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THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
IN
LATAKIA SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

A Critical Analysis in the Light of Some Modern Theories
and Practices.

by

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The teaching of English in the Syrian Government Schools was introduced by the educational reform of 1944. Because of its recency, the teaching of English, today, presents many problems which center around such questions as appropriate teaching methods, curriculum, text-books and standards.

This work attempts to study the teaching of English in Latakia secondary school for girls, with a view to tracing its development describing the teaching methods, examinations, text-books and evaluating them in the light of modern educational theories and of modern techniques of teaching English particularly as a foreign language.

Consequently this study consists of the following parts:

First, a description of the educational system in Syria to indicate the place of English in that system.

Second, an analysis of English teaching in Latakia secondary school for girls with an evaluation of the standards attained there.

Third, a study of the modern practices in the teaching of English to foreigners and a comparison between these practices and the techniques used in Latakia school.

Finally, a proposal for improving the teaching of

English, proposal which is in harmony with the modern practices
(1)
advocated.

Because the system of Education in Syria, is centralized, the program, books and methods obtaining in one school are mainly found in other schools. Hence this study is of more than local interest. Its findings will have general applicability to the teaching of English in the country at large.

(1) See Year Book of Education 1949, "Syria", P. 444.

CHAPTER I

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN SYRIA AND THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN THE SYSTEM

Part I : The introduction of English into the Syrian system of education.

Before World War I, Syria was a Turkish province. Until 1839, Education in the Ottoman Empire and particularly in Syria was almost exclusively of a religious nature and mostly conducted in Koranic schools called "Maktabs" and theological seminaries called "Madrassahs".

In the elementary schools or "Maktabs", children were taught to read the Koran in Arabic. Little importance was given to reading and writing Turkish. In the secondary schools or "Madrassahs" the main subjects taught were Arabic grammar and Syntax, Rhetoric and Style, Logic, Theology Metaphysics, studies relating to the Koran and Islamic jurisprudence. Most of the books were in Arabic; Turkish language, grammar and Literature were excluded from the program. ⁽¹⁾

After the proclamation of the Ottoman Reform Charter of 1839, new public schools were established in Syria. These were elementary schools and "high schools" which supplied some sort of post-elementary education. The Koran, religious

(1) For further details see Babikian, "Civilization and Education in Syria and Lebanon".

lessons, Arabic Grammar and syntax were also the chief subjects of study.

After the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, because of a policy for unification of the Ottoman Empire, which aimed at turkifying all Turkish provinces, the educational system began to receive increasing attention. Arabic language which had dominated the old programs of the elementary schools was replaced by Turkish and in the higher schools, where French was the only foreign language taught, English and German were added to the curriculum.

However in Syria the facilities for public elementary education were so meager that it reached only an insignificant number of children.

Besides the public elementary schools established in the Syrian territory, there were a few "higher primary" schools (Rushdiyah) and "preparatory secondary" schools (I'dadiyah). The latter were replaced after 1912, by more important secondary schools, "the lycees" or (Sultaniyah). Whereas Arabic was relegated to a minor place in the program of the government schools, it was preserved mainly through the influence of the traditional Koranic school called "Maktab", which was relatively more prevalent.

In 1920, after the first World War, Syria was separated from the Ottoman Empire and placed under the mandate of France. Politically the French mandated territory was divided

into five units, the Republic of Syria,⁽¹⁾ the Sanjak of Alexandretta, the Government of Jabal Druze, the Government of Latakia and the Lebanese Republic. With France assuming responsibility over the country, education was encouraged and real public systems of education were established in these five units. New schools were built and organized after French models. The program of studies was more or less a duplicate of the French curriculum and in many schools - especially in the Lebanese Republic and the Government of Latakia - French replaced Arabic in the instruction of some of the subjects.

The educational system in the countries under French mandate included six years of primary and elementary education. By the end of this period students were required to pass an official public examination - the examination for the elementary certificate - in order to be admitted to secondary schools. The seven years of secondary study in each country were sanctioned by the official examinations for the Syrian and Lebanese "Baccalaureats" respectively. These "Baccalaureats" consisted of two parts (I and II) separated by one academic year. All official examinations included a written part followed by an oral one.

The program of primary education in the French mandated country covered the following subjects: Arabic, French,

(1) Later in this study, the term "Syria" will mean the Government of Syria, Jabal Druze and Latakia.

Arithmetic, History, Geography, Drawing, Physical Education, General Science, Object Lessons, Morals, Hygiene, Religious Instruction and Sewing. ⁽¹⁾ Some of these subjects were taught in French, the rest in Arabic. In the Lebanese Republic and the Government of Latakia there was more emphasis on the French language than in any other territory.

The program of secondary education included French, Arabic, and another modern language - usually English - Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Psychology, Philosophy, Religion and Ethics. ⁽²⁾ Here also there was great emphasis upon the appreciation of French literature, French language and civilization.

Such was the state of education in Syria until the declaration of independence in 1941. The new nationalist government in Syria decided then to free all schools from French influences and to develop primarily a Syrian Arab type of education. For this purpose Sati' Al Husri, a well known Arab educator, was invited by the Syrian Government to study its educational system and to suggest the necessary reforms. His reports, sixteen in number, were written and published in two volumes in 1944 and 1945. These reports were accompanied ⁽³⁾ by a project outlining the Organic Law on Education.

(1) See the Open Court, 1936 (April), Education in Territories under French Mandate, P. 80.

(2) The Open Court, 1936, P. 82.

(3) See "Year Book of Education, 1949". Article: Syria, by Sati' Al Husri.

The reform of 1944 did not change the length of time of primary education; but it caused an important change in the program by eliminating the study of foreign languages in elementary schools. This is how Sati' Al Husri defended his theory about the study of foreign languages:

"To teach a foreign language in a public primary school to children who have not yet mastered their own native tongue is hardly defensible from the psychological and pedagogical points of view. The difficulties of such instruction are especially serious in the case of Arab children.

It is well known that the Arabic alphabet, grammar, and syntax are very complicated. In addition there is a great difference between the popular speech of the home and the classical Arabic taught at school consequently the teaching of Arabic is extremely difficult. To add to this inherent difficulty of the native tongue of the children the difficulties of learning a foreign language would act contrary to the elementary demands of sound pedagogies. That is why the reform of 1944 is radical on this point. It considers foreign languages as subjects for secondary education and not for primary."⁽¹⁾

The reform of 1944 also modified the educational system of the secondary school. Today it includes six years divided into two periods, the first is a four year intermediate

(1) Year Book of Education, 1949, Article "Syria" by Sati' Al Husri, P. 443.

school. This is followed by a two year course divided itself into two sections, one scientific the other literary. Thus the old "class of philosophy" and the "class of Mathematics" were eliminated and replaced by the "Unified secondary diploma".

The old program of the Syrian secondary school and the new one proposed by Sati' Al Husri are given in the following tables:

I. Official program of old Syrian Public Secondary Education.

1) Weekly schedule of the courses of study of the Lycees. (1)

	6th	5th	4th	3rd	2nd		1st	
					Liter- ary	Scient- ific	Liter- ary	Scient- ific
Religious Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Arabic literature	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
French literature	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Translation	-	-	1	1	2	2	2	2
History	2	2	2	2	2(1)	2	2(1)	2
Geography	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mathematics	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Physics	-	-	1	1	2	2($\frac{1}{2}$)	2	2($\frac{1}{2}$)
Chemistry	-	-	1	1	1	1($\frac{1}{2}$)	1	1($\frac{1}{2}$)
Natural sciences	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Drawing	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
Geometrical drawing	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Gymnastics	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
Music	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	28	28	28	28	27	27	27	27

(1) See Babikian, "Civilization and Education, Syria and Lebanon, P. 108.

2) Weekly schedule of the classes of "philosophy" and "mathematics".
(1)

	<u>Classe de</u> <u>Philosophie</u>	<u>Classe de</u> <u>Mathematique</u>
Philosophy &		
Philosophical authors	10	3
Translation of authors	1	1
French literature	3	1
History	2	2
Geography	1	1
Mathematics	2	10
Physics	3	4
Natural science	3	3
Chemistry	1½	2
Total	<u>26½</u>	<u>27</u>

(1) Babikian, P. 109.

II. New Syrian program of public secondary education. (1)

1. Intermediate school

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Religious education	1	1	1	1
Arabic	7	6	6	6
Foreign language	8	7	7	6
History	3	3	3	3
Geography	-	2	2	2
Ethics & Civics	-	-	-	3
Mathematics	4	4	4	5
Natural science	4	4	6	6
Drawing	2	2	2	-
Gymnastics	2	2	1	1
Music	1	1	-	-
Extra-curricular activity	2	2	2	1
Total	34	34	34	34

(1) Program of Secondary studies, P. 3-4.

2. Secondary school

a) for girls

	5th	6th
Religious lessons	1	1
Arabic literature	5	4
First foreign language	5	4
Second foreign language	5	4
History	4	4
Geography	2	-
Mathematics	3	3
Natural sciences	3	4
Logic	2	-
Psychology	-	3
Civics	-	3
House keeping	2	2
Music	1	1
Gymnastics	1	1
Total	34	34

b) for boys

	Literary		Scientific	
	5th	6th	5th	6th
Religious lessons	1	1	1	1
Arabic literature	6	6	4	4
First foreign language	5	4	5	4
Second foreign language	5	4	5	4
History	4	4	-	3
Geography	2	3	2	-
Mathematics	3	3	6	6
Natural sciences	3	4	6	7
Logic	2	-	2	-
Psychology	-	3	-	3
Military training	3	2	3	2
Total	34	34	34	34

A study of these tables reveals the following conclusions:

1) The length of time of secondary education was reduced from seven years to six. This reduction resulted in the introduction of the "Unified Secondary Diploma" which replaced the first and second part of the "Baccalaureat".

2) In the new system, the girl students have their own program in the fifth and the sixth secondary classes, which resembles to a great extent the literary section program of the boys.

3) The number of study periods per week was increased from 28 to a maximum in the old secondary program to 34 in the new one.

4) The studies of philosophy were confined to logic and psychology. Metaphysics which figured highly in the old curriculum was eliminated.

5) Foreign languages were made compulsory in all secondary classes, one language - French or English - in the intermediate school and two languages - first and second - in the secondary school. The first compulsory language was the one which has been studied in the intermediate school.

French was thus put on the same footing as any other foreign language, particularly English which was becoming increasingly popular.

6) Finally, in the new program of 1944 the number of

periods of foreign language teaching was the same for boys and girls, and in the literary section as well as in the scientific one.

The English program in the new system of 1944 included the following textbooks and class periods. (1)

I. Intermediate school

	Hours per week
<u>First Year</u>	8
New Method Reader. Green Primer (West. Morris Book 1. New Method Reader Book I (West)	
<u>Second Year</u>	7
Morris Book II New Method Reader Book II (West) Learn to speak by speaking Book I (West) (For teachers only) Simplified Reader, Grade I	
<u>Third Year</u>	7
Morris Book III New Method Reader Book III (West) Stories of Sindbad the Sailor. Learn to speak by speaking Book II (West) (For teachers only)	
<u>Fifth Year</u>	6
Morris Book IV New Method Reader Book IV (West)	

(1) Program of secondary studies, PP 7-8.

Hours per week

Gulliver's travels (simplified)
Learn to speak by speaking Book III (West)
(For teachers only)

II. Secondary School

A. English as Primary Foreign language

First Year Scientific and Literary 5

New Method Reader Book V (West)

Tom Brown's school days Grade IV

Outlines of English Idiom Part I,

Brackenbury.

Quintin Durward Grade IV (if time permits)

Second Year Scientific and Literary

New Method Reader Book VI (West)

David Copperfield, Grade V

Outlines of English Idiom Part II

Treasure Island Grade V (if time permits)

B. English as Secondary Foreign Language

First Year Scientific and Literary. 4

Essential English Book I (Eckersley)

Second Year Scientific and Literary. 4

Essential English Book II (Eckersley)

The educational law of 1944 was at first fully accepted by the Ministry of Education and it was strictly applied in all Syrian Secondary schools until the academic year 1949-1950. The program was then altered. The change was most considerable in regards to the teaching of foreign languages. An outcome of this alteration was the suppression of one of the two foreign languages from the secondary school program. Students, today, choose either French or English at the beginning of Intermediate school and they continue to learn the same foreign language through the grades both in the intermediate and the secondary school. In a word, Syrian students today study one foreign language besides Arabic.

As a result of this recent change the English program itself underwent a slight alteration. English now is taught eight hours per week in the first year of the secondary school and six hours in the second year or the "Baccalaureat" class.

The rest of the program of 1944 is still being applied. As to textbooks they are also the same.

Part II : An appraisal of the present place of English in the Secondary program.

Because of the centralization of the educational system in Syria, every law dictated by the Ministry of Education in Damascus must be applied in all secondary schools of the country. Some of these decrees and instructions are kept as well as the program of secondary studies in one volume (منهج الدراسة الثانوية) published by the Ministry of Education and distributed to all principals and teachers. Besides, inspectors are assigned by the Ministry to visit schools and attend classes once or twice during the academic year. They are expected to see that all educational decrees are strictly followed by every teacher in his own field. (منهج الدراسة الثانوية)

The program of secondary studies which is published by the Ministry in Damascus, includes the scope of subjects, the textbooks assigned and some general suggestions for the teaching of the school subjects in question.

The latest revision of this "program" was published in 1947. A part of it was devoted to the English teaching program with reference to those teaching methods which are considered most efficient by the Ministry of Education. The (1) "Notes on the teaching of English" are summarized as follows:

(1) See "Appendix, Notes on the teaching of English", taken from "Program of secondary studies", published in 1947 in Damascus.

"The Main aim of English teaching in the Syrian Intermediate and Secondary schools is to enable the students to acquire full comprehension in reading and fluency in writing and speech. With a view to attaining this aim it is essential that all instructors of English in the above mentioned schools should adopt the following methods in their teaching and strictly adhere to them".

Reading: Students of all grades and beginners in particular should do extensive oral reading. It is essential that they understand what they are reading. There is no point in proceeding to lesson 5 for instance if they do not understand lesson 4.

Vocabulary: Many students stuff their brains with words, but are quite unable to construct a simple sentence correctly. A word is not known unless it can be put into proper use.

Composition: Students should be trained to think in English and to write in English. Written compositions should not be attempted before the third year.

Compositions should be written in books not on loose papers so that both students and teachers can discern the improvement achieved by the respective students. Students should be asked to rewrite their mistakes correctly several times.

Grammar: Grammar should not be taught as a separate

subject. Grammar rules should be discussed and explained by teachers as they come up in reading lessons.

Translation: In all classes except the first and second intermediate, one hour should be allotted for translation from English into Arabic. No textbook for translation is assigned. It is advisable that extracts on various subjects be selected from newspapers, magazines and books. The work is to be done at home.

Instructions on how to teach the English textbooks.

A. Preparation:

1. Prepare the lesson before coming to class.
2. Decide how much subject matter will be covered in a period.

B. Work in class:

1. Begin the lesson by a review of the previous one.
2. Read the new words and explain or demonstrate their meaning.
3. Group reading is not recommended.
4. Never pass from one lesson to another until the previous lesson is thoroughly understood by the students.

C. Subject-Matter:

The textbooks assigned for each year must be completed in one scholastic year.

D. General principles of language study:

1. Children first learn to hear and identify sounds.

Speaking comes after correct hearing and is imitation of what has been heard. Reading and writing are not natural processes, and are taught after the elements of speech have been mastered.

2. The desire to learn depends much on interest and variety.

When children are bored or discouraged they learn little, the teacher is advised to have at his command as many teaching devices as possible and to avoid routine methods.

3. Arabic should be used only for

a) giving explanations,

b) translating an English word or phrases the meaning of which cannot be quickly demonstrated."

These notes reveal, to an extent, the important place which English has been accorded in the Syrian secondary program under the new regulations of 1944. English is required in the official examinations for the "Brevet" and "Baccalaureat", diplomas. Students today are required to attain a minimum grade of 30% in every school subject, and an average of 50% in all subjects, in order to succeed in official examinations or to be promoted to a higher class. This requirement is equally applied to English. Many candidates, therefore, fail and find themselves obliged to repeat their class because of a low grade in the English final examination although all other grades are acceptable. This shows importance of English in the new program of the Syrian secondary schools.

This is the type of English examinations administered to "Brevet" and "Baccalaureat" students.

A. Official Examination for the "Baccalaureat" Diploma.

<u>Grade assigned</u>	<u>Foreign Language (English)</u>	<u>Time 2½ hrs.</u>
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15%	I. Translate into Arabic:-	
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When a person buys a packet of cigarettes or a bottle of scent, he always pays some money to the Government. The person who manufactures these things, or who imports them from abroad pays a tax to the Government. The amount of the tax is fixed in proportion to the value of the goods. The importer or manufacturer makes the price of the article higher so as to get back the cost of the tax. So the buyer pays a tax indirectly. This is indirect taxation.

Sometimes indirect taxes are paid by sticking stamps on the article. A ticket for the cinema has a government stamp on the back. The owner of the cinema has to buy these stamps from the government and he adds the cost of the stamps to the price of the ticket.

8%	II. A. Punctuate the following:	
----	---------------------------------	--

I do not understand that wreck said joe perhaps it was the ship which i saw sailing about yesterday the men on board did not seem to be good sailors jonathan the coast-guard said he saw a big ship near the rocks at midnight but there was no signal nor any call for help if they were in danger why did not they show a signal light or shout for help.

12% B. Use six of the following words in sentences:
hospital, peril, devote, protest, delicious, persuade, earn,
resign.

15% III. A. Use the correct tense of the verb in brackets:

1. He gave me good advice lest I (may) fall into bad habits.
2. He always thought that truth (be) better than falsehood.
3. You (work) your arithmetic problems yet? No, I not (do) them yet, but I (work) them tonight.

5% B. Fill the blanks with prepositions:

1. The man dismissed his servant because he was not satisfied his work.
2. He was full gratitude their kindness.
3. Many men die their country war.

12% IV. A. Change from direct to indirect speech:

1. I asked the gardener "Do you think these flowers will grow"?
2. The teacher said to his pupils, "Show me your exercise books tomorrow".
3. The conductor said to us, "The train will not be able to go on for several hours as there has been an accident on the line".

8% B. Correct the following:

1. He is not enough careful in his work.
2. The pencil cost ten piasters with which he was writing.
3. He won almost

the race. 4. He was not fortunately hurt.

25% V. Write a composition of one hundred words on one of the following subjects:-

1. What I should like to be in the future.
2. Compare village life and city life.

B. Official Examination For The "Brevet" diploma.

Foreign language (English)

Time: 2 hrs.

June 1950

20% I. Translate into Arabic:-

First Aid.

First Aid teaches you to observe the signs of various illnesses. By these signs you know what to do so as to keep the person alive until the doctor comes. If a person falls down in a faint this may be caused by various illnesses.

When you learn First Aid you learn to observe the signs which show the cause of the fainting, and act accordingly. If you have not learnt what to do, you may do the wrong thing, and cause a person's death.

12% II. A. Use four of the following words in sentences:-
drown, polite, descend, thirsty, empty, collect.

4% B. Give synonyms of the following words:-
firm, calm, hate, journey.

the race. 4. He was not fortunately hurt.

25% V. Write a composition of one hundred words on one of the following subjects:-

1. What I should like to be in the future.
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When you learn First Aid you learn to observe the signs which show the cause of the fainting, and act accordingly. If you have not learnt what to do, you may do the wrong thing, and cause a person's death.

12% II. A. Use four of the following words in sentences:-
drown, polite, descend, thirsty, empty, collect.

4% B. Give synonyms of the following words:-
firm, calm, hate, journey.

10% III. A. Answer the following questions:

1. What happens when you boil water?
2. How do you write the address of a letter?
3. What is your aim in life?
4. What are the duties of a school boy?

10% B. Make adjectives and adverbs of the following nouns:-
comfort, danger, strength, beauty, faith.

3% IV. A. Change from active into passive:

1. What cities did you visit in your travels?
2. He has ordered the soldier to stand guard by the gate.
3. My father is building a house.

5% B. Fill the spaces with one of the following:-

any, every, another, no, either.

1. Dead men tell tales.
2. As these shoes do not fit me, I must buy pair.
3. Has he friends in the school?
4. I can go day, though I prefer Monday to Tuesday.
5. He goes to America five years.

6% C. Give the feminine plural of the following:-
man-servant, land-lord, husband.

4% V. A. Correct the following sentences:-

1. The watch is an useful thing to have.
2. The hunter shot a large and small fox.
3. Man could not live here without the water.

12% B. Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense:

1. I (go) to the mountains as soon as the coming vacation (begin).
2. He (become) so sick that we do not expect him to live till tomorrow.
3. Up till now no student (fail) in this class.
4. He not (study) now as he (do) at the beginning of the year.

4% C. Give the past and past participle of:-
break, swim, lie, bring.

Note: Four marks are given for good handwriting and neatness.

Appendix to Chapter I

Notes on The Teaching of English.

"The main aim of English teaching in the Syrian Intermediate and Secondary Schools is to enable the students to acquire full comprehension in reading, and fluency in writing and speech. With a view to attaining this aim, it is essential that all instructors of English in the above mentioned schools should adopt the following methods in their teaching and strictly adhere to them.

Reading

It is regretted that in far too many cases reading in class is mostly done by the teachers, instead of by the pupil, this procedure does not assist comprehension, nor does it afford practice in pronunciation. Students of all grades therefore and beginners in particular should do extensive oral reading thus affording teachers innumerable opportunities for ensuring correct accent and pronunciation. It is essential though that the students understand what they are reading. There is no point in proceeding to lesson 5 for instance if they do not understand lesson 4.

Vocabulary

Students studying foreign languages usually allot

most of their time to memorising synonyms and in every case teachers of little experience encourage such a procedure thinking that a wide vocabulary will by itself furnish students with considerable subject matter. In other words, vocabulary is taught at the expense of syntax. Many students stuff their brains with words, but are quite unable to construct a simple sentence correctly. A word is not known unless it can be put into proper use.

Composition

In composition writing, students should be taught not to make their compositions a translation from Arabic. They should be trained to think in English and to write in English. For instance to laugh on, to be afraid from, to be older from, instead of laugh at, to be afraid of, and older than are translations from the Arabic. It is therefore desirable that very little Arabic if any, be used in an English class. Even in the lower classes of Intermediate schools, words, in so far as possible, should be explained to students by representation and pictures, Arabic to be used only when absolutely necessary.

In the lower classes of Intermediate schools, teachers should satisfy themselves mainly with drilling the students in oral composition. Written compositions should not be attempted before the third year by which time the students will

have become thoroughly acquainted with the essential basic rules of grammar such as the parts of speech, the forms of verbs, the tenses etc... Formation of simple sentences at first by oral practice should however be attempted, to be followed at a fairly early stage by written practice. This should be followed by putting together simple sentences so as to form some sort of connected narrative of description, however elementary.

By the third year Intermediate, students should start to build up short simple sentences into compound and complex sentences. (This stage should be linked with analysis of sentences into clauses, care should be exercised here with regard to the formation of paragraphs, a matter of considerable importance.

And so the student arrives finally at the writing of a composition in the proper sense. This should be done regularly, say weekly or fortnightly. At first, it is advisable to discuss and prepare the subject thoroughly in class, and students should be helped to build up a relevant vocabulary to be used in the composition itself.

Compositions should be written in books not on loose papers. So that both students and teachers can follow up the improvement achieved by the respective students. When the teachers correct the compositions, they should ask the students to rewrite their mistakes correctly several times. To return

a corrected composition to a student without explaining his mistakes to him is of little value.

Attention is also drawn to the value of reproductions. These should be read out in class and students should be encouraged to make the reproduction as close as possible to the text that has been read. This will serve to familiarise them with the idiomatic use of the language, and provide them, half unconsciously not only with words but with words properly used and arranged.

Grammar

Grammar should not be taught as a separate subject; it is no use learning the names of the kinds of nouns, the degree of comparison, the tenses etc. If the student cannot construct a simple sentence properly. It is, therefore desirable that grammar rules be discussed and explained by teachers as they come up in reading lessons. By so doing, the student will not only learn the rules as something abstract but also see them applied in familiar sentences. To give an example, let us take the simple present tense. This is the first thing that a student learns in grammar, and yet it is the most widely misused tense. The reason for this is that students are taught the form of the verb in the simple present tense and the third person singular "S", but little pains is taken to see that such tense is correctly used in sentence form.

Activities

The study of languages differs from that of mathematics and other sciences in that it requires extensive reading. What is acquired in class is by no means enough for a person studying a foreign language. School authorities, especially teachers of English should therefore create for their students an English-speaking environment to help in the process of English learning. The formation of English-speaking groups, and societies will undoubtedly be very helpful, especially if the students run them under the direction and guidance of their teachers of English. It is too a good thing, from time to time, for speakers from the teaching staff or from outside to come in and give a short talk.

Instructions On How to Teach The English Text-books.

A. Preparation

- 1) Prepare the lesson before coming to class.
- 2) Decide how much subject matter will be covered in a period of 55 minutes.
- 3) Prepare a list of the new words and phrases that occur in the lesson with explanations thereof.

B. Work in class

- 1) Begin the lesson by revising the previous one to make

sure that the students have fully understood it.

- 2) Read the new words of the lesson and explain or demonstrate their meanings in a clear and simple way.
- 3) Make every student read the new words and see that they pronounce them correctly.
- 4) It is advisable that the text be read by the teacher slowly and clearly and then by the students separately.
- 5) Group reading is not recommended.
- 6) Exercises at the end of the lesson, if any, whether oral or written, should be attempted.
- 7) Try to spend the last few minutes of the lesson in a general discussion of the main points, whether the lesson is reading or grammar.
- 8) Never pass from one lesson to another until it is thoroughly understood by the students. Work half done is of little value.
- 9) Compositions suggested by the author should not be disregarded by the teachers. These compositions are within the scope and vocabulary of the students. To suggest subjects for compositions other than those recommended will in most cases be waste of time because they will be above the standard of the students.

C. Subject-Matter

The textbooks assigned for the respective years as shown above should be completed in one scholastic year. These books have been fully studied by experts before being assigned.

Due consideration of their fitness to the students of the respective grades has been given. Therefore failure to complete the assignments will, except in abnormal conditions, be the result of negligence in the part of the teachers and in consequence little benefit will be gained by the students.

D. General Principles of Language Study

1) Every child learns one language fairly thoroughly. He uses it for communication with others and as his instrument of thought. This knowledge gained without conscious effort, is acquired by a natural process, and in teaching or learning a second language we get the best results when we keep as close as practically possible to the methods by which we learnt our native tongue.

2) Prominent features of the natural process are the following:

- a) Children first learn to hear and identify sounds. Speaking comes after correct hearing and is imitation of what has been heard. Reading and writing are not natural processes, and are taught after the elements of speech have been mastered.
- b) Nature rarely teaches single words, but groups of words. Where separate words are learnt, they are immediately used in a phrase or sentence.
- c) The meaning of sound groups is nearly always learnt in association with some form of activity.

- d) Nature uses a certain compulsion, the child must learn to hear and speak in order to satisfy its needs.
- e) The process of learning is closely connected with the child's environment, it is so full of variety and interest that the child is not aware of the mental effort involved.

3) In the application of these principles in the class-room it is well to teach all new words and phrases by sound, not by sight of the written symbols for the sounds. When the sounds have been identified, imitated and associated with their meaning, reading and writing may help to fix them in the memory.

Although new words should first be pronounced separately for the pupils, they should immediately be used and practised in some suitable word-group or word-pattern.

The maximum amount of orderly activity should be encouraged in the class-room, not only for the learning of names of actions, but of objects and qualities.

The substitute for natural compulsion is willingness and eagerness on the part of the pupils, and the desire to learn often has to be stimulated by the teacher. It depends much on interest and variety. When children are bored or discouraged, they learn little. The teacher will be well advised, therefore, to have at his command as many teaching devices as possible, and to avoid routine methods. The class-room itself should be made attractive and contain a supply of

objects, pictures, and other equipment connected with the work. The aim should be English as speech. Skill in reading and writing what is already known by ear can easily be acquired. Intonation, which is just as important as pronunciation, can be learnt only by the ear, and the teacher must therefore give plenty of practice in the imitation of spoken phrases and sentences. There should rarely be silence in the language class-room. Either the teacher or the pupil should be using their voices. No actions should be performed silently. When obeying commands the children should say what they are doing.

4) For children, language-learning is one long effort of memory. They should not be called upon to use their reasoning powers to any great extent.

- 5) Arabic should be used only for
- a) giving explanations
 - b) translating an English word or phrases the meaning of which cannot be quickly demonstrated.

It must be noted that the directions and advice given above are not all that should be observed. Many other things to be said on the subject are left unsaid. Teachers are expected to use their discretion especially in cases that need particular treatment.

C H A P T E R II

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN LATAKIA

SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Introduction

Before 1941, Latakia was an autonomous territory separated from Syria and directly bound to the French "Haut-Commissariat" in Beirut. Unlike Syria, the government of Latakia was in all aspects under the direct influence of the French. This influence was most positive in the educational field. As was stated before, the Lebanese Republic and Latakia placed more emphasis on the French language than did any other French mandated territory. A good number of the subjects in elementary schools - Arithmetic, object lessons... were taught through the medium of French.

The Government of Latakia had an educational system of its own, which resembled all other systems in the French mandated territories with the only difference that Latakia schools had their own diplomas, the "Certificat D'Etat" and the "Brevet d'Etat". These two official examinations were made up by the Director of Public Education with the help of a French advisor. Both examinations were organized after the model of French diplomas, but in the "Certificat d'Etat" and the "Brevet d'Etat" there was special emphasis on Arabic,

in addition to the French language, Arabic being the mother-tongue of the students.

In 1936 Latakia was retaken by the nationalist government in Syria. The educational system of Latakia was altered to the extent that the Syrian "Elementary Certificate" and Syrian "Brevet" were introduced and added to the "Certificat" and "Brevet d'Etat". But even then emphasis on the French language and French literature was continued in Latakia schools - a characteristic which made the standard of attainment in French higher in Latakia than in the rest of the country.

However, the Arab nationalist spirit, which was embodied in the educational reform of 1944, made its way into Latakia schools. Soon there was a strong reaction against the French type of education and the French language itself. This reaction was at its highest between 1945-1946. In 1944 English was introduced into the secondary program in Latakia as well as in the rest of the country. Pupils went unhesitatingly to English. In Latakia school for girls, the majority of students have been studying English for the past five years. The following shows the number of French studying pupils and English studying pupils in all secondary classes of Latakia school for girls, during the academic year 1949 - 1950 :

	<u>French</u>	<u>English</u>
<u>First class</u> (all sections)	60	120
<u>Second class</u> (all sections)	60	80
<u>Third class</u> (all sections)	--	100
<u>Fourth class</u> (all sections)		60
<u>Fifth class</u>	25	15
<u>Sixth class</u>	8	15
	-----	-----
Total :	153	390

How is English actually taught in Latakia school for girls and how much do the "Baccalaureat" students know after six years of English study?

These were the two questions of major importance which the writer had in mind when she visited the school in spring 1950. All English classes in Latakia secondary school for girls were visited several times and a few interviews took place between the writer and the different English teachers. These visits and interviews resulted in a lot of information which centered around the following aspects of English teaching in Latakia:

1. The program
2. The teachers preparation and selection
3. The methods of teaching
4. The teacher-student relationship

5. The equipment and physical aspect of the English classrooms.
6. The standards of attainment.

The Program

In Latakia school for girls, English teachers follow strictly the same official program which has been set by the Ministry of Education. The textbooks and the number of class periods have already been mentioned in this paper.

Besides, English, in Latakia, is divided into the following subjects: Reading, Grammar, Composition, Translation, Dictation and in the third secondary year Handwriting. In every class, all the subjects are usually taught by the same teacher except translation. The latter is taught by one teacher in all secondary classes.

The following table gives a weekly schedule of English teaching in all secondary classes for the year 1949-1950.

<u>First Year</u>	Hours	<u>Second Year</u>	Hours
Reading	3	Reading	3
Dictation	2	Grammar	1
Grammar	2	Conversation	1
Translation	1	Dictation	1
Total	8	Composition	1
		Total	7

<u>Third Year</u>	Hours	<u>Fourth year</u>	Hours
Reading	2	Reading	2
Dictation	1	Composition	1
Translation	1	Dictation	1
Grammar	2	Grammar	1
Handwriting	<u>1</u>	Translation	<u>1</u>
Total	7	Total	6

<u>Fifth Year</u>	Hours	<u>Sixth Year</u>	Hours
Reading	4	Reading	2
Dictation	1	Composition	1
Translation	1	Dictation	1
Composition	1	Grammar	1
Grammar	<u>1</u>	Translation	<u>1</u>
Total	8	Total	6

The teacher's preparation and selection

The teaching of English in Syria is still in its infancy. Most of the English teachers in the country lack the preparation necessary for teaching the subject adequately. The ministry of Education has selected them because no others with better qualifications were available. Since 1944 the majority of students in secondary schools have elected English as their foreign language. At the same time very few people in Syria knew English and were ready to teach it. So, because a considerable number of English teachers was needed the

ministry of Education accepted most of those who applied for the English teaching profession with little investigation. This lack of selection is most obvious concerning the English teachers in Latakia secondary school for girls. Of these five teachers, two are Palestinian refugees. The three others are natives of the town. All of them became teachers for the main reason that they were almost the only persons in Latakia who could speak and write English. Their educational background, however, is the following:

Teacher A has the London Matriculation diploma. Teacher B and Teacher C had completed an American high school. Teacher D and Teacher E had studied English privately. None of them had any professional or higher training.

However the writer's observations of the work of these teachers lead her to believe that in spite of their limited preparation, they are making the most of their opportunities. They are interested in their work and in their pupils. They bring their own books to the school, they encourage the students to speak English, and they even attempted several projects designed to create an interest in English among the students.

The methods

What are the teaching methods which are most prevalent in the English classrooms of Latakia school for girls?

In reality there is one single method used by all English teachers there; this is namely the traditional question-answer method which required strict direction on the part of the teacher and strict obedience on the part of the student. The teacher however is the most active member in the class. She leads the pupils, chooses the assignments, asks questions, gives orders, etc. ... Besides, class activities are always characterized by individual work. Usually the teacher deals with one student at a time; while the others wait passively for their turn. Moreover, each subject is considered a unity by itself and has no relation whatsoever to the rest of the program. For instance in the reading class, only reading is taught and here, a slight reference - if any - goes to grammar or translation; and vice versa. The translation period is devoted to translation, the composition period to composition and so on.

The teacher-student relationship

In Latakia, the teacher and the students know each other on a formal basis. This relation stays between them as long as they are in class. Outside the gap widens more and more. Teacher and students, then, completely ignore each other. This formality between the students and their teacher is caused by two factors, first the traditional view point regarding teacher-pupil relation, and second by the physical aspect of the English classes.

The Physical aspect and the equipment of
the English class

In Latakia school for girls, classes are made difficult to manipulate because of the large enrollment in English classes and the insufficient number of benches and books. The sad result is this: in some English classes, every three girls sit on one bench with one textbook in front of them, moving constantly from one hand to another. Besides, the last rows in these big classes are always "out of the sight of" the teacher. Hence, these girls who are "left to themselves" are always busy doing any activity except the one which is carried on by the teacher and other more attentive students.

These numerous classes on one hand, and the eagerness of some students to take advantage of the situation on the other hand, have finally created a tense and unfriendly atmosphere in which teacher and students never feel at ease. Consequently the main objective of the English teacher in Latakia is to dominate the class in a firm way and to find out these "troublesome" students who always cause disorder. To this purpose all other educational objectives are almost sacrificed.

Standards of attainment

The question of major importance here is: how much English do girl students in Latakia know by the end of their secondary education? Standards were evaluated in April 1950.

The criterion used was the "English qualifying examination", prepared by the English Department in the American University of Beirut and administered every year to students who have completed their secondary education and want to be admitted to the University. The English qualifying examination consists of two main parts; first, an objective test made up of four sub-tests: Reading, Idioms, Vocabulary and sentence building. Second, an essay.

This examination is based on accuracy and speed, the time for each sub-test being limited. Forty-five minutes are usually allowed to the whole objective test and forty-five other minutes to the essay.

The reading sub-test includes ten short paragraphs which have to be read silently by the examinee. Each paragraph is followed by two questions accompanied by four different answers, one of which is right. Pupils have to find out the correct answer.

The second sub-test consists of a list of sentences conveying specific ideas. Each idea is expressed in four different ways. Pupils have to find out the one correct form.

The vocabulary sub-test is made up of several words. Each required a synonym, which has to be selected from a group of other words.

Finally the fourth sub-test consists of different kinds of sentences which have to be judged as right or wrong.

The subjective part includes five different topics

for essay-writing. Students are free to choose any one of these five subjects.

The Qualifying Examination was administered in April 1950 to the "Baccalaureat" students (the graduating class) in Latakia school for girls. No explanatory introduction was given and time was limited to one hour and a half as usual. The examination papers were corrected and graded according to the same system followed in the American University of Beirut. The following table gives the grades of fifteen Baccalaureat students in the different objective sub-tests:

Pupil	40 Reading	20 Idioms	20 Vocabulary	20 Sentences	100 Total
A	4	6	2.6	2	14.6
B	8	9	1.33	1	19.33
C	14	5	2/3	5	24.2/3
D	12	8	2/3	8	28.2/3
E	16	6	1.33	8.5	31.83
F	4	3	2	7.5	16.5
G	2	5	4	0	11
H	12	10	2	0	24
I	6	3	0	1	10
J	10	4	2/3	4	18.2/3
K	4	4	2	1/2	10.5
L	6	4	2/3	4.5	15.1
M	10	5	0	4	19
N	4	10	1.33	2	17.33
O	6	10	4.66	2	22.66

The results of the objective test in general, show weakness in reading, vocabulary, idioms and sentence building. Yet this weakness is greatest in the field of reading and vocabulary. In the former the highest grade is 16 out of 40 and in the latter it is 4.66 out of 20. These poor results are due to two factors: first, in reading, to the lack of speed and accuracy especially in the field of silent reading. Second, in vocabulary, to a limited scope of words because reading in Latakia school is limited to the English textbooks only.

The test on idioms was particularly good compared to the rest, with a highest grade of ten. The test on sentence construction shows great weakness too but compared to reading and vocabulary, its results are more satisfactory although two pupils have completely failed in it.

On the other hand the subjective part included the following:

Choose one of the following subjects for your essay.

An old ruin that I have visited.

We learn more from nature than from books.

How to make bread.

Swimming as an ideal summer sport.

An incident from the early history of my race. (1)

The subjective test as a whole was better than the

(1) All the students chose the second and the third subjects.

objective although the fifteen essays were actually very weak. In general the mistakes committed by the students can be divided in two categories: First: A direct translation from Arabic; second, Carelessness and lack of Drill.

Under the first category comes the omission of the article and of the verb to be from most of the sentences. Illustrations are found in the fifteen papers with perhaps one or two exceptions.

Examples: "Bread is important thing to us"

"Bread is very important matter"

"We cannot say that the books useless but..."

These sentences and many others were directly translated from Arabic. So were many verbs used in these essays too.

Examples: "The books learn us ..."

"We bread flour in the fire."

The reason is this: in Arabic to learn and to teach have the same root,

تعلم - نتعلم and bread and the act of baking bread have also the same root, الخبز - فعل خبز

Students in Latakia have acquired the habit of thinking first in Arabic, then trying to interpret their thoughts in English. This is a result of the continual use of Arabic in English classes, and to a corresponding lack of utilization of English in any situation but formal classes.

Under the second category - i.e., carelessness and lack of drill - come such mistakes as the omission of "s" from the third person singular of the present tense, and the

use of different verb tenses at the same time.

Examples: "The baker make ... put ... "
"He take ... It get ... "
"Nature give us ... "
"They knows ... "
"We take ... we mix ... and we left ... "
"They cutting ... and prepared ... "

These mistakes are partly due to carelessness because students - especially in the sixth secondary grade - actually can differentiate between present, past and progressive form. Usually they start their sentences well but suddenly go astray. These same mistakes are also due to a lack of drill in class.

The teacher never singles out one of these common mistakes and has the students work on it alone for a certain period. That is why all the verb tenses come together into the mind of the student. He has learned them together. This lack of specification and drill has already been mentioned among the main characteristics of the English class in Latakia.

Because the majority of students had written about the subject "We learn more from Nature than from Books", the writer selected two of these papers - a poor and a good one - to give an idea - though not quite accurate - about the ability of the class as a whole in English writing. These two illustrations or two samples are as follows:

1. Weak

We learn more from nature than from books. We learned many things in our life, many of the people had a good knowledge without they learn in any book. They taught from their adventure and from which happened to them. The book learn us only how we can get knowledge from the world how we can get things in a right way.

Every one has a good wise he can able to learn everything from the life in the right way. For example our fathers and mothers they know more than us and they get a good knowledge after they learning the school, and so the nature give us all that we used it, and teach us a good lessons to be a good members in this life and learned us how we lived more peacefully and more lovely.

2. Strong

We read much in books and we learn things and things but if we look at the nature we can learn more than what the papers of the book tell us.

The books describe to us the events but the nature shows us them. And we can notice in the nature the events by our eyes and we can see the right and the wrong.

Sometimes we learn in books something which is wrong but the nature shows us always the right. The writers writes what he is feeling but the nature tells the whole truth and sometimes the truth hurt us.

So we run to read the books to get free from the nature.

With this limited scope of knowledge in English, Syrian students encounter many difficulties in the course of their studies especially when they go to foreign universities abroad. In the American University of Beirut, these difficulties are partly overcome due to a "special" "English class", where students are given the opportunity to improve their language before they are admitted to Junior classes. But even after this, Syrian students still have to face many problems the most serious of which are:

1. The inability to understand fully and easily the English language as spoken by American or English people
2. The inability to speak English fluently.

Syrian students, therefore rarely master English not even after several years of university education because what they actually know does not stand on a firm basis.

A comparison was attempted between the "Baccalaureat" students in Latakia and the eighth grade pupils in the American Preparatory School of Beirut. The latter were given the same topics of composition - "How to make Bread" and "We learn more from nature than from Books" - at the beginning of the academic year 1950-1951. A study of the papers shows great resemblance in the type of mistakes made by both groups. On the whole, - though the statement might not be quite accurate - the two groups seem to have the same general amount of knowledge in English. But in Latakia, there are one or two good students, with whom no eighth grade pupil can compete,

a characteristic which is perhaps due to the difference in age and background between the "Baccalaureat students" and the 8th grade children.

Here are two of the second group papers:

"One day I went with my friends to a trip to a forest. We went there to hunt birds. While I was shooting at a bird I felt that there was something walking on my leg. I looked at my leg I saw nothing but an ant. I hitted it with my hand. It fell down on the ground. I was watching it very carefully. I saw it walking then it saw a piece of bread then it went and tell its friends to come and help her. They came and were able to carry it. I was happy to know that."

"We learn more from nature than from books. If we go group to a forest and see the nature, we see ants going and they come with food in their mouth. I went after an ant to see what she is doing and from where did it get the food. I followed her and she was going to place where it find wheat. It take one wheat and take it to her house. The ants didn't make accidents with each others. The nature learns us more than the books. We see them in our eyes going and coming back with a wheat in its mouth. In books the teacher began to teach us that the ant take food with her mouth and take it to home and that the bird sleep in its nest. If we see in our eyes better than we learn it in the book."

C H A P T E R I I I

AN EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN LATAKIA,
IN THE LIGHT OF SOME MODERN THEORIES AND PRACTICES.

A question of primary importance in this paper is, "To what extent does the teaching of English in Latakia school for girls differ from the modern concept of teaching English as a foreign language?"

In the light of some modern theories and practices, the following aspects of English teaching in Latakia will be evaluated:

1. The teacher's preparation
2. The child's interests
3. The aim of English teaching
4. The methods of teaching.

1. The teacher's preparation

Because English teaching was recently introduced into the Syrian program, the question of selecting and training candidates for the English teaching profession has not yet been given much importance by the ministry of Education. The Syrian teacher-training institutions of Aleppo and Damascus prepare candidates for the teaching of Arabic, Science, Mathematics, Philosophy, etc. ... English alone - being a foreign language - is excluded from the program. Therefore in Syria itself there are no especially trained

people to teach English. That is why since 1944 and for the past six years, English has been taught in all government secondary schools by the method of "trial and error" if it could be said. But today the Ministry of Education is trying to ameliorate the situation by sending students to universities outside the country, where they will be trained in the field of English teaching, getting rich experiences from the most recent theories and practices in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

The same critical situation presents itself in Latakia school for girls. The material being elementary, the teachers in Latakia seem to know their subject well enough. But the teaching of English as a foreign language requires something deeper and broader than such a simple knowledge of the material, something acquired in the course of experience, or through effort and training. Leavitt says: "We must not forget that just as it is possible for a mason to be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills of his craft and yet not do the work of a masterbuilder, so is it possible for a teacher to have the knowledge and skills necessary to his work and yet not be a master-teacher. Along with knowledge and skills there must go pride in craftsmanship and an appreciation of some of the larger meanings of the task, to urge one on to do ever better work."⁽¹⁾

(1) Leavitt, "The Teaching of English to Foreign Students", P. 103.

That is why teacher training institutions particularly in America are working to improve their programs. These are the questions which they consider with utmost seriousness:

First, the general education of the teacher should be broad and deep.

Second, the teacher training institutions should recognize the whole child as the core of all education.

Third, the teacher needs methods and techniques. Many well informed persons make poor teachers because they do not possess a basic set of skills in teaching.

Finally, the English teacher should constantly bear in mind the large aims of the school and of education as a whole.

"After all his work is but a small part of the larger whole and must make its contribution to the total educational process ... Has our teacher of English nothing but skills in English to contribute to the education of youth?"⁽¹⁾

2. The Child's Interests

Due to the large classes, to the insufficient preparation of the teachers and the prevalence of the traditional teaching methods, the special aptitudes of the pupils are not sufficiently recognized in Latakia school for girls.

Children are passive and have no share in the organization of the school activities. Besides there is little regard

(1) Leavitt, P. 103-106.

for individual differences. In the English class, the pupils are taught together as a unit. There is no consideration of the especially weak or the especially good student. Consequently children there show no eagerness for learning English because neither the program nor the methods are flexible. They are not altered no matter what the individual needs of the pupils are. That is why the students in Latakia school for girls feel that what they study in English - will not be needed in the future. It is only a requirement of immediate use because on it depends to a certain extent success in the official examinations.

In the modern progressive schools, the child's interest is considered as important as the training of the teacher. Motivation is actually the major basis of learning. Thus in the modern class-room, there is regard for the special aptitudes, abilities, interests and needs of the individual and one of the major school objectives is the development of self-direction, self-reliance and creative expression. And today emphasis is generally placed on social objectives. Therefore only worth while things are taught and the pupils understand that what they learn is not only of value but also necessary for earning a living, for performing the obligations of citizenship and for living a full, rich, individual life. This brings us to the aim of English teaching in Latakia.

3. The Aim of English Teaching

In all syrian intermediate and secondary schools the

main aim of English teaching is "to enable the students to acquire full comprehension in reading and fluency in writing and speech".⁽¹⁾

In Latakia, this aim has in practice given way to another objective, which is to attain the minimum English grade required in the official examinations for passing the "Brevet and Baccalaureat" diplomas. To this limited aim every other or practical or cultural purpose is sacrificed.

In the modern progressive school the aim of English teaching is mainly characterized by its social aspect: language is taught as a means of expression of creative ability and of enrichment of the pupil's experiences. More specifically the immediate objectives of English teaching are four in number:

1. The ability to speak
2. The ability to understand
3. The ability to read
4. The ability to write.

Moreover these four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing consist of the sum of many other component parts. Some of these parts are vocabulary, idiom, grammar, pronunciation, enunciation, fluency, expression, spelling, punctuation, composition, etc. ... It is only when the teacher recognizes these parts and their relationship to one another that he will go a long way towards the understanding of the

(1) Program of secondary education, P. 1

English teaching problem. For example in the illustration given by Leavitt in his "Teaching of English to Foreign Students", the teacher "will no longer exhort John to read better, but he will seek to determine what is wrong with John's reading and work on fluency, or enunciation or some other component part. When these parts have been improved, John's skill in reading will have improved."⁽¹⁾

To attain these objectives recognized by the modern progressive school certain teaching methods should be followed. What are these? And how do they differ from the methods and technics used by the English teacher in Latakia school for girls?

Reading: In Latakia school, reading in all English classes is strictly systematized and follows one single pattern. It is the traditional method of reading aloud from the text-books. Each student reads one long paragraph at a time. All others follow in their books. The teacher asks a few questions, after that comes the turn of another girl, then another girl and so on until the whole chapter is read. If time permits, the chapter is read a second time. Finally the teacher reads the new lesson, and translates it word by word into Arabic.

Today the progressive school is trying to make the reading activity as interesting as possible because experiences have shown that, if neglected, nothing could be more monotonous

(1) Leavitt, P. 7.

and therefore less useful than the class of reading. Variety is the principle which every modern and successful teacher of reading bears in mind. Actually this new movement has already taken the English reading class away from the old traditional routine of reading aloud from textbooks. These are some of the varieties mentioned by F.G. French in his book "The Teaching of English Abroad"⁽¹⁾.

1. Flash cards: Words and sentences are printed on cards flashed one by one by the teacher and read aloud by the pupils.

2. Word-building cards: Certain words considered suitable by the teacher are put on the blackboard. After each word is placed a card showing endings. The result is read by the class. Example:

hold		learn
throw	ER	fight
sing		read

3. Order-cards: Simple orders are printed on the cards and are flashed before the class. The pupils read these orders and obey them in silence. Some of these orders are: Open your book, raise your right hand, touch the desk, etc. ...

As it appears, these activities are not concerned with the English textbook. In regard to the use of the English reader, Leavitt recommends the following.⁽²⁾

(1) French, pp. 62-64.

(2) Leavitt, pp. 35-36.

- (a) It is better to let many pupils read short passages than a few pupils read long passages.
- (b) Competition in reading should sometimes be conducted, with the class judging the result.
- (c) The class can be divided into pairs competing in reading with one another.
- (d) To train the class in understanding, the teacher asks the pupils to close their books and listen to one who reads carefully to make them grasp the meaning of the text in question.
- (e) Pupils sometimes take the part of the character in the story.
- (f) Occasionally the pupils are trained to read quietly in unison.
- (g) Students can be divided into pairs. Seated in different parts of the room or outside. They read to each other.
- (h) Sometimes, the teacher should emphasize a simple component, such as fluency, or enunciation while the others are ignored for the time.

What is the kind of reading which should always be emphasized in class? Should the pupils be trained in silent reading or reading aloud?

French says: "It is not necessary to spend much time on such questions as:

Should the pupils in the class be made to read aloud all together?

Should the teacher first read the lesson aloud to the class as a pattern?

Which is more important? Reading aloud or silent reading?

All these methods have their uses in the proper place and at the proper time. The good teacher never ties himself down to one method; he uses many different methods all in one lesson. That is why his lessons are interesting happy and successful."⁽¹⁾

Leavitt treats the question more definitely. In his book much importance seems to be given to silent reading because it is the natural way in which we read books in order to understand the ideas expressed by the writer. Therefore students should be trained in silent reading as often as time permits.

Today the reading activity is not consecrated to the teaching of reading only but grammar, spelling, dictation, dramatization, all these are insisted upon all the time. Moreover, the question which has received great importance and careful study in the last few years is the treatment of reading disabilities or what we call remedial work in reading. In "the remedial room", failing pupils are treated by capable teachers helped by doctors, oculists, school nurses, social workers, visiting teachers and parents. In the remedial room many types of reading matter exercises and techniques are available. Whether speed, vocabulary, or comprehension is

(1) French, pp. 64-65.

concerned, for every defect there is a set of exercises prepared by a specially trained teacher. At the same time the educational laboratory has proved the importance of scientific study of word frequency, the necessity for attention to eye span, lighting and proper physical make up of books.

This remedial teaching has proved to be valuable both to the individual child and to the school. It has opened broad new horizons for the reading cripple.

Grammar: Grammar teaching in Latakia is also characterized by the individual question-answer method. Students learn the grammar rules and principles at home, come and recite them in class. After the whole lesson has been recited once or twice the pupils do orally some exercises related to the theories in question.

In the modern progressive schools the important fact that teachers and pupils always keep before them is that grammar is a means not an end. English grammar is never taught as a separate course but only in relation to a broader activity which is the teaching of English in general. Grammar should be functional. What is studied has to be put into immediate use in exercises and compositions; it also has to be related to the reader to see how writers make use of the grammatical rules and forms. That is why grammar teaching is postponed until time comes when it is actually needed by the pupil. All teachers today agree that if grammar is introduced into the program before students are ready to receive it, it becomes

then one of the most uninteresting and inefficient school activities. When should grammar lessons begin to appear in the course? The answer is this: "The pupils will only be puzzled and discouraged if grammar is introduced before they have had time to collect, in their speaking, a sufficient number of words and of sentence-patterns from which to select the groups that (in the grammar lesson) will receive their special grammatical names, and from which the pupils will be able to build the first simple grammar rules."⁽¹⁾

In Latakia, grammar is taught from the very start, in the first secondary year. In many progressive schools, grammar is not begun until the third year of the course. Even then, only the easiest grammatical names (the parts of speech and the main divisions of the sentence-patterns) are taught. According to French grammar teaching can be even postponed until the fourth year. Only at that time pupils will have plenty of material to use and the grammar will appear to them to be easy. But because English in Syria is taught only in secondary schools the writer believes that grammar could be introduced from the beginning not as a list of rules but in the form of such easy applications as the "s" of the third person singular of verbs in the present tense or the "ing" of present participles, etc. ...

Whether grammar is introduced in the first year or

(1) F.G. French, "Teaching of English Abroad", P. 93.

postponed until the third or the fourth, the essential thing considered by all modern teachers is to make quite certain:

- 1) that grammar work is not more advanced than the reading work,
- 2) that it is so graded as to appear easy and not difficult to the pupil.

Composition: The English composition in Latakia school is always done by the pupils at home. The teacher herself selects the subject and explains it in Arabic whenever there is need for such an explanation. Usually in the composition class the teacher is more active than the pupils. She gives back the corrected papers, comments orally on each mistake committed by the pupils and finally assigns a new subject for the next time.

Like grammar, composition is a means not an end. It enables the student to express - in a written form - accurately and correctly what they have in mind. The written composition is one way of communication through which children "talk" about something which they know and are really interested in. If the element of interest does not exist, the teaching of composition becomes a most artificial activity. That is why the modern teacher in choosing the subject of the composition makes sure that the pupils really know something about the subject and are eager to communicate this something to another person. This is attained when subjects are chosen from every day life, when they appeal to the imagination of students and especially when they require vocabulary within the scope of knowledge of the class.

The correction of composition, which is considered as monotonous and easy at the same time by the teacher of English in Latakia, is a difficult task and requires patience and special technique. The teacher should make every mistake known to the pupil, give her the right form, and see that the wrong one is eliminated. How is this achieved? The teacher is free to choose that method which proves to be most useful. But many teachers today require that the composition be written again in its corrected form. To encourage the pupil to this, the composition is not graded until the correct form is copied and sometimes the second copy alone is graded.

The aim of teaching composition should be broader than the building of correct sentence-patterns. The mechanics of writing are considered important. The title, the margin, indentation, the neatness and legibility of the task, all these which are at present neglected by the English teacher in Latakia should go side by side with the ideas and language in which the subject is developed. Not only this but the teaching of composition develops in the pupils the element of creativeness, a sense of accurate observation and also a means of expressing individuality.

Translation: Translation begins in the third secondary year in Latakia school; no textbook for translation is assigned. Instead, extracts on various subjects are selected by the teacher from newspapers, magazines and books.

Translation is supposed to be done at home, according

to the suggestion of the Ministry of Education. Sometimes, however, the teacher in Latakia requires the whole work in class. In both cases - whether translation is a home work or not - the teacher writes the paragraph for translation on the blackboard, reads it aloud and slowly, underlining all new and difficult words. The equivalent words in Arabic are given by the teacher and put on the blackboard too. After that, pupils write the translation in their copy-books, or they take notes and leave the rest for completing at home. At other times translation is also done orally or on the blackboard.

The teaching of translation has been a subject of long discussion among many modern English teachers. Different opinions have been formed about the matter. Today there are strong arguments against the use of translation as a method of teaching. Every language - they say - has its own set of habits and it is believed that translation brings to the mind of the student the language habits of his mother tongue; therefore it hinders the learning of the foreign language.

Those who stand in favour of translation believe that the latter occurs any way because as soon as the pupil meets a new English word he immediately searches in his mind for the equivalent in his own language. But when the English word becomes quite familiar, there is no feeling of success in translating it and translation therefore is dropped. The teacher's duty then is to try to take away the strangeness of the new word as quickly as possible and make it familiar to

the pupil. Only then, all need for translation disappears.

What is the most prevalent opinion concerning the use of translation? All modern English teachers today seem to agree that the pupil must be trained to make the direct connection between his ideas and the English words which represent them. The pupil must also be trained in the formation of correct English sentence. And phrase-patterns. That is why translation should not be attempted until all other means have been used: English speech, pictures, objects, or actions may be referred to for the direct connection between idea and word.

In the higher classes, the use of the mother-tongue is sometimes valuable for explaining points in grammar or for giving the equivalent meaning of a new English word which could not be understood otherwise. But the class should get back into English as quickly as possible.

Dictation and Hand-writing: Two other English activities take place in the English classes of Latakia school. These are dictation - taught in all secondary grades - and hand-writing in the third year only.

Dictation is sometimes done by one girl at a time on the blackboard; sometimes all the pupils write in their copy books whatever the teacher dictates. Mistakes are either corrected by the teacher outside the class, or by the pupils themselves in class, each girl correcting her neighbour's dictation.

The period of handwriting in the third secondary year is wholly devoted to training the pupils to write clearly and "nicely" first the alphabet, then single meaningless words and finally short sentences. The model is given by the teacher on the blackboard and imitation is achieved by students in copy-books which are regularly checked and graded.

Summary: In a resume of the main differences between the generally accepted, ideal principles of modern English teaching and the actual methods in effect in Latakia school for girls the following are evident:

In a modern progressive school, all English activities are related to each other and make one integrated whole. Good pronunciation, correct English sentences, good spelling, good penmanship are stressed whether pupils are taught reading, or grammar, or composition.

Change and variety is the principle on which modern English teaching is based.

The interest of the child is the center of all English activities.

The teaching of English is not limited to textbooks. Pictures, and other small objects, charts flash-cards have their importance in the English class.

A modern English class has its own library of books and magazines. This variety is selected by the teacher with consideration to the standard and special interests of the pupils.

Students continue to learn English outside the class. Through interest and challenge they are trained to speak English, listen to English and seek pleasure and culture by reading newspapers, magazines, stories and other kinds of literature.

Finally the modern English teacher has broad education besides a specific knowledge in his field. He has also had adequate preparation and practice in the field of English teaching.

What are the characteristics of English teaching in Latakia? And how do they differ from these modern principles and techniques?

Latakia schools are subject to the Syrian educational system and follow every decree set by the Ministry of Education in Damascus. That is why the work of the English teacher in Latakia as well as in the rest of the country is limited to a great extent. Her main objective is to finish the English program in the amount of time allotted to it and to prepare her students for the official examinations. This is the major purpose for teacher and pupils. Consequently, grammar, composition, translation, every English activity is considered an end by itself and is held important for its use as a means to pass the official examinations for the "Brevet" and "Baccalaureat" diplomas.

Unlike the modern English teacher, the teacher in Latakia rarely refers - if ever - to an English activity while teaching another. For instance the reading period is devoted

to the teaching of reading only, that of grammar to grammar and so on.

In a modern English class, an active and informal atmosphere always prevails, whereas any English class in Latakia is characterized by a feeling of strictness and uneasiness.

A modern English teacher is a guide, an advisor and a co-operating member of the class at the same time. The English teacher in Latakia is a director, a chief whose orders are strictly obeyed.

In a modern English class, the pupil is very often more active than the teacher. The initiative comes from him. He asks questions, chooses topics for conversation, selects sometimes the subject of composition and gives his own opinions on how to organize extracurricular activities.

In Latakia, students are passive. They receive orders from the teacher, answer questions asked by the teacher and are expected to tell or write about those topics which are considered convenient by the teacher.

In the modern class, English teaching is flexible; that is, the teacher changes her topic and her method according to the need of the learner. If circumstances call for a drill on a special topic in grammar, grammar is referred to. If pupils are eager to talk about something, the teacher immediately and skillfully introduces a few minutes of conversation, etc. ...

This characteristic is not found in the English classes of Latakia school. Here, only what is planned by the teacher is executed no matter what the circumstances might be. This lack of flexibility is partly due to the limited capacity of the teacher and partly to her lack of freedom and her dependence on the teaching plans suggested by the Ministry of Education. The teacher's main objective in Latakia is to finish the English program in the amount of time designed for it.

Finally a modern English class is richly equipped with pictures, flash-cards, records, and other necessary objects. The blackboard is often used for demonstration, drawing, giving examples, spelling a word; moreover there is action in the class-room coming from imitation dramatization, following orders, acting the parts of the story read in class, etc. .

In Latakia English classes, textbooks make the only source of information. The blackboard is rarely used because the teacher is often satisfied with oral explanations. And finally action totally lacks because this modern informal but creative attitude toward teaching and learning has not yet made its way into Latakia class-rooms.

C H A P T E R IV

A PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
IN LATAKIA SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

From the previous discussion, it is obvious that the teaching of English in Latakia must be improved along the following lines:

1. Schedule for Beginning

The first thing to study is the time at which the teaching of English starts and the number of years during which students are taught English in the Syrian secondary schools.

We know that in 1944 Sati' al Husri suggested the elimination of foreign language teaching from all classes of the elementary school. His main reasons were two:

1. He claimed that certain subjects in the elementary school curriculum - such as Arithmetic, Object Lessons, History, Geography etc., are not given enough time in spite of their importance. To increase the number of periods devoted to the teaching of these subjects there is one or two possible solutions; either elementary education should cover six years instead of five, or the foreign language should be eliminated and its teaching time should be spent on the subjects mentioned above.

Sati' al-Husri suggested the second solution because:

2. The teaching of a foreign language in classes where children have not yet mastered their mother-tongue is harmful and it definitely hinders the mental development of the pupils.⁽¹⁾

Many educators and teachers, however, disagree with Sati' al-Husri's proposal. For example in 1946, a "commission" - with the purpose of studying the educational system of all Arabic-speaking countries - visited the schools in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Transjordan, etc. and reported on the teaching of foreign languages as follows:

"In view of the need for foreign languages in the Arabic-speaking countries, the Commission is of the opinion that it would be unwise to postpone the teaching of a foreign language until the secondary school. The age twelve is a late age to start a foreign language and it must be remembered that the age at which the average pupil leaves elementary school is higher than twelve, so that a large number of children would begin their foreign language at the age of thirteen or fourteen. For all except the brighter pupils such a late start would preclude proficiency in the language, not to say mastery of it."⁽²⁾

On the other hand, foreign language teaching is included in the primary schools program in all Arab countries

(1) See Sati' al-Husri, تقارير عن حالة المعارف في سوريا واقتراحات
P. 23. لاصلاحها

(2) Akrawi and Matthews, P. 563.

of the Near-East. This is how it is distributed: ⁽¹⁾

Egypt

	<u>Primary school</u> (4 years)			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
<u>Foreign language</u> (Periods)	-	-	8	8

Iraq

	<u>Primary school</u> (6 years)					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<u>English</u> (Periods)	-	-	-	-	6	6

Palestine

	<u>Primary school</u> (7 years)						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
<u>English</u> (Periods)	-	-	-	8	8	8	8

Transjordan

	<u>Primary school</u> (7 years)						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
<u>English</u> (Periods)	-	-	-	7	7	7	7

In Lebanon, foreign language teaching starts in the kindergarten.

(1) Op. Cit. pp. 197-247-311.

The opinion of the Commission of 1946 and the primary programs of the Arab countries mentioned above present in themselves a convincing and rather definite treatment of the question: should there be any foreign language teaching in the Syrian elementary school or not? The teaching of English before the "Elementary Certificate" class, will not hinder the mental development of the child. It can go side by side with Arabic - no matter how difficult the teaching of the latter is. This view is also supported by Dr. Kurani's experiences with his children who are bilingual and by Setl Arsanian in his "Study of the mental development of bilingual children."

It is true that children cannot start learning a foreign language until they attain a minimum degree of readiness and maturity. Actually this readiness is present in the fourth elementary grade where the average pupil is ten years old. Therefore the teaching of English, in Syria, can profitably take place at least two years before the beginning of secondary education.

One of the serious objections to starting foreign language teaching in the elementary school is the difficulty of providing enough teachers of foreign languages for the outlying village schools. Another objection is the lack of need or interest in a foreign language in the villages. But it is not necessary that a foreign language be taught in all elementary schools. For instance, in Syria, English should be taught in elementary schools where there is a sufficient demand for it.

2. The Program

The English program in the Syrian secondary schools may be improved along the following lines:

A. The teaching of translation and dictation has not proved to be successful in Latakia school for girls and all English teachers, here, have expressed their wish to get rid of them. Dr. Michael West, author of the series of English readers known by his name, gave a lecture in Latakia in Nov. 1950, in which he explained that translation should not be required in the English program of the Syrian secondary curriculum because its harm is much greater than its value; it leads the students into many confusions and trains them to think first in Arabic and then write in English.

Questioned by the writer on the same subject, Prof. West said that in case the teaching of translation is absolutely necessary in the Government schools program, let the student read a whole passage in Arabic, and translate the idea involved in it, into English. But "word by word" translation is quite harmful. The writer's opinion is that translation is a technical study and should not be combined with the study of the language. If it is to be taught, it should be taught as a separate branch at the highest level in the secondary school and then only after the study of English has been introduced into the elementary school and the children have acquired the habit of thinking directly in English.

On the other hand Professor West believes that the teaching of dictation is harmful. It sets into the child the wrong habit of making spelling mistakes, a habit which perhaps he will never be able to overcome. Again, if dictation is absolutely required, students can be asked sometimes to write a short dictation which has been carefully prepared before. Dictation then would be so taught that not a single mistake would be made by the students. The writer is of the opinion that dictation should not be taught as a separate English subject. Having the purpose of getting accuracy in spelling, dictation can be included as a part of the teaching of written composition.

B. As a consequence of the previous paragraph, the examinations administered by the Ministry of Education to "Brevet" and "Baccalaureat" students, need also to be changed. Here too, the piece of translation would be omitted and in its place, a few short reading paragraphs with some questions would be quite convenient. If translation however is necessary, it could be given as a separate examination.

The rest of the examination - is acceptable.

C. The textbooks, at present used in the English classes of the Syrian government schools, have proved to be good, and appealing to the students - especially the young among them. These books have certain characteristics which place them among the better ones that have been written in the field of teaching English abroad.

"The New Method Readers"⁽¹⁾ for instance, are based on a carefully graded selection of the most common English words. They include some easy stories which appeal especially to young students.

The series of "An English Course for Foreign Children", by Morris, has been especially written for the elementary schools abroad. In this book, lessons consist of a short conversation, a reading paragraph and a few exercises centering around a rule of grammar. So this book encourages the pupils to discern the rule in its context and takes the teacher away from the traditional method which would present a list of confusing theories and principles.

The booklet "Learn to speak by speaking" is a good incentive for short conversation periods in class. It is also based on a graded selection of common English words and expressions.

Although these books mentioned above lack somehow a natural approach to life, yet they are the best that we have in the field. Besides them, different magazines and stories should be investigated by the students of English in the course of their study. The teaching of a foreign language cannot be limited to textbooks no matter how adequate the latter are.

It is only through wide reading and extracurricular activities that students in Latakia as well as in the rest of

(1) Michael West, "Series of New Method Readers".

the country will acquire a fair knowledge in the field of English and dare say they know something about another nation's culture.

3. The teaching Methods

The English classes in Latakia school seem all to have the following characteristics:

1. The lack of variety
2. The lack of specification and accuracy
3. The lack of eagerness to learn English

Lack of variety

The lack of variety is most conspicuous in the reading class. This is not pardonable because reading can be an all-rounded activity relating the four English skills together. In the modern reading class, speaking hearing and writing go side by side with the ability to read the English textbook. To reach this "four fold" objective, the modern English teacher uses many different ways: For instance,

1. Silent reading is given much importance by the modern English teacher. Students are often trained to read quickly and with enough comprehension, different English texts, without using their voices or even moving their lips.
2. Sometimes one pupil reads and the whole class listen while all books are closed. In this case the reader tries to enunciate well and to pronounce every syllable clearly,

in order to let the audience understand him. At the same time the listener is challenged to get the right meaning of what is being read. The teacher checks on the result by asking several questions related to the text in question. Through this method good habits - clear enunciation, good pronunciation and correct hearing - are soon built in the pupil.

3. At other times competition in fluency of reading is organized between several classmates and judgment is given to a committee consisting of the rest of the class.

4. If the text to be read includes more than one character, acting is then referred to. Pupils take the part of the part of the characters in question and read it, thus paying more attention to pronunciation and enunciation, and following the activity with pleasure and interest.

The various methods of using the textbook would not take more than a few minutes. The rest of the reading period can be devoted to the teaching of spelling - the teacher dictates a few words on the blackboard - or to correct sentence-building - pupils use some words taken from the reading lesson sentences - or finally to oral conversation. The subject might be the reading text itself or any other topic suggested by the pupils. Finally a part of the reading period can be devoted to asking questions. Even this last activity can be achieved in several ways:

- a) The teacher asks questions of individual pupils
- b) The pupils themselves ask questions and the teacher answers them.

- c) A pupil chooses another and asks him questions
- d) Each pupil asks the one who is sitting on his right
- e) A pupil has the right to ask questions until he makes a mistake or a pupil has the right to be asked questions until he commits a mistake.

Lack of specification and drill

Very often, the teacher of English in Latakia feels much disappointed and discouraged when the same mistakes are committed again and again by the students although the correct form has been given and explained many times before. Yet the teacher herself is to be blamed, because she has never tried to select one mistake at a time and work on it for a certain period. This is the logical method used by modern teachers of English: first, to single out one specific difficulty - it might be a rule of grammar or an idiom, etc. - second, to drill on it alone, again and again, until it is mastered by the students. This method is quite effective in the teaching of English idioms. For example most of the Arabic-speaking students say "to laugh on" instead of "laugh at", "to be angry of" instead of "angry with" etc.

The students often tend to translate these special expressions directly from Arabic because the teacher corrects the mistakes in the following way: "to laugh on, what is this to laugh on? to laugh on is a direct translation from Arabic. Girls never say to laugh on. It is wrong. In English we say

to laugh at". And that is all. Because of the repetition of the mistake by the teacher, the students get confused and have the tendency to use the wrong expression again.

How does a good teacher evade such undesirable consequences? She spends a few minutes every now and then, insisting on the fact that in English they say to laugh at. She uses the expression in several sentences, asks the pupils questions built around the verb to laugh at and insists on correct answers.

The teacher, for instance, says: "I laugh at my sister. You laugh at your friend. Who laughs at you?"

- "Jane laughs at me."
- "Are you laughing at Mary?"
- "No, I am not laughing at Mary."
- "At whom are you laughing then?"

and so on, until the pupils use to laugh at spontaneously, unconsciously if we might say. Through drill and specification every bad habit gradually vanishes away and is finally replaced by its substitute, the correct one.

Lack of eagerness to learn

Students in Latakia should be encouraged to look at the English lessons with more interest and less awkwardness. In Latakia the atmosphere of the English class is altogether unnatural. First, students care to study English as long as it will assure them the minimum grade required in the official

examinations. Once they believe this grade is probably attainable English hours then become periods when all sorts of activities are possible: talking, drawing, or studying a difficult chapter in physics or geography.

How can such an attitude on the part of students be explained? The teacher herself is responsible for that. To stimulate the students to learn English, she tells them about the importance of the foreign language in the official examinations and the possibility of failure because of a low grade in English. But she never cultivates in these students the feeling of pride and satisfaction coming from the ability to speak fluently another language besides one's mother-tongue; the ability to read about another nation in the language of this nation, the ability to listen to an English radio program, or to attend an English lecture or an English movie, in other words the ability to share a whole and rich culture with millions of people. Only when the teacher puts these objectives before the student English classes become an interesting means to an interesting end and the study of English will no more be considered boring and artificial. Today most of the girls in Latakia secondary school are shy; shy to enunciate well a piece of poetry; shy to pronounce clearly certain "strange", unfamiliar syllables. A sense of uneasiness and bewilderment always prevails in the English classes of Latakia school. The following incident is a good illustration of what has just been said:

In the third secondary grade, a student once absolutely refused to pronounce such words as "beasts" "scientists" because she could not produce the sound "sts" very accurately, the thing which made all her class-mates laugh and which cost her many tears. This would not have happened if the pupils were trained from the beginning to look at these strange English sounds in a natural way and to try to master them as soon as possible. To fight against shyness and awkwardness, two of the best and most successful methods to use are the game-like exercise and dramatization. For instance students might be asked to find out in their vocabulary all the words which end with "sts" and a reward will be given to the girl who gives the highest number of these words. Pupils then forget about themselves and are "taken" by the whole atmosphere of interest and competition. This sort of exercise or activity should become familiar to the English class in Latakia.

4. The Teacher's Preparation

The quality of good, successful teaching is mostly acquired. It certainly needs intelligence but a great part of it is due to interest first of all, then to training, to effort and guidance. In Syria, the "Normal Schools" prepare many students for the teaching profession. But these institutions do not train pupils in the teaching of foreign languages. The Ministry of Education, therefore, should send every year several

students to foreign universities where they can specialize in the teaching of English. Besides, English teachers should always keep in touch with one other. Regular meetings can be formed where these teachers discuss together some interesting class incidents, help each other with suggestions and try to find out solutions to those difficult problems which sometimes arise in the field of English teaching.

On the other hand, when people apply for an English teaching position in the Syrian secondary school, they should be interviewed, examined and later in the course of their teaching - in case they become teachers - they should be helped by inspectors and advisors especially trained in this field.

Here we come to the place of the inspector in the whole system of teaching. The inspector's duty is to help the teacher improve his methods, to bring him new books to read new ideas on the teaching of his subject. Moreover, the inspector should conduct demonstration lessons before the teacher. By doing this, the inspector becomes a true educational guide, not an educational policeman. In a word in Syria, English teachers need the help of "a modern inspector with a true understanding of the aims and methods of education and a desire to cooperate with the teacher in every way possible. An inspector who is not only an expert on the structure of the educational system but one who is expert in educational methods who can help the teacher to improve his methods and solve his many perplexing problems."⁽¹⁾

(1) H.A. Kurani, "Statement prepared at the request of the Minister of Public Instruction in Syria", p. 6.

5. The System of Teaching

The lack of adequate training and preparation is not the only characteristic which distinguishes the English teacher in Latakia from all other modern teachers. A modern teacher is to a great extent free in the planning of her lessons and the organization of some extra-curricular activities. In Latakia, teachers are tied up to the regulations of the school as a whole. For instance at the beginning of every academic year, teachers are required to make a schedule of their lessons day by day and to follow it through the whole year. They are also supposed to give the pupils a certain number of home-tasks. Whether this home work is useful or not, whether it is done with honesty or by cheating, still it is one of the school requirements which the teacher of English has to fulfill without hesitation. Such a rigid control has its advantages sometimes - teachers and pupils work then according to an organized system and in this case disorder can be controlled or eliminated - But in general, any system of that sort has some undesirable consequences; For instance, teaching methods become less flexible and the teachers feel less responsible and less eager for their work.

Besides, in those schools where there is rigid control, the principal is very often an autocrat and teachers fear him more than they understand him. In Latakia, for instance, the teachers are sometimes reprimanded in the presence

of students. Actually, the way in which a teacher is treated by "the school" to which she belongs affects to a great extent her attitude towards her profession and even the attitude of the pupils towards the teacher herself. Therefore, a teacher should be respected even when she commits mistakes. Comments can be made privately when teacher and principal are alone. These comments should be given in a friendly way. The teacher has to feel that the principal wants to help her, not to tie her with orders or to embarrass her in the presence of pupils.

As to the system of teaching itself, it should be flexible enough so that the teacher's opinion could be considered and certain teaching methods could be changed accordingly. If the teacher feels and believes that home-work is an unnecessary task, home-work should then be cancelled or at least be used less frequently. If the teacher and the pupils want to have a friendly talk outside the class, the principal has nothing to complain about. On the contrary it is his duty to put the teacher and the pupils "informally" together as often as he can. Trips, meetings, lectures and play acting all these informal activities can be and should be a source of enjoyment and information at the same time, to the English class.

6. The Physical Aspect of the English Class

Finally, the general atmosphere or the physical aspect of English classes in Latakia, is also something to be changed.

Because of the great number of students who prefer English to French, English class-rooms are always over crowded. In the fourth secondary class - (in 1949 - 1950) every three pupils sat on a bench and very often every two pupils shared the same textbook. English teachers in Latakia have been complaining during the past academic year about the fact that English textbooks always come late and they never come in sufficient number.

English teaching cannot be successful when classes are organized in such a way. Big classes should be divided into sections not including more than twenty or twenty-five students. Besides, each pupil should have her own textbook. It is the duty of the principal to help the teacher assure the sufficient and necessary equipment for the English class. In case the pupil's poor conditions do not permit her to buy textbooks, help should come from the school administration itself.

Now, even when classes do not include many students, a teacher cannot always sit in the same place. In this case there are always some girls "in the back" who profit from the situation and spend the period doing anything but what they are expected to do. A good teacher is always alert, watching: she moves around and by her active appearance she challenges the pupils to follow the class activity with interest and co-operation.

CONCLUSION

Because Latakia schools are under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Education, the teaching of English there, as well as that of any other school subject cannot actually improve unless the whole system of education is reorganized by the responsible authorities in Damascus. On the other hand, the various weaknesses - in the field of English teaching - which have been mentioned in this paper do not characterize the English classes in Latakia alone but may be found all over the country. For instance, in all Syrian secondary schools, English teachers lack adequate preparation and training and English classes are overcrowded and textbooks are not sufficient. As to the teaching methods, they differ - though slightly - from one teacher to another; but in general the textbooks, number of periods and the various English subjects are the same everywhere.

However, in spite of all these weaknesses which characterize the English classes in Latakia, English teaching there, seems to be in a state of continual positive change, though the process is being very slow. This improvement is due to two main reasons:

1. Re-organization is taking place in the Syrian educational field as a whole, including the teaching of English itself.

For instance, at the beginning of the academic year 1950-1951, inspectors in Damascus decided that they should very

often go around and visit various classes and schools, whereas, formerly, these inspectors used to visit the government schools only once per year. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education suggested that in each government school, there should be regular meetings of teachers, in which teaching methods and problems would be discussed and suggestions would be given.

This new re-organization movement will soon have its effect on the various schools in the country and consequently English teaching in Latakia will also be affected by it.

2. The teachers of English in Latakia are helped by the teachers of other school subjects; The latter have been also complaining about the great number of students in certain classes in Latakia school for girls. Finally authorities in Damascus declared in November 1950 that these big classes could be divided into more sections. Hence one of the various problems which hindered effective English teaching was solved.

This slow change, however, is not satisfactory.

The reform should touch such deeper questions as:

- 1) The teacher's selection and preparation.
- 2) The re-introduction of foreign language teaching into the elementary school program.
- 3) The enlistment of capable, modern inspectors.
- 4) The improvement of English official examinations administered by the Ministry of Education.
- 5) The omission of such English subjects as translation and dictation from the program etc. ..

These aspects of English teaching system need to be reviewed. Effective English teaching in Syria - including Latakia - depends on them.

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