enrolment rate in the age 6-15 years reached 86.2% in 1997 the rate among females falls to 39.8%. It decreases further in the age group 16-18 years to 41.8% and 12.9% for males and females, respectively.”

In Shabwa Governorate, for instance, where the majority of people are in rural situations, the gross enrolment rate of women for both basic and secondary education is 18.7% (ibid: 132), which shows a very low status for women’s education in this governorate. This is a common phenomenon in the majority of the governorates of Yemen, especially rural ones. However,
discussion of the reasons behind such a phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study.

1.3. Status of English in Yemen:

Statues of English will be looked at in two perspectives as in the paragraphs below.

1.3.1. Historical Perspective:

As mentioned earlier in (1.1), Aden was captured by the British in 1839 and they remained as occupying forces for the entire southern part of Yemen till 1967, that is, they ruled for 129 years, in a succession of about 33 British general governors and high commissioners commencing with Captain Stafford B. Haines, who lead the military campaign to capture Aden, and concluding with Sir Humphrey Trevelyan as the last British governor for Aden colony and south Yemen as a whole.

Absolutely, English as the language of the rulers became the official language. The need for Yemeni employees made it a must to start establishing systematic education to provide the British administration with local personnel equipped with English. This would have made their mission of spreading control over the whole inland area much easier.

As for the question when English language has started being taught in schools in Yemen? It is really unjust and totally far from ground reality, what some scholars like, for instance, Al-Mikhlafi (1999) and Al-Hamzi (1999), among others, believed that English was introduced in Yemen in 1920s unsystematically and only after the 26th 1962 revolution in systematic education. This is probably true just for one part of Yemen; namely the northern part, but as a matter of fact English started much more earlier on the hands of the British Colonizers in Aden and subsequently in the whole occupied southern part of Yemen. Indeed, they started establishing systematic English medium schools to attract the locals, especially the sons of the Sultans and Chiefs of the tribes.

Suleiman (1994:66) asserts that after seventeen years of British occupation for Aden, i.e., started 1839, the inauguration of the first government school took place on the hands of Saint G.B. Badger in 1856,
which lasted only for two years and then closed. However, its goal was to provide clerks for the Arabic section in secretariat of Bombay Government in Aden. In 1866 another government school was opened in Crater, Aden with English as the medium of instruction, and was administered by an Indian principal. Its goal, as he himself admitted, was “to establish and spread its influence all over the country and to attract the sons of the chiefs. The main concern of such a school is to psychologically prepare the tribesmen and the Sultans to accept the strange new comer, namely, the British occupier.”

Later on, many other schools had been established by the British. In 1879, for instance, another government primary school was opened in M’alla, Aden, a third one in 1880 in Tawahi, Aden and a fourth was opened in Sheikh Othman, Aden in 1882. In 1918 the British had established the Government Residency School Building in Crater, Aden (presently, the Military Museum) that comprised both the primary and secondary schools with English as their medium of instruction (Suleiman 1994:67-8)

As for the girls' education, the first government primary school was established in 1930s and administered by Miss. Walker as the first British school lady to run such a job in Aden Colony (ibid: 67-8)

In 1938, the British Government had appointed Mr. John Attenborough as the Director of the Department of Education in Aden for the first time after being long-run by the Indians. He, in fact, started politicizing education in Aden and its protectorates.

Further more, during the British occupation era a number of missionaries' schools were established. The Vatican, for instance, had established two schools in 1854; one in Crater, Aden, known as Saint Joseph School and another one by the name of Saint Anthony, in Tawahi, Aden. Both were providing primary and secondary education with English as their medium of instruction. However, those were not the only schools; rather there were some others set up by other missionaries working in Aden at that time. The Scottish Protestant Mission known as the ‘Keith Falconer’ ran a school in 1886 and the Danish Mission School came to being in 1910.
The medium of instruction in those schools was English as well (Al-Ardhi 2001:136).

The number of Government, Aided and Independent schools, actually, had been increased over those three decades. Figure (1.2) gives a clear idea about the structure of education system in Aden at that time.

**Figure (1.2)**

**Aden Colony- Structure of Educational System**

- Men’s teacher Training Center (2 years)
- Government Scholarships abroad
- Women’s Teacher Training Center (2 years)
- Government Technical Institute (Boys)
- Aden Girls College (Government Secondary (Girls (4 years))
- Aden College (Government Secondary (boys) (4 years+2 years)
- Government Secondary School (Boys) (4 Years)
- Aided and Independent Secondary Schools (Boys and Girls) (4 years)
- INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS (Government, Aided, Independent) (Boys and Girls) (3 years)
- PRIMARY SCHOOLS (Government, Aided. Independent) (Boys and Girls) (4 years)

**Source:**

In 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, compared to earlier decades, education position in Aden had witnessed some reforming measures that pushed it forward. As far as certificates are concerned, for instance, the government secondary schools syllabus had been promoted and Senior Cambridge Certificate had been introduced. Arabic had been a compulsory subject.
after being for a long time a non-compulsory one, and English remained the
language of instruction in the secondary schools.

In 1960s loud voices heard in some areas of the then occupied south
Yemen demanding the British Government to make Arabic as the medium
of instruction in schools. For instance, the director of education department
in Al-Qua'iti Sultanate, Eastern Protectorate, (presently, Hadramout Govt.),
Mr. Mohammed Abdulqadir Bafaqiyah had urgently asked the British in an
application to arabicize the secondary school syllabus in the Sultanate. His
application was absolutely rejected and he had been under sharp criticism
from the British for his frankness and straightforward attitudes (for details,
see Suleiman 1994:299)

In the northern part of Yemen English started in a rather random way.
In the mid 1920s, when the Imam (Monarch of Yemen) and for sake of his
own interests, felt the necessity for educating some Yemenis; a group of
students were chosen to be sent abroad for a scholarship. Thus, they were
taught both Arabic and English before leaving Yemen. The types of
materials and the procedures of teaching in this special situation were
freely determined by the teachers themselves (see Al-Mekhlafi 1999:5).

1.3.2. Contemporary Perspective:

After the declaration of both republics in the two parts of the country;
that is, formerly YAR and PDRY in the north and south Yemen,
respectively, the system of education remained totally different.
Consequently, English as a foreign language, in terms of materials,
curriculums and age of its teaching remained dissimilar as well.

In the northern part schools, anyhow, English was taught for six years in
both preparatory and secondary schools commencing from grade seven,
i.e., the first year of the preparatory school.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, Al-Mekhlafi (1999:5) argues that
in 1963 – 1964, the first school year in the Republican era, the requirement
for introducing English as a school subject was thought of. Thus, a group
of Egyptian teachers were brought to teach English, who definitely, took up
the Egyptian curriculum of English, viz, The Nile Course of English, which
was employed till the late 1960s. In 1970 this course was replaced by the Progressive Living English for the Arab World, a course that was taught in some parts of the Arab world, which did not fit in teaching English in Yemen. Another course, English for Yemen (EFY), in later stage, was designed by the Ministry of Education in the northern part of Yemen in collaboration with the British Council to meet the needs of teaching English for the Yemeni learners.

David Rhymer, an inspector of English language teaching in the Ministry of Education has been quoted in Al-Mekhlafi (1999:7) as specifying the objectives of the EFY course in the secondary schools as follows:

1. To give further practice in the language acquired at the preparatory stage.
2. To consolidate the language acquired at the preparatory stage.
3. To extend the student's knowledge of the basic language acquired at the preparatory stage.
4. To introduce the students to practice in scientific language, vocabulary, sentences which are read in scientific descriptions.
5. To give the students practice in basic scientific language, vocabulary, sentences which are read in scientific descriptions.
6. To give the students some knowledge of the descriptions of language.
7. To give the students study skills, e.g., extraction of information from texts such as, reading, summarizing, categorizing, defining, etc.

Then again, the former Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, PDRY, came to existence in south Yemen on the eve of November, 30th, 1967. Thus, its announcement was an end for a very long chapter of the British occupation lasted, as pointed out previously, for 129 years in which English was imposed as the medium of instruction in education and the language of the government as well.

Being the language of the colonizers among other reasons, English after independence was strongly objected to continue such an outstanding role in the daily life of the people. Revolutionary voices raised up unconsciously against everything linked to the colonial era, and some people, unfortunately, were of the view of stopping English of being taught at
schools, even as an ordinary optional school subject, for nothing but it was the ‘language of the occupation’. However, Ghanim (1978:7) asserts that “we must remember that glorifying English (i.e. the language) does not mean the glorification of the English rulers or the English values. English belongs to any country which uses it; it is no longer the property of the English alone.” It is really unjust and unfair to deal with English language as equally as dealing with the English, the colonizers. Ghanim has also clarified the matter in a good justified wording:

_The Yemenis, as in case of several other British colonies, were against the English – the rulers; they left in 1967. We never accepted the English style of life. We are against the colonial traditions, the imperialistic attitudes, the bourgeois values, the snobbish outlook, etc. But we are not against the English language, which is an international; for the economic, scientific, technological, commercial, and intellectual development of any country in the modern world the learning of English has become a must. The English language, whether we like it or not, embodies modern thought; English language is a “window on the world” _

(Ghanim 1978:7)

After independence, particularly, in the 1960s, the entire curriculum had been changed and homogeneously unified in all over the PDRY and English was no longer the language of instruction in education particularly in the secondary schools. Ghanim also has described the situation as:

_English is no longer the medium of instruction at the school level. When English was the medium of instruction, there was more contact with English and most students just “pick up” the language. Our government has taken the right decision of replacing English by Arabic as the medium of instruction at the school level because effective learning takes place only through one’s mother tongue. At the same time we must remember that our students are exposed to English only during English lessons (i.e., only about 4 – 5 hours a week)_

(Ghanim 1978:13)

Anyway, the curriculum of the Technical Institute in Aden remained unaffected with English as the medium of instruction. It was associated, for
a period of time, to the British system of Education due to difficulties in designing a new curriculum (see Suleiman 1994:366).

In regard to age on which English used to be introduced in former PDRY, it was the grade five of the Unity School3 till the end of the secondary stage, i.e., the total exposure to English is eight school years.

During the 1960s and 1970s the series of The New Method Readers by Michael West were adopted to be the syllabus of English in schools. It consisted of books modified and tailored to meet the needs of the Arab learners in many countries in the Arab world and known by the name of New Method English for the Arab World. West’s main aim in designing that course was ‘reading-first approach’, which was produced to serve in situations where large classes had to be taught with limited facilities and lower learner motivation. Along with those readers, supplementary reading materials were provided as companions, containing glossaries of English words with their equivalents in Arabic, in addition to some abridged English novels for supplementary reading.

West had considered many essential aspects in designing his course in FL situations such as ‘the mental age of the book’ (to go with the reader’s chronological age), the best ways to put to use the ‘minimum adequate’ and ‘defining’ vocabularies...” (Tickoo, 2003:351)

By the end of the 1970s, a new locally designed course for both unity schools and secondary schools were produced by the Educational Research Center, Aden. The unity school syllabus, English for Unity School, was designed by Omer Basunbol4 in 1978, which is a series comprising 4 books along with workbooks and supplementary materials of stories and rhymes. The secondary school course, Yemeni Reader, is a locally designed course, as well, which was produced at the Educational Research Center, Aden, by some Yemeni experts in collaboration with the well known Indian Linguist Professor N. Krishnaswamy of the CIEFL, Hyderabad. The course, however,

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3 Both primary and preparatory schools were combined together as one school in the educational ladder of former PDRY known as “the Unity School of the Eight Classes”.
4 An eminent scholar of EFL in Yemen, who presently serves as an associate professor of ELT Methodology, Hadhramout University, Mukalla.
consists of 4 books accompanied by supplementary materials for the whole secondary stage.

On May, 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1990, the two long-separated parts of Yemen merged into one independent, democratic and integrated entity known as the Republic of Yemen. Since then, the government role in the field of education has been basically focused on the unification of the educational system and the modernization of the whole syllabuses for all stages all over the country.

English as being the only foreign language taught in schools in the new educational system has not been gaining an adequate attention, particularly in the basic education and secondary education. Students are exposed to English only 4 – 5 hours weekly, and it starts at the grade of seven, i.e., 13 –14 of age; in other words at the puberty period of development. This age, frankly speaking, is not suitable for learning a new language, simply because the earlier the language is introduced the easier and the better the acquisition will be. ‘Critical Period’ in language acquisition – a biologically determined period of life when language can be acquired more easily and beyond which time language is increasingly difficult to acquire. Though all research comes from first language “second language researchers have outlined the possibility of extrapolating the critical period hypothesis to second language context” (Brown, 1987:42)

Although some experts argue in favor of this age as an ideal start for learning a foreign/second language, it is much better to begin L2 at an earlier age. There is a general consensus on the idea that “the acquisition of a native-like accent is not possible by learners who begin learning after 6 years of age. It is very difficult for learners who begin at puberty to acquire native-like grammatical competence” (Ellis, 1985, cited by Al-Hamzi: 1999:4)

Another reason why English should start earlier in Yemeni schools, is the learners' neurological development. It is argued that the function of the brain in the language acquisition is so crucial. In the lateralization of the brain – assignment of certain functions to either of the two hemispheres, left or right – language function is, certainly, assigned to the left hemisphere. The lateralization of the brain is a slow process which begins
by the age of 2 and is completed around the puberty (see Brown, 1987:43). During this period, many functions, of which language is one, are assigned to these hemispheres. It is proposed that there is a relationship between lateralization and L2 acquisition. Brown has summarized Thomas Shovel's arguments in this regard as:

*The plasticity of the brain prior to puberty enables children to acquire not only their first language but also a second language, and that possibly it is the very accomplishment of lateralization that makes it difficult for people to be able ever again to easily acquire fluent control of second language or at least to acquire it with what Alexander Guiora et al (1972a) call "authentic" (nativelike) pronunciation.*

(Brown 1987: 43)

For the above discussed justifications, therefore, it is unerringly rational that English should start in the schools of Yemen Republic much earlier than the existing situation. The researcher, however, is of the idea that English should commence from the grade fifth if not earlier. There was an experience of quite reasonable time (well over two decades) of teaching English right from the fifth class onwards in the former PDHY, and it was quite successful experience. Voices should come up loudly for this rightly educational reform. Scholars like Al-Mekhlafi (1999) and Al-Hamzi (1999), among other Yemeni experts, have clearly put forward this suggestion. Anyway, pushing ahead English for some years earlier in the educational ladder should be the norm and the healthier decision rather than introducing it too late to Yemeni EFL learners.

The new English language syllabus of both secondary and basic education in the Republic of Yemen has been designed recently by Oxford University, UK. *Crescent: English Course for Yemen* has been in effect since 1996. It is specially designed for the Arab learners of EFL by English Language Teaching for the Arab World Unit at Oxford University to meet the needs of Arabs in general and Yemenis in particular. The course consists of six books series accompanied by workbooks, handwriting books, class cassettes, teacher's book, and visual aids' box containing: flash cards,
number flash cards, and wall sheets. It is, for sure, based on both functional and structural approaches.

In introducing the course, the authors themselves argue that “Crescent English Course, especially developed for teaching of English in Arab schools, was first published in 1977 after research, conference and seminar discussions over a number of years. It pioneered the communicative approach to language learning and teaching. Since 1977, the course has been amended from time to time and tailored to meet the changing situations in different countries using it. This policy of regular updating has ensured the continued success of the course throughout the Arab World.”(O’Neill, Snow, and Webb 1996:1)

Regarding materials and methodologies proposed for teaching this course, they are essentially pupil-centered, concentrating on real communication. In fact, it involves more than one language skill, so an integrated skills approach is needed for its teaching. At the lower levels, however, the course emphasizes at the learners need for a control over the input and systematic practice of language before putting it into practice.

1.4. Teaching Methods of English at the Yemeni Schools:

English, as has been mentioned so far, starts right from the grade 7 of the basic education. As far as teaching methods are concerned, traditional approaches of teaching were followed. Grammar Translation Method GTM, for instance, has been dominating the scene of language teaching in Yemen till the present time for nothing but its familiarity to the teachers more than the other ones. As Richards and Rodgers (2001:6) have pointed out, GTM was dominating the European and foreign language teaching from 1840s to 1940s, and in modified form it continues to be widely used in some parts of the world.

In the Yemeni domain of teaching English, GTM continues maintaining a prestigious profile at school level till the present. In addition to the teachers' familiarity with the GTM, some other reasons like the large classes and the absence of well qualified English language teachers contribute considerably in its survival. English language teaching is, in
many cases, assigned to teachers who have no orientation with the modern trends of language teaching in general and of ELT in particular. Unfortunately, students who have passed their secondary school exams may be entitled to teach English in basic education schools, which is, really, a nightmare for English language teaching situation.

Furthermore, elderly teachers may find it at ease and well-situated to stick to such a method, which requires no much effort in preparing lessons. They are, therefore, satisfied with using Arabic as a medium of teaching English in classes, and the whole class changed to be some sort of reading from the text; explaining every phenomenon and giving the equivalent for every single utterance in Arabic. Communication is of no interest for such teachers; they in fact do not create confidence in the learners to use English in class. Classes, if truth be told, seem to only rotate around limited repetitive language activity as reading or listening to the teacher translating word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase what is in the text. It is true as Attamimi (2003) argues that even “there is no attention paid to accurate pronunciation. Furthermore, there is no attention paid to the usage of language in communication and on the activities of listening and speaking.”

Anyway, in search for an alternative, the Bilingual Method (BM) was suggested by Ghanim for teaching English in schools:

A Bilingual Method seems to be the most suitable for developing countries where an attempt is being made to train teachers within a short period and teach English to the pupils within a limited time available. The Structural Approach... by no means implies the Direct Method (meaning the total exclusion of the mother tongue of a learner and reliance on situational teaching); the exclusion of the mother tongue is certainly not germane of the Structural Approach. Bilingual Method allows the use of the mother tongue developed as a technique.

(Ghanim. 1978: 10)

What Ghanim suggests seems to be rationally acceptable, but the use of the mother tongue might get the wrong end of the stick in practice and Arabic might be excessively used and the exposure to English will be at its minimum. In no doubt, as he himself then again admits that if Arabic is
excluded totally then the process as whole will be complicated. He suggests that Arabic should be used by the teacher and only the teacher not the learners when he feels it is fatefully a must, especially at the earlier stages of teaching English.

The current and contemporary methods, in deed, have hardly ever been followed by the teachers. As a matter of fact, when the new syllabus was introduced in 1996, it was wished-for to be totally a pupil-centered in its materials and its recommended methods of teaching. Since then, things are going the other way round; observations revealed that students are almost inactive elements in English classes for nothing but the teachers' reliance on the conventional approaches and methods of ELT. Although, each textbook of the Crescent English Course is accompanied by a teacher's guide, as mentioned so far, packed with some suggested methods and techniques, teachers prefer their own.

As it is commonly accredited, language basically is a form of communication, and it should be taught within this domain. There should be teachers who are well qualified and have the aptitude, capacity and enthusiasm as well to resort to such methods of ELT to make teaching and learning creative, effective, enjoyable and dynamic.

1.5. English outside the Classroom:

English in Yemen is a foreign language, taught to foreign learners, by foreign teachers, in a foreign setting; so the total situation is foreign. Therefore, environment surrounding the English language learning situation in Yemen is definitely so daunting. Outside classrooms, students never practice their English in either listening or speaking and rarely read or write in English as well. As for reading, the sources seem to be in shortage. Suitable books for English language learners are not available in the market or schools or even colleges' stores to be issued and read at home. Newspapers such as the weekly Yemen Times or Yemen Observer are the only regular materials that some students who are majoring English in the university level can get access to them.
Students at earlier stages as those in the secondary school, for instance, find no appropriate materials in their schools, and school library seems to be some sort of luxury in such stages. The sense of support is more or less absent for the EL teachers. They never recommend some sort of activity to be practiced outside the prescribed syllabus such as listening to radio programs of English language teaching.

Listening to English in action is next to impossible for the Yemeni learners of English. They are not exposed to the authentic use of English either out or even in the classrooms. The cassettes accompanying the text books carry some native speakers recorded materials like dialogues, rhymes and descriptions, which can either be used inside the class or at home, are not available to the vast majority of the schools in Yemen.

As a matter of luck, some students of English may find a chance of practicing English with some foreign nationals like tourists in hotels and restaurants and foreign employees in some business enterprises, for example, and perk up their language, while some others may get a chance to work along with some foreign nationals in companies and establishments. All these remain exceptional cases for the majority of the learners of English.

English, nevertheless, has become the language of opportunity for learners to better their future careers in joining foreign companies and enterprises, which pay well for their employees, and get in touch with people using English. English, for that reason, is most widely used foreign language in Yemen. Hillenbrand, quoted in Al-Mikhlafi, has described the situation of English in Yemen as follows:

Since unification, English is slowly beginning to become the most important second language in Yemen. English is the lingua franca among the non-Arab groups (from the UK, Germany, the US, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and other countries) working in Yemen

(Hillenbrand 1994 qtd in Al-Mikhlafi 1999: 4)

Although radio broadcasting, compared to other countries in the region, started too early in Yemen, i.e., in 1940 by the British, but transmitting educational programs in English is not there. Both TV and Radio in Yemen
have been transmitting some programs for nearly one hour daily along with
news bulletin in English but these programs are never of educational
nature for EFL students in Yemen.

1.6. The Role of English in Present-Day Yemen:

No doubt, English is a ‘window on the world’. It is the most widely used
language among different people from different walks of life in the globe.
Certainly, English is the mother tongue of more than 320 million people
and 200 million use it as either second or foreign language. English thus
occupies a noteworthy position of being the language used by a large
number of people in the world. Verghese (1989:1) argues that “of all the
languages used in the world today English deserves to be regarded as a
world language. It is the world’s most widely spoken language. It is the
common means of communication between the peoples of different nations.
One person out of every four on the earth can be reached through English.”

The demand for learning English as a foreign language in Yemen is,
beyond doubt, greater than ever. Recently, a large number of students have
become very much interested in joining English language departments in
the Yemeni universities and they are definitely very much keen to acquire
English. As mentioned earlier that the main objective for such students
joining these departments or private institutes, is either learning English as
an end or to get the opportunity of holding good positions either in foreign
establishments or in government or public sectors. In short, and in any
case, English will help those people to better their conditions of living.

English in recent years has become the most broadly used language in
the internet. In Yemen, as in the rest of the world, the internet is spreading
very fast all over the country and English is utilized next to Arabic in
accessing the web. Figures revealed that 14,000 people are using the
internet in early 2001\(^5\), but it is expected that the figures would have been
highly increasing and the use of English is much wider.

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No doubt, it is a well established fact that the best and effective learning would be achieved through the mother tongue. However, some specializations in the Yemeni universities adopt English as the language of instruction as in the faculties of engineering, and medicine. Furthermore, the role of English would also be better characterized as a library language in these faculties or the likes. English is regarded as the key to the 'store­house of knowledge' in which several books and references are written. To access these references one should have background knowledge of English so that he could keep up to date with research advancements in the concerned field in the globe.

English plays a decisive role in tourism in the country. Thousands of tourists from different countries and different cultures are heading to Yemen annually. English is badly needed in this field for the enormous number of people who find English the common language to communicate with the locals and to get in touch with the actual life there. The figures obtained from the tourist authorities in Yemen show that the number of tourists arriving to Yemen reached 75,579 in the year 2001 contributing an income of $ US 37 million which is equivalent to 6,290 million Yemeni Riyals⁶. Guides, tourist agents, hotel receptionists etc. need to be acquired with intelligible English to easily interact with those tourists. In some cases, due to the dearth of Yemeni English speakers, tourist departments and tourist agencies, as well, resort to other nationalities like Somalis and Kenyans, for instance, to be recruited in these positions, whom Jack Jackson (1993) describes as less knowledgeable in the local culture than a well read visitor.

1.7. Teaching English in the Departments of English:

In the Yemeni Universities two types of English departments can be distinguished: Department of English in arts faculties and department of

English language in education faculties. Students joining the former are necessarily introduced to literature oriented courses; whereas students joining the later are introduced mostly to linguistic and language teaching oriented courses. Definitely, this does not mean that in the department of English in education faculties literary subjects are exempted from the syllabus rather students are given some orientation to the English literature.

Additionally, some other centers are set for English studies, research and translation in some universities in Yemen. But our main concern, in this regard, is the department of English in the faculty of education. Typically, in each college of education in the government universities there is a department of English language. Some of these departments, in fact, offer two years diploma course, while others offer bachelor course in ELT both for those students who have successfully passed the General Secondary School Leaving Examination (GSSLE). The post-graduate courses have recently been initiated in some departments; MA program has started in both Sana’a and Aden Universities for quite long time, while PhD program has been recently introduced in Sana’a University. The main objective of these courses is to provide schools with well qualified teachers of English language.

Students joining the department of English language at Aden University, for instance, are provided with sufficient orientation in the language teaching methodology, language skills, essentials of English grammar, some selected novels and drama, survey of English literature, short story, English phonetics and phonology, general linguistics, curriculum design, teaching school texts, second language learning, theory and practice of materials production, translation, non-fictional prose, etc. Time allocated for each paper depends on the contents of the subjects prescribed; it ranges between 3 to 6 hours per week accordingly.

The contents of the syllabus basically concentrate on the formal and structural aspects rather than the communicative function of the language. In this regard, Al-Hamzi suitably describes the situation as:
Communicative aspects are studied analytically as pieces of information rather than a method that can be employed to build up the communicative competence in the students. What eventually happens in the classroom is merely an introduction given to the students to the speech activities and the typical sentences used in expressing these acts regardless of the appropriateness of these forms in a given context.

(Al-Hamzi 1999:16)

1.8. The Area of the Study:

The present study has to do with the students of the department of English, College of Education, at Ataq, Shabwa Governorate, Aden University. A brief introduction is due, in this regard, about Aden University at first and then a description of the college itself will be given before talking about that department of English as the main focus of this study.

1.8.1. Aden University:

Aden University is actually regarded as one of the pioneering Yemeni institutes of higher education. Although some of the colleges affiliated to the university had been established in 1970 on wards, the university itself as a full-fledged higher education institution in the former PDRY came to existence on September, 10th, 1975 according to the presidential decree no (22) for the year 1975( for further details see Suleiman 1994:58). At that time, the colleges affiliated to Aden University were only nine; compared to the present day it comprises about 15 colleges distributed in Aden city itself and other governorates. It includes faculties of Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Law, Administration, Economics, Oil and Minerals, Arts and Faculty of Education7. On the other hand, Aden University encompasses a number of centers and institutes like the Yemeni Studies Center, Science and Technology Center, Computer Center, Continuing Education Center, Center of Ecological Studies, English Studies and Translation, Institute of

7 Faculty of Education is located in Aden itself and comprises about ten other branches (education faculties) spread in different governorates.
Languages, University Consultation Center, and Women Center for Research and Training.

Indeed, courses offered in these colleges vary from one to another, but commonly, all of them offer the graduation courses and some of them have recently introduced post graduation programs leading to PhD degree.

The number of teaching staff of the university, according to the annual Statistical Book (1998) is 625 for the academic year 1998/99; 606 of them are Yemenis and 19 are Non-Yemenis. The number of the students, on the other hand, reached 9560 males and 6329 females for the same year (see Arasi et al 2000)

As for the language of instruction, it is, of course, the mother tongue, Arabic. English is the language of instruction in faculties of Engineering and Medicine, for instance.

1.8.2. College of Education, Shabwa:

This college was established in Ataq, the capital of Shabwa Governorate (see the map, appendix 26), in November, 1993 and it widely opened its doors at the same year for the Diploma Course⁸ admission. It, actually, started the academic year with specializations like Arabic Language, English Language, Physics-Mathematics, and Chemistry-Biology. Afterwards, specializations of both Islamic Studies and History-Geography were adjoined to the college as well.

As for the teaching staff and students, the college had commenced with 26 teaching staff at its very beginning, and the number of students enrolled at that time reached 140. In 1998/99 the number of the teaching staff increased to 48, with an enrolled students' number of 530(see Arasi et al, 2000:249).

The College of Education Shabwa Governorate branch main objective is to train and prepare teachers to serve at school level. It also aims at the activation of the scientific and intellectual movement in the governorate, whose population is about 647,863 according to the population projections

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⁸ When the college was inaugurated it was set for offering a program of Diploma in Education (two years after secondary school). Recently, some of the departments, of which English is included; the program has been replaced by B.A. in Education
of the year 2003. The following graph shows the growth of the students’ numbers since the foundation.

**Figure (1.3)**

**Enrolled Students and Graduates in the College of Education, Shabwa 1998/99**

![Graph showing the growth of enrolled students and graduates from 1993/94 to 1998/99.](image)


### 1.8.3. Department of English:

As mentioned above, the Department of English was one of the primary departments in the college. It, in fact, offered the diploma Course in English language for those who successfully cleared their Secondary School Exams. Recently, it has adopted the B.A. program, but when the field work for this study was going on, the Diploma Scheme was in effect.

Of course, English is the medium of instruction in the department except with subjects related to education, Arabic language, general culture, and religion are taught in Arabic. Students are acquainted with knowledge related to language skills, grammar, ELT, phonetics and general linguistics. Courses of this nature are specifically designed to meet the needs of training the students to turn out to be competent teachers of English at schools of basic education.
Teaching in the department, as observed, never gives a chance for studying the language as a communication. The syllabus itself does not clearly put a weight on communicative aspects of English and instead of maintaining a learner-centered teaching, which gives an opportunity to practice, classes turned to be a teacher-centered, and the formal teaching of English is prevailing. The lecturing mode is the norm in the majority of the classes and fluency and proficiency of the learners do not seem to be satisfactorily convincing.

Nonetheless, the following two tables show the subjects with their credit hours currently taught for the students of the department (cf. appendix 24) to see the difference between this and the old teaching plan of the department).

**Table (1.2)**
The Current Teaching Plan of the Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s.n.</td>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table (1.3)

Second Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>s.n.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Reading III</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Eng. Phonetics &amp; Phonology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>ELT Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Assessment and Evaluation*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Psychology of Learning*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Teaching Aids*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Communicative Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Theory &amp; practice of Materials</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Teaching School Texts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>General Linguistics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>The Short Story</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Teaching Practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Those subjects marked with asterisk* are taught in Arabic


1.9. The Need for Reading in EFL Context in Yemen:

The significance of practicing the four skills is indisputable and reading in English as a foreign language skill for the Yemeni learners, above all, is vital. Practicing English, in most cases, is at its minimum for all levels of education, i.e, primary, secondary, college and university levels. The best way to make the four skills grow best is to teach them all together, because pedagogically it is untrue to teach the basic skills separately.

The practice of listening, for instance, falls short in a situation like that of Yemen. The lack of authentic exposure to English spoken in real life situations is rare. Students usually lack the contextual knowledge of English, which makes it difficult to use it appropriately to express themselves completely clearly. This is due to insufficient listening because they do not have the opportunity to listen to authentic English.

Speaking also is not tolerably practiced. Students of English, in Yemen, as noticed, keep talking in Arabic. The exposure to English is too limited either for those in the school levels or even for those majoring it in the college level. In the earlier stages of learning, students' motivation is not
activated by the teachers. Added to that, is the barrier of shyness and the feeling of being under some sort of sarcasm by their peers the majority of learners are reluctant about speaking English in class or in the school domain and this is true even for grown up English language learners.

Writing, being discussed next to listening and speaking, does not necessarily entail that it is the least consideration receiving skill. Foreign language learners, more to the point, could be directed to write, of course in English, in and out the classroom. This skill is next to reading in the opportunity of practice, in the sense that writing assignment can be done under the direct guidance of the teacher or at home in a rather stress-free condition. As reading does not necessarily presuppose a teacher to guide the learner all the way of its practice, writing does so.

Reading in English, nonetheless, remains the only skill that can be effortlessly practiced by the Yemeni learners anytime, anywhere and at any age. The huge bulk of knowledge in the globe can be easily accessed through the printed material that is available for reading in different fields. Even at the linguistic and sociocultural level of language, the pragmatic use of English can be gained, to some extent, through reading. Dialogues and conversations presented in certain texts, definitely, carry some cultural values, some pragmatic tactics of English.

Since listening is absent and speaking is too rare, Yemeni learners need to be directed to focus more on reading as a skill; it is through reading they can acquire vocabulary, and structure of English. Moreover, the urgent need for English in developing countries, including Yemen, is to have access to the vast and ever growing mass of written material. As in the case of India, though the status of English is different in Yemen, for Narayanaswamy (1972:300), example, predicts that there will be a shift from paying attention to both speaking and listening to reading in English. Reading knowledge of the language, for him, will be fundamental for all stages of learning. He asserts that “the emphasis in language-teaching may well have to shift from expression to comprehension – reading comprehension, in particular.” This may be true as well for some other developing countries like Yemen, for instance.
1.10. Research problem:

The standard of students in English language, on the whole, does not ascend to the level of aspiration ELT experts are actually seeking. There is of course a slow progress in the learning process of English language in the Department of English, College of Education, Shabwa, in particular. Although the students are learning English for almost six years before joining the college, and they are prepared to be teachers of English over the two years of training, their performance, therefore, is not satisfactorily good. There are some reasons which may make an ascription to this predicament:

1) It is believed that the reason behind this sort of disappointment in the standard of students is the problems of comprehension in reading English as a foreign language, in particular.

2) The curriculum put into service in teaching English in the college may not give more emphasis on reading skills, which is essential for the whole language acquisition.

3) Teaching methodology of English language, generally, and that of reading, particularly, may exert some sort of pressure on the learners' reading ability.

4) The exposure to English language is, however, too limited in terms of time allocated for English in schools or the years of exposure. Six years of very limited exposure to English before joining university may not be enough as a base for effective learning in English.

5) Intensive reading is most commonly executed program in nearly all the Yemeni universities. There is no room for genuine extensive reading program at all.

6) Dearth of suitable printed resources for the students to practice their reading habits in English.

7) Time allocated to reading in the department may not be sufficiently enough to teach this subject effectively.

1.11. Scope of the Study:

The study is devoted to investigate the problems Yemeni university learners encounter in reading English. It is limited to batch 2001/2002 first
and second year students, of the English Department, College of Education, at Ataq, Shabwa Governorate; Aden University. It will mainly focus on the classroom teaching of reading along with students reading habits and interests.

1.12. Justification for the Study:

Reading is, undeniably, markedly critical in the process of learning for both young and adult learners of English as a foreign language. It is through reading, as has been pointed out severally, that a considerable quantity of knowledge can be acquired in different genres of different areas. If reading, therefore, is being a problematic issue, then an investigation into this phenomenon is a must.

As part of researcher's job in teaching English to the foreign language learners in the department of English in the College of Education, Shabwa for three academic years, reading has been observed to be taught in some difficulty. Students' performance in reading is too exasperating, and they did not show any sort of familiarity even with indispensable techniques of reading like skimming, scanning, predicting, etc.

Anyway, the study is carried out in accordance with the following justifications:

1) Reading is the core of any syllabus of teaching English language in both foreign and native contexts.

2) It is mainly through reading that the Yemeni learners of English can acquire the main basic structure of the language.

3) Reading English in the Yemeni context is not merely a skill of mastering a foreign but it is also a means to access it as a 'library language' through which those learners can pursue their higher education and can keep in touch with advancements in their major fields of study.

4) Having a problem in reading, Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language may not be sufficiently competent in acquiring this language.