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PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
TO BEGINNERS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE SYRIAN
SECTOR OF THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide practical suggestions for introducing changes into the present English teaching situations in the Preparatory Public Schools of the Syrian Sector of the United Arab Republic.

To study the existing teaching situations a sample of twenty-eight teachers out of an estimated total of 200 English teachers in Syria were interviewed, and thirteen classroom observations were made. In addition, the teaching method as prescribed in the programme and syllabus of study issued by the Syrian Ministry of Education have been studied and compared with the actual methods observed and reported.

The information obtained shows that several methods used by the teachers cannot be called modern methods. The teachers appear to be somewhat aware of modern teaching ideas. Nevertheless, they do not apply fully what they know nor what is prescribed by the Ministry.

Many factors have contributed to the development of the present teaching situation. Some of these factors have developed from within, such as a given teacher's poor command of English and lack of training; other factors have been imposed from without, such as Michael West's influence, the adoption of the logical approach, and the belief in the transfer of training.

Before making proposals for the introduction of changes, the foundation on which these proposals are based is examined. Chapter two is therefore devoted to some modern concepts of English language

teaching, such as the relation of writing to speech, the definition of language, and the meaning of language mastery.

The last chapter is devoted to practical suggestions. Some of these suggestions are designed to introduce changes into the daily teaching activities. The others are for the improvement of the general status of teachers. The major teaching principle suggested has been the establishment of linguistic patterns. Mastery of the patterns contained in the prescribed textbook, within the scope of the vocabulary given, constitutes one of the major objectives of this study. It has been shown in detail how the patterns are to be developed starting with the initial activities stage and proceeding to the normal conversation stage. Problems pertinent to the proper use of the textbook exercises and other related reading and conversational materials, and methods which can be used for the improvement of pronunciation are discussed also. The chapter closes with a proposal for an in-service training course and improved supervisory practices for the improvement of the skill and effectiveness of teachers of English.

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INTRODUCTION

The present century has witnessed rapid changes in the methods of teaching English as a foreign language. Several attempts have been made to write appropriate textbooks to be used by foreign teachers and students of English. Most Syrian teachers, however, have neither been trained in the proper use of the textbooks, nor in teaching English in general. According to the English language inspector in Syria, no one of the English language teachers in Syria in the year 1957-58 was trained in the theory and practice of modern linguistic science.¹ Consequently it is natural to expect the standard of English proficiency among students to be very low. Abed Rahman Hammar has reported that in 1957, out of the 1190 candidates who sat for the examination for educational missions to be sent abroad, 518 candidates (about forty-three per cent) scored below twenty, 547 candidates (forty-four per cent) scored between twenty and fifty, and only 125 candidates (about eleven per cent) scored above fifty.² This means that only eleven per cent were able to pass.³ Such a deficiency in English proficiency on the part of the average Syrian pupil can be attributed to many factors one of which is the teaching method used.

It seems, therefore, that a study such as this in which the results of the scientific study of language are applied to specific practical teaching situations can contribute towards the improvement of the teaching

1 Interview with Raja'i Hakky, February 9, 1958.

2 عبد الرحمن حمور ، " تعليم اللغات الحية " ،
المعلم العربي ، شباط ، ١٩٥٧ ، ص ٢٤٢

3 Personal correspondence by the writer with the Director of Educational Missions and Cultural Relations; letter dated May 5, 1959, Damascus, Syria.

method. That is, this study aims to assist the teachers of English in the Preparatory Public Schools to achieve the prescribed teaching goals.

The study is organized broadly so as to include the following⁴ objectives: (1) to describe the existing teaching method for beginners in the Preparatory Public Schools of Syria; (2) to present some modern concepts of the teaching of English as a foreign language; and (3) to suggest practical teaching procedures so as to aid the English teachers for beginners in the Preparatory Public Schools to achieve, for their pupils, a mastery of the proficiencies implied by the existing prescribed⁵ textbook. The whole discussion on the suggested practical teaching procedures is centered around the efficient utilization of the lessons of the existing prescribed textbook for the development of two important language skills; listening and speaking. Reading and writing are not included.

The information contained in the body of this study has been obtained from three sources:

1. Publications concerning the teaching of English including⁶ the Program of Study which was issued and prescribed by the Ministry.
2. First-hand observation of nineteen English classes to procure information on the actual teaching processes.
3. Interviews with thirty-three teachers of English during which

⁴ By Beginners is meant primarily first graders of the preparatory Public Schools. That is, pupils who have earlier had six years of formal education without the study of English, and who average about twelve years of age with a range of age from about eleven to fourteen years.

⁵ See Evan Gatenby, The Direct Method English Course, Book I.

⁶ For the existing prescribed program of study, see Appendix A.

prepared questions were asked.⁷ The purpose of these questions was to formulate a descriptive statement of the teaching method so as to be able to suggest specific procedural changes. The questions covered the following important phases of the teaching method: the teaching procedures and skills, the teaching of the alphabet, the teaching of meanings, the teaching of grammatical rules, and the ingenuity, difficulties, and problems of the teachers.

The thirty-three teachers who were interviewed constitute a sample of approximately sixteen per cent of the estimated two hundred teachers of English in all the Preparatory and Secondary Schools of the Syrian Sector.⁸

Since this study is limited in scope, it is thought appropriate that it be considered as a pilot study, subject to experimentation and revision. Further it is suggested that a pilot project be carried out in a preparatory school in Syria for the determination of the efficiency of the suggestions given.

It is believed that this study is the first of its kind. Previous works treating closely related subjects are as follows:

1. Afaf Zayn's thesis, The Teaching of English in Latakia School for Girls.⁹ In this study a general picture of the teaching of English in Latakia together with a few broad suggestions are presented.

2. Amal Hakky's thesis, Errors Made in Spoken English by Arabic Speaking Students in Syria and Lebanon.¹⁰ This is a study of the English errors made by Syrian students.

7 For the questions asked, see Appendix B and C.

8 This figure was supplied by the English Language Inspector in Syria, Raja'i Hakky. Interview, February 8, 1958.

9 Unpublished Master's thesis, the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon 1951.

10 Unpublished Master's thesis, the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, 1951.

3. Afif Bulos' thesis, The Teaching of English to Arabic Speaking Students.¹¹ This study treats the teaching of English to Arabic speaking pupils on the Freshman level at the American University of Beirut.

4. Adel Abdallah's thesis, The Teaching of English in Syria,¹² which was searched for in the General Library of the American University of Beirut, the Library of Beirut College for Women, and the Library of the Syrian University. This thesis has apparently been lost since no trace of it could be found by the librarians of the above-mentioned libraries.

5. Malak Malas' thesis, The Teaching of English for Beginners in Damascus.¹³ This study provides a general idea about the teaching of English in Damascus. A few broad proposals are made, such as improvements in the training of teachers, better supervision and more interest on the part of the Ministry of Education.

11 Unpublished Master's thesis, the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, 1956.

12 Unpublished Licentiate's thesis, the Syrian University, Damascus, Syria, 1956.

13 Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Beirut College for Women, Beirut, Lebanon, 1957.

CHAPTER I

THE PRESENT TEACHING OF ENGLISH FOR BEGINNERS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF SYRIA

A. INTRODUCTORY

To be able to make specific suggestions that will aid the teachers of English for Beginners in the Public Schools of Syria to teach efficiently, a descriptive statement about the teaching method is needed.

In this chapter, the officially prescribed teaching method is studied, and compared with the actual methods in use as checked by interviews and observations.

This is followed by an analysis of the factors which have contributed to the present teaching situation as revealed in the first two sections.

B. THE PRESENT TEACHING METHOD FOR BEGINNERS AS OFFICIALLY PRESCRIBED

1. Introductory. The present teaching method in the Preparatory School has been summarized in the present prescribed program and syllabus¹⁴ which were issued as a supplement to the Arab Cultural Unity Agreement. This agreement was signed in Damascus on the twenty-fifth of March, 1957.

The supplement treats in detail the various phases of the teaching of English in the Preparatory Schools of Syria (formerly called Intermediate Section).

According to the program, the aim of teaching English in the

¹⁴ See Appendix A.

preparatory school is to produce an individual who is able to comprehend spoken English, to speak current English correctly, to read with recognition the common words and structures of English and to write a few sentences about a simple subject.

Language is defined in the present program as various groups of words or patterns, at the mastery of which the teacher should aim.

Language should be introduced in the first half of the first year through speaking. Thus in this stage, the pupil should never meet anything in print which is unfamiliar to him in speech; that is after a number of patterns have been mastered, reading should follow.

Meanings of new words and structures are to be given through the use of audio-visual aids to create the necessary situations. Students should be enabled to associate the new forms of the language with the actions or objects they represent. Translation, it is stipulated, may be employed only when the meaning of a new word or structure is difficult or impossible to convey in English. Once the Arabic equivalent is given, students should be drilled in the English forms.

Grammar is considered a retarding factor, especially in the elementary stages of learning. Grammatical rules should be taught as patterns. Terms attached to these patterns may be given on a very limited scale when they are absolutely needed, and only after a long period of practice. Hence a teacher applying the present notion of grammar assists his students to produce the patterns of the language without letting them become aware of any rules or grammatical terms unless he thinks they are absolutely necessary.

Reading should first be introduced by the teacher through writing some sentences on the blackboard or on cards. Later the

students are helped to shift from reading sentences on cards or on the blackboard to reading sentences in the textbook.

Oral reading, it is insisted, is not to be allowed in the Preparatory Schools until the material has already been well comprehended. This implies that silent reading precedes oral reading. Accordingly, a teacher following the present prescribed program should start first with pronunciation and reproduction of the new elements met in the reading lesson. Then silent reading by the class should follow using the Arabic equivalents or synonyms given in the book. In the third step, the student's comprehension of the material should be tested followed by the teacher reading the lesson orally. The last step is oral reading by students under the supervision of the teacher, who is expected to correct the errors made. This is followed by further training on the new words and structures in the lesson at hand.

While the reading procedures are stated systematically, the fact that familiarity with the structure through the ear is different from familiarity through the eye, which is essential in reading, is overlooked. Whatever the student's standard of mastery of the material on the speech level is, requesting him to read English writing (the spelling of which is erratic) is likely to expose him to erroneous pronunciation and incorrect phrasing and intonation.

Furthermore, to learn the Arabic equivalents or synonyms of the new structures met when reading silently is a procedure that contradicts what was previously advocated, namely, that the function of the teacher is to present the meanings of new words by creating situations and by using audi-visual aids.

Conversation following a reading lesson is considered of the utmost importance. Its function is to link the language learnt to the pupil's experience.

Variety in the method of teaching is essential for keeping up interest. Dividing the lesson period for the performance of various activities is looked upon as a means for creating variety in the teaching activities and for arousing the interest of the students.

An examination of the syllabus accompanying the instructions shows that the learning experiences are introduced under two headings: oral and written work. Oral work includes reading as well as oral practice. Written work includes penmanship, punctuation, and written composition. Hence the following can be deduced:

1. Grammar is not considered a separate activity in itself as was the case in previous years.
2. The language skills to be developed are well coordinated and integrated.

A further examination of the syllabus shows the dominant importance attached to oral work. In the first half of the first term, it is five times as extensive as the written work. Then more emphasis is given to the written work until it takes as much as half the time taken for oral work in the third year. This same shift of emphasis is shown in the division of the lesson in the first year.¹⁵

The first two months:

Speech training	25 minutes
Rhymes, games, etc.	10 minutes
Reading	10 minutes

15. See Appendix A, p. 137.

Then later the lesson should be divided as follows:

Speech training	25 minutes
Reading	10 minutes
Writing	10 minutes

Later the lesson can be varied as follows:

Reading or writing	20 minutes
Conversation	25 minutes

In conclusion, it can be said that the present method of teaching English as prescribed by the Ministry contains many modern linguistic views. Probably the most important one is viewing language as one unit composed of patterns to be developed as skills. These skills are primarily listening and speaking, which constitute the foundation on which reading and writing are to be developed.

A further examination of the method reveals that the Ministry prescribes specific instructions. Although this tendency can be considered as a limitation on the freedom of teachers, it is perhaps more significant as a sign that the Ministry wishes the teachers to use the modern methods and techniques formulated by its experts. It further indicates that the Ministry is growing more aware of the fact that many of its teachers are in need of information on how to teach.

C . THE PRESENT TEACHING METHOD FOR BEGINNERS AS CHECKED BY INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Introductory. The discussion now turns to a study of the method of teaching English as revealed through interviews with English teachers and direct observations of classes.

Originally, it was planned to study the teaching method through observations of classes only. This is because it is believed that first-hand observations are the best means for the formation of a definite true statement of the situation. The Syrian Ministry of Education, however, granted a permit allowing only interviews with teachers and principals. Observation, therefore, was done only unofficially and on a very limited scale.

The questions were asked only of teachers who were teaching English in the Preparatory Schools, and who had taught sixth graders in previous years. This was done because this study is being conducted primarily with the aim of helping English teachers who teach beginners.

It was very difficult to find a large number of teachers to answer the prepared questions. Teachers seemed reluctant to reveal their methods. The questions were first asked of five teachers in Aleppo.¹⁶ They were then revised¹⁷ and asked of twenty-eight teachers distributed as follows:

<u>City</u>	<u>Number</u>
Damascus	8
Homs	8
Hama	8
Aleppo	<u>6</u>
Total	28

Thus the total number of teachers interviewed is thirty-three out of an estimated two hundred English teachers in all the Public Preparatory and Secondary Schools of the Syrian Province.¹⁸ The questions

16 For the trial questions, see Appendix B.

17 For the revised questions, see Appendix C.

18 This figure was supplied by the English Language Inspector in Syria, Raja'i Hakky. February 8, 1958.

were modified after the initial interviews for the following reasons:

1. The questions: Why and Any difficulty? irritated some teachers; therefore they were discarded.

2. The first question was modified in order to find out the following:

A. The nature of the initial activities.

B. How long they lasted.

C. What activities followed them.

3. A few questions on the use of the textbook were added to cover this phase of the learning experience.

4. More questions on translation were added in order to check the extent of its use.

5. Questions on the Ministry's instructions and schedule were added to disclose the teachers' points of view in relation to them.

6. The check list was added to draw the teachers' attention to the possible problems and difficulties they may have.

To make it easy for the teachers to express their opinions, the questioning was conducted in Arabic. Each of the questions was asked once, and the teacher was allowed to speak freely. When he finished answering a question, his answer was written down in English.

In spite of this, most of the teachers did not speak freely about their methods for the following reasons:

1. Some pointed out that they thought the study would be reported to the Ministry.

2. Because the study was conducted by a Syrian student from a foreign institution, some expressed the view that it was a foreign political educational activity.

Nineteen classroom observations were made, six of which were on the secondary level. These six are not considered here because they are not strictly relevant to the study. The remaining thirteen classes were distributed geographically as follows:

<u>City</u>	<u>Number</u>
Hama	7
Damascus	4
Homs	1
Aleppo	<u>1</u>
Total	13

These classes were of the following grades:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>
Seventh	5
Eighth	6
Ninth	<u>2</u>
Total	13

The information obtained by means of the observations supplements and to some extent contradicts the data from the interviews. While the answers to the interview questions indicated the main outlines of the method, observations offered data on the teachers in actual class situations. The specific techniques and procedures used to tackle the problems of the study were revealed most clearly in the actual classroom situations observed.

2. Findings of the interviews. Findings of the interviews are reported under six headings:

- a. The teaching procedures and skills.
- b. The teaching of the alphabet.

- c. The teaching of meanings.
- d. The teaching of grammatical rules.
- e. The ingenuity of the teachers.
- f. Special problems and difficulties.

a. The teaching procedures and skills. The following data were obtained concerning the teaching procedures and skills employed in the initial and the advanced stages of learning:

The first question ran as follows:

1. Presumably, you have a textbook which you are expected to finish by the end of the school year with your students who do not know English at all:

A. Do you start by reading the alphabet on the first page, or reading the first lesson or what else?

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
a. I start by teaching oral sentences in the present tense, representing actions that can be performed in the classroom			15	53
b. I start by teaching oral words, such as names of objects in the classroom.			10	36
c. I start by reading the alphabet.			2	7

One teacher volunteered the following reason:

The letters of the alphabet are the basic units of words and sentence, once the basic units are mastered, the learning process becomes very easy.

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
d. I do not wish to answer the question at all			1	4
B. Do you teach your students how to read or write those words or sentences?				
a. <u>Teachers starting with oral sentences:</u>			15	53
No.	13	87		
Yes.	2	13		
b. <u>Teachers starting with oral words:</u>			10	36
No.	8	80		
Yes.	2	10		
c. <u>Teachers starting with the alphabet</u>			2	7
Yes.	2	100		
d. <u>I do not wish to answer the question at all.</u>			1	4
C. For how long does this activity last?				
a. <u>Teaching simple oral sentences lasts:</u>			15	53
Until enough oral sentences are mastered.	7	47		
For the first week or two.	5	33		
The purely oral activities should ideally continue through the entire first term, but as there is prescribed reading and				

	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
c. <u>Learning the alphabet is followed by:</u>			2	7
Oral practice based on the lessons followed by reading them.	1	50		
Reading the lessons of the textbook together with making oral sentences using the words that come in them.	1	50		
d. <u>I do not wish to answer this question</u>	1	100	1	4
2. Later in the academic year, how do you teach a new lesson (lesson 5, 7, or 8) of the textbook?				
a. I start teaching a lesson with oral drills on the new words and structures.			18	64
b. I start by reading the lesson orally myself.			6	21
c. I start by having my students read the lesson orally.			3	11
d. I start by having my students read the lesson silently.			1	4
Each of the above-mentioned procedures is followed by a different one as follows:				
a. <u>Teachers starting with oral drills in the new words and structures of the lesson are split into two groups:</u>			18	64

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>	<u>N. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
<u>Group A:</u>	15	84		
1. Silent reading.				
2. Questions to test comprehension.				
3. Oral reading by teacher.				
4. Oral reading by students.				
<u>Group B:</u>	3	11		
1. Oral reading by students.				
2. Silent reading.				
3. Questions to test comprehension.				
4. Oral reading by teacher.				
b. <u>Teachers starting with oral reading of the lesson by the teacher are also split into two groups:</u>			6	21
<u>Group A:</u>	4	67		
1. Silent reading.				
2. Questions to test comprehension.				
3. Oral reading by teacher.				
4. Oral reading by students.				

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
<u>Group B:</u>	2	33		
1. Oral drill in the new words and structures.				
2. Silent reading.				
3. Questions to test comprehension.				
4. Oral reading by students.				
c. <u>Teachers starting with their students reading the lesson orally follow it by:</u>			3	11
1. Silent reading.				
2. Questions to test comprehension.				
3. Oral reading by teacher.				
d. <u>Teachers starting with their students reading the lesson silently follow it by:</u>			1	4
1. Questions to test comprehension.				
2. Oral reading by teacher.				
3. Oral reading by students.				
3. According to the author of the textbook, speaking and reading go hand in hand with writing in the textbook. Do you follow the same procedure?				
Yes.	28	100	28	100

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
4. Do you devote some regular time to conversation?		
Yes, two periods per week.	20	71
Yes, 10-20 minutes in each lesson.	8	29
5. What occupies most of your time, speaking, reading, or writing?		
Speaking.	24	86
Reading.	4	14

Examination of the data given above indicates that there exist three types of approach to the teaching of English in the Public Schools: the letter approach, the word approach, and the sentence approach.

The data show that fifty-three per cent of the interviewees follow the sentence-approach, thirty-six per cent follow the word-approach, and only seven per cent follow the letter-approach namely, the teaching of how to read the alphabet.

It is only in the teaching of reading that the Ministry makes it clear that the teacher should start with sentences. In oral work it is stated that his function is to train students in the patterns of the language, thus the oral approach is not definitely stated to be a sentence-approach.

Eighty-seven per cent of the sentence-approach advocates and eighty per cent of the word-approach advocates introduce the language on a purely oral basis without any reading or writing. The rest of both groups, accompany the oral drills by reading and writing. The

majority of the interviewees, therefore, are in agreement with the Ministry's prescribed instructions regarding the initial teaching experiences.

As regards the length of this initial oral activity, interviewees vary greatly. Forty-seven per cent of the sentence-approach advocates do not state a definite period—saying: "Until enough oral sentences have been mastered," and thirty-three per cent are in favor of a period between one to two weeks. According to the remaining twenty per cent, the prescribed reading and writing of the textbook limit this period to five to twenty minutes throughout the academic year instead of permitting the entire first term to be devoted to it, which is what they consider the ideal situation.

The responses of the word-approach teachers are rather analogous in this respect to the sentence-approach teachers. Fifty per cent of them are in favor of devoting two periods to the oral words with which they start; thirty per cent think that it should last until about fifty words are mastered, and ten per cent consider it a relative matter.

Consequently, it can be said that the majority of the teachers interviewed are not in favor of an extended introductory period of oral practice such as is advocated and practiced in some intensive courses
19
for teaching English to adults.

Whatever the nature of this initial activity may be, the majority of the teachers tend to hurry back to the textbook. This is clearly pointed out by all advocates of the sentence-approach, by seventy per

19. An example is the Special Form English class at the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon.

cent of the word-approach advocates, and by fifty per cent of the letter-approach advocates. The remaining teachers (thirty per cent of the word-approach teachers and fifty per cent of the letter approach teachers) employ some oral work based on the textbook before studying it.

When these introductory procedures are over, and the study of the lessons of the textbook becomes systematic, oral work taking the form of oral drills in the new words and sentences of the lesson constitutes the activity of sixty-four per cent of the teachers; oral reading by the teacher as the initial activity in the study of the lesson is used by twenty-one per cent; oral reading by students, by eleven per cent; and silent reading by only four per cent.

Advocates of oral drill in the use of new words and structures as the initial activity in the teaching of a lesson are split into two groups:

1. Eighty-three per cent of them follow the oral drills consecutively by: 1. Silent reading; 2. Questions to test comprehension; 3. Oral reading by teacher, and 4. Oral reading by students.

These procedures are prescribed by the Ministry. Thus, of the teachers interviewed, only fifty-four per cent adhere to the steps prescribed by the centralized authority.

2. The remaining seventeen per cent of the sentence-approach advocates deviate from the prescribed procedures by reversing the order of silent and oral reading by students. That is, they start with oral reading before silent reading and after the oral drill activity.

Those who start initially with oral reading by the teacher are also split into two unequal groups:

1. Sixty-seven per cent of them follow the oral reading with which they start, by silent reading by students, questions to test comprehension, and then oral reading by students.

2. The second group, thirty-three per cent, follow oral reading by oral drills on the new words and structures, silent reading, questions to test comprehension, and then finally oral reading by students.

Thus, the second group differs from the first by the inclusion of oral drills in the teaching of the lesson which is a prescribed activity. Both groups, however, are in agreement with the Ministry on the last step being oral reading by students.

Those who start with oral reading by students (eleven per cent of the interviewees) follow it by silent reading, questions to test comprehension, and finally oral reading by the teacher.

There is only one teacher who starts with silent reading, followed by questions to test comprehension, oral reading by the teacher, and finally oral reading by students.

These two groups, constituting fifteen per cent of the total number of teachers, neglect the drill on the new words and structures which is prescribed. This percentage combined with the percentage of the group who start initially with oral reading by the teacher gives a total of twenty-nine per cent of the teachers who neglect drilling on the new words and structures which is the first step in the prescribed program.

All the data discussed so far do not show the place of the teaching of writing. Further, they do not indicate the relation to one another of the language skills developed. Responses to question three show that all teachers follow the plan of the textbook as they attempt to

develop simultaneously the speaking, reading, and writing abilities. In the introductory procedures and in the teaching of a new lesson, initial activities are oral drills; later multiple development of the skills is attempted. This does not mean that the emphasis laid upon each of these skills is the same. Responses to the question on the amount of time devoted to speaking and conversation indicate that speaking occupies most of the lesson time of eighty-six per cent of the teachers. This professed fact combined with the response that seventy one per cent of the teachers devote two periods per week or ten to twenty minutes of each lesson, to conversation, helps to establish a clear picture of the teaching situation of English in the Preparatory Public Schools in Syria. The situation is distinguished by oral work as the initial activity in the elementary stages of learning and in the teaching of new lessons, and by a great emphasis on speech and conversation. These data, however, do not show the graded shift of emphasis from oral work to written work which is prescribed in the present program. Further, they do not indicate the performance-levels reached by the students in each of the skills.

b. The teaching of the alphabet. The following data were obtained on the teaching of the alphabet:

	<u>No. of</u>	<u>Per</u>
	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Cent</u>
At what point in the teaching process do you teach the alphabet?		
Two to three months after the beginning of the school year.	11	39
At mid-year	6	21
I do not teach the alphabet at all	3	11
After the first two weeks from the beginning of the school year.	2	7

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
In the first lesson (this was discussed before).	2	7
When dictation is begun. Probably at the end of the first term.	2	7
When dictation is begun.	2	7

Examination of the above data indicates that sixty-seven per cent of the teachers who do not teach the alphabet as an initial activity, teach it after a period that varies from two weeks to the whole term. The data further indicate that fourteen per cent of the interviewees teach the alphabet at the time the study of dictation is begun.

As learning dictation involves learning how to reproduce from memory the individual letters of the language isolated and in words, such a response is an indication that the alphabet is taught when it is needed.

Eleven per cent of the teachers think that the alphabet should not be taught at all. They probably mean that they teach the sounds rather than the names of the letter. The sound associated with the symbol W, for example, is different from the name of the symbol, which does not even contain the sound it represents.

Answers to this question neatly illustrate the dilemma posed by two conflicting approaches: the logical and the psychological approaches to the teaching of a foreign language. According to the logical approach the learner is led step by step from the simple units (letters of the alphabet) to the complex units (the words and the sentences).

The majority of teachers, as shown above, are inclined towards the psychological approach, that is, from the whole to the constituent parts. Although an interviewee's answer does not guarantee actual application of what is professed, at the very least this preponderance of preference for the psychological approach means that teachers are aware of modern trends in the teaching of the English language.

c. The teaching of meanings. The following data dealing with the methods of conveying meanings were obtained:

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1. How do you teach a new word in the lesson?		
By showing the object or performing the action.	26	92
By means of sentences.	1	4
By means of translation.	1	4
2. How do you teach an abstract new word like <u>good</u> or <u>bad</u> ?		
By means of sentences.	25	88
By means of definition.	1	4
By means of translation.	1	4
By means of its synonyms, antonyms, or sentences.	1	4
3. Do your students have notebooks in which they write the English words and their Arabic equivalents?		
Yes.	25	88
No, students have only Arabic companions for the text.	1	4
No, students depend on their memory and the continuous drill they are given.	1	4

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
4. Do you ask your students to translate from English into Arabic, when reading, speaking, or writing? What do you ask them to translate?		
No, except when they seem not to understand the meaning of a word or a sentence.	26	93
Yes, but only the sentences which contain the new words.	2	7
5. Do you translate for them? What do you translate?		
Yes, difficult English words and sentences.	27	96
Yes, new words.	1	4
6. Do you ask your students to translate from Arabic into English? What do you ask them to translate?		
No.	28	100

The data show that ninety per cent of the teachers try to associate the new words of the lessons to be learned with concrete experience; that is, by showing an object or by performing an action. Four per cent of the interviewees teach new words by sentences, and four per cent by translation.

Thus the term new words suggested to the majority of the teachers only action or object words. The answers to the question or the teaching of abstract new words complemented the first. The data show the big difference between the methods used in teaching the two types of words. Abstract new words not associated with something physically concrete, are taught by using them in sentences, that is, by the creation of a context, by eighty-eight per cent of the teachers interviewed. Using words in sentences for understanding meanings, means that the new in the language (as far as meaning is concerned) is understood in terms

of the old. If these teachers actually achieve success in illustrating meanings by sentences, the learning of abstract new words has an advantage over learning action or object words in as much as it provides an opportunity for practice in listening to and talking the language. Hence according to the data discussed so far, Arabic has no place in the teaching of meanings of new words by the majority of teachers.

The answers to the question on the use of notebooks for writing the Arabic equivalents, show that eighty-eight per cent of the teachers say that their students have notebooks in which they write the Arabic equivalents of the words they come across. These responses help to infer how meanings are given. Arabic equivalents, although this is not professed directly, can be considered a basic means for rendering meanings. The Arabic equivalents, however, are accompanied by actions, objects or sentences which clarify meanings and establish the patterns of the language.

Analogous responses were made by another eight per cent of the interviewees. Arabic companions, or writing meanings on the pages of the textbook replace the use of the notebooks. Vague answers were given by four per cent of the teachers not revealing their techniques of giving meanings.

The validity of the afore-mentioned inference about the majority's method of giving meanings is borne out by the answers to the remaining questions on translation. The data show that words and sentences whose meanings are difficult to comprehend, are translated into Arabic either by the teachers or by the students. This is reported by ninety-six per cent of the interviewees.

The reverse of the process — translation from Arabic into English — is reportedly not employed at all.

Translation from English into Arabic and not the reverse indicates that the English language (words and sentences) as it is the language to be learned, is considered as the groundwork of the educative process, and that Arabic is used as a supplementary tool for rendering the English understandable.

d. The teaching of grammatical rules. The following data were obtained concerning the method of teaching grammatical rules:

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
How do you teach a grammatical rule?		
I use examples illustrating the rule, then I give the formulation of the rule.	15	54
I give the rule first, and then the examples illustrating it.	12	42
I give continuous practice in the form of questions and answers, with the rule not given unless it becomes absolutely necessary.	1	4

The data reveal that fifty-four per cent of the teachers interviewed teach the grammatical rules inductively, forty-two per cent of the teachers teach them deductively, and only one teacher proclaims that continuous practice in the form of questions and answers constitutes a substitute for the rule-example or the example-rule methods.

It is interesting to note that the statement teaching of a grammatical rule, means to the majority of the teachers only an inductive-deductive principle. Hence the teacher probably makes an attempt to develop the reasoning ability of the students as a technique for the mastery of grammar.

The data cannot indicate the standard of mastery of the two groups of teachers. Hence, no inference can be made as to which method is more successful in the achievement of teaching objectives.

e. The ingenuity of the teachers. In the following section, data on the ingenuity of teachers and its relation to the prescribed instructions are treated:

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1. Do you think the schedule of the study sessions and other instructions issued and prescribed by the Ministry are best for your teaching purposes?		
Yes.	23	82
To some extent.	2	7
Refused to answer.	3	11
2. To what extent are you able to adhere to them?		
As much as possible.	1	4
To a large extent.	1	4
To a limited extent because they imply too much oral practice.	1	4
Refused to answer.	25	88
3. Have you made any discoveries, which have helped a great deal in the teaching job, and which would help also other teachers? What are they?		
No.	13	46
Yes, it is useful to have pairs of students ask questions of each other.	4	14

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
Yes, requiring the speaking English all the time.	3	11
Yes, the teacher should never ask a student to read a new lesson before it is read for him.	2	7
Yes, review is the best procedure for good mastery of the language.	2	7
Yes, group competition in reading is effective.	1	4
Yes, continuous conversation is effective.	1	4
Yes, having students make a collection of pictures and asking them to name them.	1	4
Yes, drawing pictures instead of writing words to give meanings in some cases.	1	4

The above section is an attempt to see the relation of the practices discovered by the teacher to the practices prescribed by the Ministry. This is because it is believed that the teaching-learning process is frequently a precarious experience necessitating creativity on the part of teacher.

The answers show that eighty-two per cent of the teachers consider the schedule of the lesson-session and other instructions prescribed by the Ministry best for their teaching purposes. About the same percentage of teachers refuse to reveal the extent to which they are able to adhere to the Ministry's prescriptions.

If the teachers who profess that the Ministry's instructions are best for their teaching purposes actually are able to adhere to

them, there seems to be no reason for not revealing their adherence. The fact that they have refused to do this suggests that they do not adhere strictly to the prescribed instructions. Digression was indicated several times in their responses. The reasons for deviation may be attributable to one of the following:

1. Belief in the soundness of the Ministry's instructions but inability (for whatever reasons) to put them into practice.
2. Belief that some or all of the instructions are pedagogically unsound.

If the interviewees are honest in proclaiming that they think the instructions are best for their teaching purposes, then they are, at least partly, unable to adhere to them.

It was hoped that the answers to the question on the discoveries made by teachers would reveal their actual practices and provide a basis for comparison with the prescribed ones.

Forty-six per cent of the teachers say that they have made no discoveries. The remaining fifty-four per cent declare that they have discovered various pedagogical techniques and principles which help in the teaching job. Having students work in pairs, one to ask questions and the other to answer them, is reported by fourteen per cent of the interviewees. The importance of using English at all times as a medium of communication is mentioned by eleven per cent. Oral reading by the teacher to precede silent reading (which is in opposition to the Ministry's directions) is reported by seven per cent of the teachers. Review as a technique for mastery of the language is also reported by seven per cent of teachers. Each of the following was reported by only one teacher:

Group competition, continuous conversation, making a collection of pictures, and drawing pictures instead of writing the Arabic equivalents.

One clear instance of deviation from the prescribed instructions is evident in these data: oral reading by the teacher preceding silent reading. The rest of the teaching discoveries do not contradict the Ministry's directions.

The deviations which have been presented in several places in this study so far indicate that whatever the prescribed directions may be, and however strict the central educational authority may be, the educative process symbolizes to a large extent the practical application of the teacher's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge. Teachers cannot avoid expressing in practice what they are, through the mere prescription and enforcement of something that comes from without.

During the interviews, teachers were more enthusiastic in answering this question about teaching discoveries than in answering other questions. It was felt that the question and the answer contributed towards the establishment of increased confidence in the teachers. This suggests that future investigators might profitably ask similar types of questions.

f. Special problems and difficulties. The following data summarize, in decreasing order of frequency of mention, some of the problems and difficulties expressed by the English language teachers:

	<u>No. of</u> <u>Teachers</u>	<u>Per</u> <u>Cent</u>
Low salaries.	25	89
Laziness of students.	24	86
Transfer of teachers.	22	79

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Sizes of classes.	21	75
Lack of interest on the part of students.	19	68
Disciplinary problems.	17	61
The difficult nature of the English language.	14	50
Student strikes.	13	46
Lack of availability of audio-visual aids.	10	36
Individual differences.	8	28
Overcrowded curriculum	8	28
The need for linguistic knowledge on how to teach.	5	18
Poor memory of the students.	4	14

Because the educative process is a complex phenomenon this question was included in the questionnaire to discover the factors which may directly or indirectly contribute towards making the teaching job more difficult or more complicated.

Low salaries as a problem is reported by eighty-nine per cent of the teachers, and no other problem was mentioned as often. Poor memory of the students was mentioned least, by only fourteen per cent. Between these two, twelve problems are reported by the teachers interviewed. Although there is no definite line of demarcation between any two problems, the problems mentioned can be classified roughly as follows:

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>
A. <u>Financial.</u>	
Low salaries.	25
B. <u>Psychological.</u>	
Laziness of students.	24

	<u>No. of Teachers</u>
Lack of interest on the part of students.	19
Disciplinary problems.	17
Individual differences.	8
Poor memory of students.	4
C. <u>Special.</u>	
Transfer of teachers.	22
Strikes.	13
D. <u>Teaching-learning.</u>	
Size of class.	21
Lack of availability of audio- visual aids.	10
Over-crowded curriculum.	8
E. <u>Linguistic.</u>	
The difficult nature of the English language itself.	14
The need for linguistic know- ledge on how to teach English.	5

This classification of reported problems indicates that the psychological dimension of the teaching-learning situation is considered to be a problem by the majority of teachers, while the linguistic technical dimension has received the least consideration as a problem.

The fact that the psychological symptoms are considered as problems rather than the need for linguistic knowledge on how to teach is likely to be due to a crystallized belief in the validity of the teaching methods used by the teachers. In other words, teachers may tend to

think that low achievement is probably due to the students' poor mentalities and personalities rather than to the teaching method used. Students, according to the teachers, should conform to the methods in use, and not the reverse.

Thus one may say that any training program for raising the effectiveness of teachers should not be purely linguistic and technical. Teachers are in need of some knowledge of educational psychology to help them handle learning problems efficiently. Such knowledge is vital for the achievement of the objectives of the training program.

3. Findings of the observations. These findings are reported under five headings:

- a. The teaching of reading.
- b. The teaching of conversation.
- c. The teaching of grammatical rules.
- d. The teaching of meanings.
- e. Special problems and difficulties.

a. The teaching of reading. In all classes visited, part or all of the period was devoted to the development of reading skills.

The following procedures were observed in almost all the classes visited:

A. Oral drill. The teacher first drilled the students on the new words in the lesson. This activity was begun with the teacher pronouncing the new words followed by the class as a whole, then by individual students. Occasionally, pronunciation by individual students preceded the class pronunciation.

B. Giving meanings. In the present prescribed program, the Ministry insists that students look for meanings of the new words in their books during silent reading. Only two teachers, however, followed this procedure. Eleven out of thirteen teachers gave the meanings before the silent reading activity was begun, i.e. immediately after the oral drill.

C. Construction of sentences. The Ministry does not emphasize the construction of sentences after meanings have been given. Nine of the thirteen teachers deviated from this procedure. They taught their students how to use the new words in sentences.

D. Silent reading. Construction of sentences was followed by silent reading. One of the advantages of this activity was the opportunity it offered to all students to be active in the lesson. In this activity, students read the section, and prepared the answers to the questions on it. The answers to the questions were already underlined in the textbooks of some students, in two of the classes observed.

In all the classes, the ability of students to comprehend appeared to be far beyond their ability to express. For example, most of the students gave the correct answers in wrong tenses. The present tense form was the most common tense used in answer to the questions whether these were asked in the present, past, or perfect.

This tendency is probably due to overemphasis on comprehension not coupled with sufficient oral drill and practice. Another possible reason is that teachers, in accord with the plan of the textbook, stressed the present simple tense as an initial activity. This procedure resulted in its receiving more emphasis and more practice than the

other tenses. A third reason which might have contributed to such errors was the use of a form of the question in English which suggested a parallel answer for example:

Did you go to school yesterday?

The word go suggests the answer:

Yes, I go to school yesterday.

It seems, therefore, that students tended to overlook the words did and yesterday which are the words that determine the time of the action in English.

E. Oral reading. Silent reading was followed by oral reading by the teacher. This is followed in all the classes by individual reading by the students.

The mistakes made were the following:

Pronunciation. Vowel sounds were mispronounced in the following words: Bought, bird, and favor.

Of the consonant sounds, the following were mispronounced:

G in goal and regret.

P in please and poor.

V in seventeen, and very.

R was always rolled like the Arabic R.

TH in three and thank. It was sometimes like S and sometimes like T.

TH in then and those. The sound was pronounced like Z.

Intonation. Students showed a considerable variation in their masters of intonation. Some had good English intonation, and that of others was poor, and clearly Arabized.

F. Exercises. The exercises which followed oral reading by students were mostly taken from the textbook. They covered the use of the new words and structures of the lesson in patterns and sentences.

In closing it can be said that the steps followed in the teaching of reading both agreed with and differed from the prescribed steps. The teachers followed some of the steps mentioned in the program namely: silent reading by the class, questions to test comprehension, oral reading by the teacher, and then oral reading by the students. They deviated from the Ministry's instructions, however, mainly in their methods of giving meaning. According to the Ministry, students are supposed to make use of the Arabic equivalents or English synonyms given in the book. But the teachers observed gave the meanings first and then constructed sentences using the new words before silent reading was begun.

b. The teaching of conversation. In the present prescribed program conversation is expected to follow the reading lesson, and its function is to link the language learnt to the pupil's experiences.

In all of the classes visited, questions to test comprehension after silent reading were developed into a conversation. Questions were asked by the teacher and answers were given by the students. Three teachers requested students to ask their classmate questions.

The vocabularies of students in all the classes visited appeared to be better than their ability to put these words into correct constructions. The mistakes they made were in the singular, plural, tenses, and function words. For example:

1. The men is in the room.
2. The boy was afraid from the dog.

3. He was working from two weeks.

4. He is working since five days.

Two teachers not only corrected the students' errors, but provided explanations from time to time, as follows:

Did precedes the verb if we want to ask a question in the past tense.
Do precedes the verb if we want to ask a question in the present tense.
The present tense form in both cases remains unchanged.

These mistakes were probably due to unequal distribution of the drilling activities in both the question and the answer forms. Although the amount of time assigned to conversation appears to be reasonably sufficient, the large sizes of the classes made it impossible for the majority of the students to participate in the oral work.

c. The teaching of grammatical rules. The Ministry insists that grammar should not be taught as a separate subject. The textbook conforms with this, and grammar is not presented in the sets of grammatical rules to be memorized and applied.

In all the classes visited grammar was taught as grammatical rules incidental to reading and to exercises that followed the reading lessons. Although this may be considered as an advanced step towards integrating the language skills, the spirit of formal grammar appeared to dominate the teaching-learning activities. Learning the various terms attached to the various cases of the linguistic forms, for example, was emphasized by three teachers. A teacher was not satisfied that his students could produce the following forms correctly:

1. The boy is taller than the girl.

2. This book is cheaper than the pencil.

3. This book is the cheapest.

He insisted on students learning that the first two sentences were in the comparative case and the third one was in the superlative case. Such an activity indicated that teachers tended to encourage knowledge about the language as well as knowledge of the language. Students, therefore, were prepared both to speak the language and to describe it if necessary.

Another teacher was seen teaching a list of the so called irregular verbs. The following layout was placed on the blackboard:

IRREGULAR VERBS

<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
Write	Wrote	Written
Come	Came	Come
Put	Put	Put
Go	Went	Gone

REGULAR VERBS

	Verb	†	ed	
Ask		Asked		Asked
Cry		Cried		Cried
Play		Played		Played

After the class was over, this teacher commented, "My students are poor in grammar."

The foregoing observations suggest that the teachers observed were inclined not to think in terms of the prescribed program in which grammar was considered a retarding element. One can conclude that the Ministry's instruction were not strictly followed, probably because the

teachers did not have the necessary background to understand fully the concepts behind them.

d. The teaching of meanings. According to the present program, audio-visual aids should be used to convey the meanings of the new words in the lesson.

In none of the classes visited, however, did any teacher use any kind of audio-visual aid to help in making meanings clear.

Five teachers conveyed meanings by giving the synonyms of the words or by the use of definitions followed by Arabic equivalents. The remaining eight teachers gave the Arabic equivalents directly, sometimes associating them with the construction of sentences, and sometimes not. In general students tended to appear rather bewildered if the Arabic equivalents were not given.

This is not the sole use of translation. Translation from English into Arabic was also observed. The amount of it, however, varied from one teacher to another. A teacher translated the whole lesson, which was a story, word by word, and sentence for sentence. He justified this by saying, "Students insist upon that." Another teacher translated only those sentences which he thought his students were unable to understand.

As regards the use of English as a medium of instruction, the following was observed: The students of four classes seemed to be accustomed to hearing English. They appeared to be following the teacher when he spoke in English. Students of the other nine classes, however, looked bewildered when the teacher spoke English continuously for about two minutes.

e. Special problems and difficulties. In all the classes visited, most of the teaching activities, whether they were drills, conversation, or grammar, were based on the lessons of the textbook.

One of the problems observed was the limitation imposed on learning opportunities due to excessive adherence to the textbooks. Not one teacher tackled a novel topic or gave some new exercises outside the scope of the textbook. In only four instances did teachers develop the topic of conversation to include talking about some of the experiences of the students.

To rely on the printed page is probably pure habit. Teachers are not accustomed to deviation from the materials of the book. It would appear that they feel the field of language to be no broader than the scope of a textbook.

A second problem was the failure to use audio-visual aids. In all of the classes visited, no audio-visual aid was used. Two reasons might be advanced for this:

1. The failure of the Ministry to provide audio-visual aids.
2. The fact that teachers do not readily conceive of the idea of using audio-visual aids at all, much less actually preparing them.

D. POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND THE EXISTING TEACHING METHOD

After describing the method of teaching of English for Beginners in the Preparatory Public Schools, it is the purpose of the following section to analyze some of the factors which are believed to be responsible, at least in some degree, for the creation of the present situation.

1. Teachers' Command of English. In the classes observed, English teachers seemed not to know the English language well enough to be able to communicate freely in English.

This deficiency on the part of many teachers biases them toward a dependence on reading and translation and the use of rules which attempt to produce the language without real mastery of it.

2. The Training of Teachers. According to the inspector of English language Teaching in Syria, no teacher has a background in linguistics.²⁰ Probably this can be attributed to the tendency to think (mistakenly that a knowledge of the language is the only qualification needed for teaching it. As Leslie Leavitt has said, this is due to the belief that a certain amount of ability to teach is part of the equipment of every educated person since everyone has had some experience in the teaching-learning situation during his student days.²¹

3. Extent of Scientific Linguistic Knowledge. According to Leonard Bloomfield it has been only during the last century that language has been studied scientifically. Scientific knowledge about language has not been introduced into the educational systems.²² Consequently it is not surprising to find that teachers do not have a scientific conception of language.

4. The Prescribed Textbooks. Since the Ministry of Education prescribes the textbooks to be used, and since the student's mastery of the textbook is the criterion for measuring his achievement and the success of his teacher, the teacher is systematically pushed towards over-reliance on reading, writing and doing the exercise presented in the textbook. Further, the final public written Brevet and Baccalau-

20 Raja'i Hakky, Interview, February 9, 1958.

21 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p. 115.

22 Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 3.

reate examinations held under the supervision of the Ministry of Education strongly influence the teaching methods which teachers use throughout the whole preparatory schooling period.

5. Michael West's Influence. Prior to the presently prescribed series of textbooks, West's series was prescribed.²³ His approach to the teaching of English was as follows:

a. Learning words. West is an advocate of teaching English through words presented in the form of stories, essays, reports, etc. New words are presented and studied first, and reading the lesson follows. A figure indicating the number of words which the student has studied from the beginning of the series is given at the end of each lesson.

b. Development of reading ability. In West's words:

Our problem is to devise some system whereby a boy may learn to read. We must learn to read by reading. It is obvious that the crux of the whole problem is the book. For reading, a book is necessary; the boys can't read the teacher. The most the teacher can do is to help the boys to read the book, and every single time the teacher opens his mouth, the boys (very correctly and politely) look up from their books -- and stop reading!...²⁴

Thus West thinks that the teaching of English is limited mostly to reading the book, and that the teacher, by speaking, interrupts the reading process. It is obvious that the teaching perceived of English in this way is not in accord with modern methods of the teaching of English.

c. Appeal to translation. It is only in the third academic year, after the student has mastered 863 words,²⁵ that word meanings are given

23 Michael West, New Method English for the Arab World (Five books, one for each year).

24 Quoted from the Modern Language Forum, (The Modern Language Association of Southern California), June 1931, by Harold Palmer and Vere Redman This Language-Learning Business, p.111.

25 See Michael West, New Method English, Classbook II.

in English instead of in Arabic, although West continues to accompany his textbooks by Arabic companions through the entire series.

6. Logical and Psychological Approaches.²⁶ Probably one of the reasons accounting for the present teaching-learning situation in the Preparatory Public Schools is the adoption of the logical approach. This is more evident in English teaching than it is in the teaching of many other subjects. Gradation of the language teaching activities from the letter to the syllable, word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc. is conceived of as a basic, logical method of teaching. The spread of recent educational ideas, however, through the inspectors of the Ministry, as well as the existence of prescribed textbooks that are not based on the letter-approach, has tended to shift the initial emphasis from the letter to the word.

The interviews connected with this study indicate that the majority of teachers use the sentence-approach and the word-approach, and are therefore aware of this new psychological idea.

7. Automatic Transfer of Training.²⁷ A belief in the automatic transfer of training seems to be an important factor in accounting for the present English-teaching situation in Syria.

It is mistakenly assumed that mastery of a grammatical rule guarantees its application in different situations. Harry Greene found that there is no relation between knowledge of grammar and the application of knowledge in a functional language situation.²⁸ Further, James

26 John Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, p. 247.

27 L. Crowford, Learning a New Language, p. 36.

28 Harry Greene, Encyclopedia of Educational Research, p. 393 A.

Tharp reported that experimental evidence does not support the belief²⁹ that drill in grammar helps towards achievement in a foreign language. Afif Bulos, however, established the notion that knowing the rule does³⁰ help learning the language in the case of adult students. With children, the reasoning capacity is not sufficiently developed, hence, they tend to learn better by repetition. Ability to learn through reasoning seems to develop in the course of growth. Whatever the condition of the learner may be, it is doubtful whether without some practice, one can easily apply a rule merely because he has comprehended it well. It is practice alone in reading, writing, speaking or listening that helps to make the application of the rule automatic. No one who has acquired a habit of a certain usage stops to think of any rule he is employing unless he is called upon to do so.

This suggests that in the final stage of learning a language intellectual comprehension of the rule does not contribute towards better automatic production, which is one of the controlling objectives in the learning of a language. If advocates of grammar claim that rules are helpful (at least in the introductory stage as one teacher has said), then as Bulos says, they must be used as a means to an end.³¹ The injurious effect is not in acquiring knowledge of the rules, but rather

29 Ibid., p. 476 A.

30 Afif Bulos, The Teaching of English to Arabic Speaking Students, p. 52.

31 Ibid.

in the fact that learners and teachers do not proceed beyond them, i.e. the rules become ends in themselves. Some of the modern textbooks try to compensate for this deficiency by providing supplementing exercises on rules.³² Although this is a step towards better production, yet it treats the process of learning somewhat like a written mathematical problem that requires reflective thinking to be solved.

8. The Historical Basis. Charles Fries says that the reason for most approaches being based on rules goes back to 1586 when the first English grammar was published. Up to the eighteenth century all the grammar books that were published were either introductions for the ultimate study of Latin or were directed to foreigners who wished to learn English. In the eighteenth century the purpose of grammar books shifted to teaching English people correct English.³³ Whatever the purpose of the grammarians was, their linguistic results were presented in the form of logical generalizations and rules. Presumably they collected numerous sentences, usages and expressions and through analysis and synthesis they reached the common characteristics that underlie them. The net product was what they call grammar of the language. Exceptions were presented as supplements to the grammar books, to be studied and memorised.

This method was clearly inductive. Anyone interested in studying a language would find himself before a multitude of rules and abstractions and lists of exceptions. The method he would thus naturally employ would be deductive; that is, from the rule to the usage.

32 See, for example, A.S. Hornby, Composition Exercises in Elementary English, p. 83-184.

33 Charles Fries, Teaching of English, p. 10.

Books of grammar were directed to foreigners regardless of what their linguistic backgrounds might be.

Continuous familiarity with the concept of language as a set of rules has hence constituted one of the basic components of the Syrian English teacher's outlook on language. It has even crystallized his conception that teaching and learning should be advanced exclusively through the medium of these rules.

The prescribed program which contains many modern educational ideas, has shifted the emphasis slightly, towards an awareness of the necessity of associating rules with examples.

In conclusion, it can be said that the present English-teaching situation in Syria has its foundation in concepts that have been accumulating and developing throughout the past years. Many of these concepts, like the ideas of broad transfer of training, teaching by rules, the logical approach, the use of translation and teaching words by means of lists have been imported into Syria through the English textbooks. Other factors contributing to the present situation have grown from within, such as the lack of training, the lack of scientific knowledge about language, and the lack of a good knowledge of the English language.

E. SUMMING UP

This chapter has attempted to formulate a descriptive statement about the present methods of teaching English for beginners in the Public Schools of Syria.

In the first section, the officially prescribed teaching method was described.

In the second section, the actual methods in use were revealed through analysis of the questionnaire and observation results. The answers to the questions asked of the teachers helped to form an outline of the main characteristics of the methods, and the data from the observations supplemented these.

Those two sections were followed by an examination of factors which are likely to have been most instrumental in the development of the English teaching situation as it now exists in the Preparatory Public Schools of Syria.

CHAPTER II

MODERN CONCEPTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

A. INTRODUCTORY

To teach efficiently, one needs not only to know the language, but he needs also to know about the language. That is, knowledge about language is essential for the formation of clear teaching objectives as well as for providing the means that facilitate the attainment of those objectives.

It is the purpose of this chapter to study the relation of writing to speech, to define language, to discuss the relation of words to patterns and to meanings, and to explore the meaning of mastery of a language.

B. WRITING AND SPEECH

A person has learned a language when he is able to speak it and to understand it when it is spoken.³⁴ Speaking and understanding are such interwoven skills that it is difficult to separate them when one is learning a language. Reading and writing are also two interdependent skills. Linguists have agreed that language is speech and writing is the visual record of it.³⁵ One can write the same language using different symbols. It is also a fact that all languages were spoken before they were written.³⁶ A child at six years of age can

34 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, p. 3.

35 See, for example, Otto Jespersen, Philosophy of Grammar, p. 2 Albert Baugh, History of English Language, p. 19 Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 21.

36 Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 21.

speak and understand his native language; only later does he learn to read and write it. Frequently one learns to speak and understand a spoken language without being able to read it or write it.

Teaching English exclusively by writing and reading confuses the learner and leads to mispronunciation. This is due to the fact that English spelling is erratic. For example:

1. Similar sounds are often written with different symbols as in:

<u>dear</u>	and	<u>deer</u>
<u>meet</u>	and	<u>meat</u>
<u>fight</u>	and	<u>photo</u>
<u>kid</u>	and	<u>cat</u>

2. Different sounds are written with the same symbols as in:

<u>woman</u>	and	<u>women</u>
<u>foot</u>	and	<u>food</u>
<u>then</u>	and	<u>thin</u>
<u>go</u>	and	<u>do</u>

3. Symbols having no function are often used, as in the following examples:

half, wednesday, night, receipt, doubt, etc.

All this is not intended to imply that reading and writing are less important than speech. The growing use of printed material as a medium of communication makes the pupil's need for writing and reading very great.

C. THE DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE

A definition which provides the teachers of English with a comprehensive concept of language is needed to guide them towards the

successful attainment of their teaching objectives. Leslie Leavitt says, "Language is a tool by means of which there is an exchange of ideas between two people."³⁷

This definition implies that language is a social phenomenon. Hence the existence of a social group to use this vehicle of communication of ideas is essential for learning and teaching it.

A brief and basic definition of this kind naturally lumps language with writing and signalling (as all of them are tools for exchanging ideas) and does not make reference to the constituents of language nor to the way they are arranged to form its units: words and sentences. Nor can such a brief definition show the relation of language to the experiences of its speakers on the one hand, nor to reality on the other.

A lengthier and more rigorous definition is offered by Charles Fries. To understand this definition one needs to study the procedures that lead to it.

Fries says that in describing man's behavior the terms stimulus and response are employed, that is:

$$S \longrightarrow R$$

A man, individual A, stimulated by the sensations called thirst, for instance, may either seek water, thus employing the bond S — R, or he may utter a few sounds: I am thirsty, and some one else, individual B, for example, may respond to his call. The process can be represented as follows:

$$S \rightarrow r \rightarrow s \rightarrow R$$

37 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p. 3.

The actual language act consists of both the r, the sounds uttered by individual A, and the s, the sounds heard by individual B. ³⁸

Fries continues to say:

If language is to fulfill its function of providing the means of precise social co-operation, then individual A must be able to predict with considerable accuracy the practical response which particular speech sounds will elicit in individual B.

It is probably valid to insist that any particular sounds are language in so far as they elicit regular, predicable responses. 39

Accordingly, in Fries' words:

Language is a system of recurring names of vocal sounds in patterns that correlate with recurring sames of stimulus situations which elicit recurring sames of response situations. 40

The term system indicates the existence of organized diverse units: sounds forming words; and words so combined to form a coherent whole which constitute the structure of language.

The statements:

1. Sames of vocal sounds in patterns
2. Sames of stimulus situations
3. Sames of response situations

point out the regular functioning of the vocal sounds arranged in patterns as stimuli and responses to the situations of the speaker's life.

38 Charles Fries, Structure of English, pp. 32-36.

39 Charles Fries, The Structure of English, p. 35.

40 Supplied by Raja Nasr, Professor of Linguistics at Beirut College for Women, Beirut, Lebanon, 1956.

Hence they indicate the intimate relationship or bond between language as symbols of reality and reality itself.

This implies the need for the permanent association of English patterns with the learner's actual environment. Variety and repetition in the learning situations associated with the appropriate patterns are essential if the above-mentioned bond is to be established as an unconscious habit in the mind of the learner.

It may be said, in conclusion, that language represents the intrinsic structure of man's thought. It determines to a large extent his outlook on the universe. Learning a foreign language means, therefore, substituting, at least in part, a new pattern of thinking for a previous one.

D. THE RELATION OF WORDS TO PATTERNS

AND MEANING

To the average person and to untrained teachers, the concept language means little more than the concept words. Many textbooks for teaching English as a foreign language are based on the notion that language is primarily a group of words.⁴¹

For determining the meaning of the whole sentence, the following examples reveal that relations between words are not less important than the words themselves:

1. Woggles uged diggles.⁴²
2. The small boy threw a big ball.

41 See, for example, Michael West's series of textbooks, New Method Reader, and New Method English for the Arab World.

42 Charles Fries, Structure of English, p. 71.

The words of the first sentence are meaningless, yet the reader can understand that woggles and diggles are symbols of things, animals, or human. Further the reader can also understand that woggles is the performer and diggles is the receiver of the action symbolized by the word ugged, due merely to the positions they occupy.

According to Fries, examining the second sentence reveals at least four kinds of meanings:

1. Lexical meaning. The meaning of the isolated words as determined and defined in a dictionary.

2. Syntactical meaning. The positions of small in relation to boy, and big in relation to ball indicate that the boy is small and the ball is big; not the reverse. The fact that the small boy precedes the word threw and the big ball follows the same word indicates that the boy is the doer of the action and the ball is the receiver of the action .

3. Morphological meaning. This is the meaning of boy in contrast with boys, and threw in contrast with throw. In other words, the meaning conveyed by the form of the word.

4. Intonational meaning. A low or high pith indicates whether a word is uttered in an imperative or inquiring mood, or in response to a question. The word fire pronounced with a high pitch is a vigorous summons; if pronounced, however, with a rising pitch contour, it becomes a question.⁴³

43 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, p. 38.

Example two represents one of the English patterns. That is, it is an important model for constructing other sentences. One can insert any suitable noun in place of boy or ball, any transitive verb in place of threw, and any adjective in place of big or small.

Otto Jespersen calls patterns such as this free expressions.

Even without any knowledge of English grammar one feels that the following sentences are analogous:

John gave Mary the apple.

My uncle lent me five shillings.

In both we have the same type. The words that make up the sentences are variable but the type is fixed.

There are other expressions which Jespersen calls formulas. These are uttered as units whose meanings are usually different from the meanings of the component words taken separately. How do you do?, beg pardon, thank you, etc. are fixed expressions (i.e., formulas) to be taught as they are.

In morphology also, one can discern two kinds of word forms:

1. Regular forms. These are forms which constitute the majority of word molds in English. For example, the addition of a dental suffix -ed to indicate past time in verbs, and the addition of -s ending to nouns to form the plural number.

2. Irregular forms. These are forms which do not conform to the usual word patterns. They are frequently remnants of older forms. For example, oxen, men, geese, etc.

In learning his native language, the child is often heard saying books, mans, tooths, etc. When he says books no one is able to

tell whether he has created the form himself according to a pattern or whether he is repeating a form he has heard before. But when he says tooths, and gooses, it is clear that he is constructing a form he never heard in accord with a pattern he has already mastered. That is, the subconscious mind of the child through constant hearing and repetition of many forms and sentences forms a notion about a pattern which guides him in constructing sentences of his own. ⁴⁴ "... a language would be a difficult thing to handle if its speakers had the burden imposed on them of remembering every little item separately." ⁴⁵

The foregoing analysis of English implies that continuous listening and repetition of the patterns is one of the basic methods of learning English easily.

E. THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE MASTERY

It has been shown that patterns prevail in the entire field of language: words and sentences. Thus the question may arise now: What does it mean to master English? Is it to master all the words? Or all the sentences? Or all the patterns?

Looking at a dictionary, one finds that all its words are classified under one or more of the seven parts of speech namely: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

Charles Fries' analysis of spoken English shows that the majority of the English sentences consist primarily of the arrangement of

44 Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar, pp. 18-21.

45 Ibid., p. 21.

the first four of the above-mentioned parts of speech.

46

Albert Hornby reported, twenty-five principal English patterns.

47

Robert Maston says that there exist about four hundred fifty patterns

in English.⁴⁸ As one examines these patterns, he recognizes that he knows some or all of them depending on his past experience, but nobody can be said to know all the words of any language. The more his experience grows, the more he adds to the stock of his vocabulary which he fits into the patterns already learned. Therefore,

A person has 'learned' a foreign language when he has thus first, within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system (that is, when he can understand the stream of speech and achieve an understandable production of it) and has, second made the structural devices (that is, the basic arrangements of utterances) matters of automatic habits.⁴⁹

The question arise now: what does Fries mean by a limited vocabulary?

According to Fries, it falls into four categories:

1. Function words. These are words which primarily function as means of expressing relations of grammatical structures. They are few in number but used very frequently. They include auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, etc.

46 Charles Fries, The Structure of English, p. 86.

47 Albert Hornby, The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Oxford University Press, 1952.

48 Professor of Linguistics at the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, 1955.

49 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, p. 3.

2. Substitute words. These are words that function as substitutes for other words. For example, the so called personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, relative pronouns, and words like none, nobody, nowhere, each, both, all, any, few, many, several, much, etc.

3. Certain vocabulary items. These items are distributed in use in accord with grammatical rules depending, for example, on the presence or absence of a negative. Some, any, too, also, either, neither, etc. are some of these items.

4. Content words. Words that function as symbols for the speaker's experience with reality -- things, actions and qualities. ⁵⁰

An adequate number of these words, relating directly to the pupil's environment, needs, and experiences, is essential in learning a foreign language. Objects and qualities found in the classroom, and actions that can be performed, must constitute the early experiences of the learner.

The failure of some teachers as well as some textbooks is due to their too early attempt to teach words whose patterns and/or meanings are advanced beyond the experiences of the pupils.

F. SUMMING UP

The purpose of this chapter was to present the teachers of English in the Preparatory Public Schools with a few modern concepts of English language teaching. The notions presented were a summary of the important linguistic knowledge which is thought essential for the successful teaching of English.

50 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, pp. 44-54.

In the first section, the relation of writing to speech, and the difference between the two, were discussed in brief.

The second section was devoted to the study of two important definitions of language representing two different concepts of language, and thus two ways of teaching it.

The objective of these two sections was to help the English teachers view language as a group of patterns; each pattern being composed of words, and associated with a particular experience of the speaker with reality.

The chapter closed with a section on the meaning of language mastery. Such a discussion is thought to be essential in helping the teachers of English to view the objective of their teaching activities distinctly and to enable them to organize their teaching activities accordingly.

CHAPTER III

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ENGLISH TEACHING TO BEGINNERS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF SYRIA

A. INTRODUCTORY

In this chapter, an attempt is made to suggest some teaching procedures for the improvement of the teaching of English, keeping in mind the teaching situation in the Preparatory Public Schools of Syria, as well as modern views about the English language and linguistic pedagogy as presented so far.

In making these suggestions for changing the existing teaching situation, the following three factors are taken into consideration:

1. The existing physical structure of the situation. This structure consists mainly of the classroom physical setting which includes school desks, blackboards, and such simple visual aids as pictures, charts, objects, etc. which may be collected by the teacher and the students to help in the creation of vicarious situations.

2. The existing social structure of the situation. By this is meant the extent to which the human element involved makes the situation a complex one. The human elements involved in Syrian English classes may be classified as follows:

A. The teachers of the English language. They are untrained, and use methods which they have learned from the prescribed programs, from books, from their own experience, etc.

B. The learners. They are of two types:

1. New students who have never before been taught English.
2. Old students who have become accustomed to a certain teaching method.

Both of these categories of students should be helped to develop attitudes which will facilitate the application of new teaching procedures.

C. The Ministry. The function of the Ministry is to prescribe textbooks and issue pedagogical instructions to which teachers should adhere. The execution of the instructions is checked on by the Ministry's inspectors.

In making the proposals, it is assumed that teachers are granted the freedom to modify the Ministry's instructions on method to a certain extent. Further, the proposals are given with the understanding that neither the prescribed objectives, nor the time for their achievement is to be altered.

3. The English teaching objectives in the Preparatory Public Schools of Syria. These are the objectives as formulated and prescribed by the Ministry. It is one of the aims of this study to assist teachers of English in the Preparatory Schools to achieve the teaching objectives set up by the Ministry.

The suggestions are divided into two groups:

First, teaching procedures designed to assist the teachers of English in their daily jobs. Such suggestions involve new ways of using the prescribed textbook for the development of listening and speaking skills.

Second, general suggestions for improving the status of teachers.

These suggestions discuss the provision of an in-service training program for teachers improving the method of inspection.

B. THE OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN
THE PREPARATORY PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF SYRIA

As P. Gurrey said, "For success (in the teaching of English) a definite and clear objective is absolutely essential."⁵⁰

It is here suggested that the official objectives prescribed by the Ministry be adopted as they stand. They are as follows:

The aim of teaching English in the Preparatory School is to produce, in three years, an individual who is able to listen with understanding to spoken English, to speak current English correctly, to read with recognition the common words and structures of English and to write a few sentences about a simple subject or incident.⁵¹

This aim does not show the need for mastery of the prescribed textbooks. It is, therefore, suggested that future statements of the aims state the position of the textbook as follows: within the scope of the vocabulary of the prescribed series of textbooks, students by the end of the third year, should be able to produce and to recognize automatically in speech and in writing, all the patterns given.

The discussion now turns to the teaching procedures to be used for the achievement of the above-stated objectives.

C. USING THE PRESENTLY PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK
IN THE FIRST GRADE

1. Introductory. The remaining portion of this section is devoted to discussing practical procedures for developing the listening

51 P. Gurrey, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, p. 17.

52 See Appendix A, p. 128.

and speaking skills through the proper use of the existing textbook.

An examination of the lessons of the official textbook ⁵³ reveals some advantages and limitations, as follows:

Advantages. First, the textbook lessons are ideal examples of a gradual shift in presentation of vocabulary and sentences from tangible experiences to abstract ones, with a minimum resort to translation. Second, the textbook lessons are based on a multiple approach to learning the language, with the least emphasis on writing, more on reading, and the most on conversation. Third, the textbook lessons are not based on the word approach. It seems that the main objective of the author is the development of conversational ability.

Limitations. First, the textbook lessons contain no pronunciation or intonation exercises. Second, the textbook lessons contain no stories, games, songs, or rhymes intended to give life to the lessons and make them more interesting. Third, the approach of the lessons is entirely conversational. There is no systematic presentation of the sentences through patterns.

It can be said, then, that one of the important functions of the teacher is to complement the material of the textbook. Another function, is to select, present and organize the material of the textbook in accord with modern linguistic pedagogical procedures. A third function is to co-ordinate the lessons of the textbook with the complementary material introduced.

The following sections attempt to show the teachers how to perform these functions efficiently.

53 Evan Gatenby, The Direct Method English Course, Book I.

2. Initial Activities. The first question which arises after the objectives are established and viewed clearly, and after the functions of the teacher are well conceived is how to start the learning process. In this, three important problems face the teacher:

1. The kind of the initial skill.
2. The unit of the initial skill.
3. The selection of the unit material of the initial skill.

The first is the question of which of the four skills the teacher should start with; the oral-aural skills or the motor-visual ones.

Linguists have agreed that the oral-aural approach is the shortest, the most natural and the most effective way to learn a foreign language.⁵⁴ While most linguists agree that the teacher should start with oral-aural skills there exist differences of opinion on the time to be devoted to the initial skill before another is introduced.

Michael West entitles the nineteenth as Beginning to Read.⁵⁵ Lawrence Faucet introduces reading and writing soon after listening and speaking.⁵⁶ P. Gurrey believes that the first year or two should be devoted entirely to listening and speaking before reading and writing are introduced.⁵⁷ Charles Fries advocates a multiple approach in accord with the following order of skills: listening, speaking, reading, then writing.⁵⁸ Such differences imply that the validity of beginning

⁵⁴ See, for example, P. Gurrey, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, p. 17. Harold P. Almer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, p. 30. Lawrence Faucet, The Teaching of English in the Far East, pp. 124-126.

⁵⁵ Michael West, New Method English for the Arab World, Primer, p. 43.

⁵⁶ Anne Cochran, Modern Methods.... Language, p. 17.

⁵⁷ P. Gurrey, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, p. 17.

⁵⁸ Charles Fries, American English Series: Teachers' Guide, Preface VI.

with oral-aural activities has been more firmly established than the length of time to be devoted to this activity. Thus one can say safely that the characteristics of the learning situation may be the best guide in determining the length of the period.

It was found that seventy-five per cent of the teachers interviewed, introduce the language on an oral basis entirely. The period devoted to this oral activity varies between two class periods and the whole term. But in general, the majority are not in favor of an extended introductory period of oral practice.

In the prescribed program, it is emphasized that speech should precede reading and writing, and that the pupil should never meet anything in print which is unfamiliar to him in speech. Furthermore, the time to be devoted to oral work is five periods out of six in the first year, and four out of six in the second and third years.⁵⁹

This schedule, with its emphasis on initial oral activities, is entirely consistent with modern trends in linguistic pedagogy. Hence, it is suggested that teachers adhere to it.

The second problem is the choice of the unit of the initial skill. Unit, as used here means the language unit -- that is, the letter, the word, or the sentence.

The Gestalt theory of learning implies that the learning process should be begun with learning sentences. This is consistent with the practice of fifty-three per cent of the teachers interviewed. In the prescribed program, however, the sentence-approach is not mentioned as part of the oral-aural initial activities. It is emphasized only later in the teaching of reading.

59 See Appendix A, p. 138 and 141.

It is appropriate here to examine the relation of the sentence-approach to the word-approach.

Experience shows that in the teaching of English to Arabic-speaking adults, learning words is an easier initial procedure than learning sentences. The period, however, between learning the component items and the sentences which they form should be reduced to a minimum so as to eliminate the development of a gap between the students' abilities to produce the two. This lack of connection was observed in some of the schools visited. As an illustration, supposing the following sentence is to be learned:

The book is on the table

one method is to start by drilling students in the sentence as a whole, and then to study the words which compose it. The second, is to learn the words first, followed immediately by the sentence. The second method has the following advantages:

1. In learning the sentence, less confusion results because the component items are already mastered.

2. The need for translating the whole sentence is eliminated because the meanings of the words would have been given earlier, as direct experiences with objects -- in this case a book and a table.

As a consequence, the following conclusion can be drawn:

Provided that the recognition and production of the sentence is the over-all objective of both the teacher and student and that the words learned are soon combined to form a sentence, it is pedagogically sound to start the learning process by teaching words as an introductory step towards learning the sentence. In advanced stages,

however, the teacher may directly introduce simple sentences which can be used as a means for creating a context in which new words are better recognized and understood.

The third problem relevant to the initial activity is the selection of the words and sentences to be practiced. Two principles should be observed:

1. The degree of concreteness and tangibility of the words. Early experiences with language should be associated with the following:

A. Objects, pictures, specimens, colors, shapes, etc.

B. Actions, activity, etc.

C. Something going on in the present tense.

D. Immediate needs of students and their daily experiences in class and in school.

The words of the prescribed textbook are adequate for this purpose because they are based on the students' immediate physical environment -- the classroom, the school, the street, etc.

2. The degree of difficulty of the form of the words and sentences. By difficulty is meant here the difficulty in pronunciation of both the words and the sentences of the initial activity.

In this connection, multisyllabic words and long sentences are not automatically more difficult than the monosyllabic and short sentences, as some writers think. The actual source of difficulty is the existence of different forms and patterns in English. As Leslie Lieavitt has said, "Similar forms (in both Arabic and English) help mastery, different forms hinder it." ⁶⁰ Consequently, words that contain sounds and

60 Principal of International College, Beirut, Lebanon. Interview, April 20, 1958.

clusters and intonations not found in Arabic should be postponed. Sentences that contain different word orders and different patterns from the Arabic ones should be avoided in order to bring difficulty to a minimum and foster the learning process. An example is the perfect tense, for which there is no equivalent in Arabic. This tense should be postponed.

In conclusion, one can say that the function of the teacher is to introduce the language to the learner as follows:

1. From the concrete to the abstract.
2. From the tangible to the intangible.
3. From the known to the unknown.
4. From present tenses to past tenses to future tenses.
5. From forms and patterns similar to the Arabic ones to those that differ from Arabic.
6. From listening to speaking to reading and then to writing.

Furthermore, an additional function of the teacher in the elementary stages is to help to establish the foundation of desirable attitudes of students towards the learning process. The teacher's method may be scientifically sound, but if he fails to introduce it to the learner properly, the whole program is apt to fail.

Accordingly, it is suggested that the introductory lessons be spent in naming objects of the classroom, writing some words as well as students' names, reading a short song and explaining its meaning in Arabic, learning some questions and answers such as "What is your name? My name is -----," some greetings, and some action words like stand up, sit down, etc.

The specific objectives of these early teaching activities are to lead students to:

1. Believe that English is an easy language to learn.
2. Believe that the method of the teacher is fruitful and promising.
3. Give students a sense of achievement.
4. Make the teaching material practical and interesting.

For the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives, it is essential that the teacher strive to have the social atmosphere of the class as pleasant as possible.

Mockery by some students at their class-mates should be avoided completely. The teacher should, from the first lesson warn his students against this trend which usually develops as a result of feeling the peculiarity of the sounds of the language.

Accuracy in pronunciation and intonation should not be overemphasized. Too much interruption is apt to lead to self-consciousness. Once self-consciousness when speaking the language is developed, it is usually a difficult deterrent to get rid of. Self-consciousness when speaking the English language is noticeable among many Syrian students at the American University of Beirut.

Early lessons should not be spent entirely in learning the language. Some knowledge about language is essential. It is suggested, therefore, that the teacher, in Arabic, attempt to clarify the nature of language, the method by which the child acquires his own language, and that he give a brief description of some of the teaching techniques he uses. Such material should be enriched with illustrations and

examples that may help to reveal to the students some of the erroneous notions they may have. Even in a later stage, if the teacher notices any apparent dissatisfaction with the method he is using, he should encourage more desirable attitudes by giving a short explanation of his reasons for teaching as he does.

3. Listening. Listening and speaking are, in fact, two reciprocal activities that cannot be undertaken simultaneously by a student. Thus the student or the teacher is either a listener or speaker at a given time.

According to Harold Palmer listening and reading are passive psychologically, while speaking and writing are active. ⁶¹ The latter two are dependent extensively on the former. So Palmer insists that students should not be expected to produce before they receive. ⁶² The more they are compelled to listen, the more rapidly their rate of progress is accelerated. ⁶³

In all the classes visited, listening on a large scale did not exist. The only kind of listening to speech, was witnessed in oral reading and in listening to questions asked in order to produce the necessary answers.

Listening is overlooked also in the prescribed program. Listening to precede speech is not mentioned. Even in the suggested division of the lesson for the first two months of the first year one finds that

61 Harold Palmer, Scientific Study of Language, p. 65.

62 Harold Palmer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, p. 40.

63 Ibid., p. 19.

twenty-five minutes are devoted to speech, and ten minutes to rhymes and games.

Harold Palmer says that the young child in learning his own native language undertakes what he called an incubation period during which the child passively receives and stores up a large quantity of the language before he tries to utter the sounds and forms of the language. He suggests that this process be employed in teaching an adult person a foreign language.

According to Palmer beginners, unlike advanced students, are incapable of receiving rapidly and imitating the teacher immediately. A beginner concentrates his attention on either what he hears or what he wants to say. For this reason it is suggested that the learner in the early stages concentrates on listening solely through devoting a portion of the lesson period to hearing and observing the teacher's speech.

When listening to a language being spoken one hears word-groups succeeding each other without a break, and usually fails to perceive the individual words of which they are composed.

In listening according to Palmer two processes are involved: catenizing and semanticizing.

"Catenizing means: learning to recognize or to produce a chain of sounds or syllables as an integral whole irrespective of all considerations of meaning." Semanticizing, on the other hand, means the

64 Harold Palmer, The Scientific Study of Language, p. 75.

65 Harold Palmer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, pp. 40-41.

66 Ibid., p. 19.

process of association of the word with its meaning.⁶⁷ Hence, it is suggested that the sentences which should be listened to must be expressions of the students' daily experiences so as not to require translation. Students, however, are not expected to understand fully the meaning of every word heard. They should concentrate on the idea behind it.

Palmer divides the work of learning a language into two main types:

a. The purely receptive work.

68

b. The receptive productive work.

a. The purely receptive work. It is divided into the following:

A. Unconscious oral assimilation.

B. Conscious oral assimilation.

69

C. Imperative drills.

A. Unconscious oral assimilation. This type of listening is the most rudimentary one and is essentially the natural process by which children assimilate the forms of their mother-tongue. The teacher should accompany the sentences by abundant gestures which illustrate the meaning. Students should be told in advance that they are expected to listen to the spoken language calmly and without any attempt to respond or analyze what they hear.

Recommendation. The following is a suggested procedure for presenting a few textbook lessons for the purpose of establishing unconscious oral assimilation:

67 Ibid., p. 21.

68 Harold Palmer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, See Synoptic index.

69 Ibid.

Lesson one and lesson two. The teacher using appropriate (even exaggerate gestures in referring to the objects and activities) says:

A book, a pencil, a chair, a desk. Look at the book. What is this? It is a book. This is a chair. That is a desk. Point to the door. Touch the piece of chalk. Write your name. Put the piece of chalk on the table. Is this a piece of chalk or pencil? It is a pencil. Stand up. Take the pencil. Write your name. Sit down. Look at the blackboard. Is this the wall or the blackboard? It is the blackboard. Is that the wall? No, it is not. What is it? It is the blackboard. The box is on the table. Where is the table? The table is on the floor. What is this? It is the classroom, etc.

Lesson eight. I am eating an apple. Look at the apple. An apple is a fruit. I am drinking milk. I can drink milk. I can eat an apple also. I can eat bread. Is bread fruit? No, it is not. I can drink coffee out of a cup. Can you give me a cup of milk? Yes, I can. Can you drink water? Yes, I can. Look at the picture in your book. The boy is eating an apple. He can eat an apple. He is not eating bread. The girl is drinking out of the cup. She is looking at the boy. Can she drink tea? Yes, she can. Look at the egg. Is the boy eating bread? No, he is not. Can he eat bread? No, he cannot, etc.

Studying these two examples reveals their introductory nature. They are set up to familiarize the student's memory with the forms of the language in the lessons as a preliminary step towards developing his ability to speak.

In advanced stages, such unconscious oral assimilation may take the form of listening to mere oral reading of the lesson by the teacher. A tape recorder, if available, can be used for recording such lessons.

B. Conscious oral assimilation. Here students should focus their attention on particular forms. This type of assimilation, as Harold Palmer says, is an introductory procedure towards the kind of work in which the students are to play a more active role.⁷⁰

The first portion of lesson nine of the textbook may be used as an illustrative example for the purpose of establishing conscious oral assimilation. This portion of lesson nine contains the following material:

There is a cap on the desk. Whose is it? It is A --'s. That bag is not A--'s, it is B--'s. Whose is this pencil? It is C--'s. D--'s is here on the desk. I can see a lot of things on the teacher's table. What can you see? I can see a bottle of ink, a short piece of string, a long ruler, some flowers, and a key.

This portion may be expanded and modified as follows: with the teacher reading it while the pupils merely observe and listen. The teacher will, of course, use a great variety of appropriate gestures and objects.

1. There is a cap on the desk. There is a key on the desk. There is a bag on the desk. There is a bottle of ink on the desk.

2. The bag is not Ali's. The bag is not Khalid's. The bag is not Hasan's. The bag is Sami's. The key is not Ali's. The key is not

70 Harold Palmer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, p. 47.

Khalid's. The key is not Hasan's. The key is Sami's. The cap is not Ali's. The cap is not Khalid's. The cap is not Hasan's. The cap is Sami's.

3. Whose cap is it? Whose bottle of ink is it? Whose key is it? Whose bag is it? The cap is Ali's. The bottle of ink is Khalid's. The key is Hasan's. The bag is Sami's.

4. I can see a lot of things. I can see a key. I can see a cap. I can see a bag. etc.

The first portion of lesson eleven contains the following material:

I am an English boy. My name is George Brown. Mr. and Mrs. Brown are my father and mother. I have one brother and two sisters. My brother's name is Jack, and my sisters's names are Mary and Rose. Mary has two brothers and one sister. Our parents have two sons and two daughters...

This portion may be presented for the purpose of establishing conscious oral assimilation as follows:

1. Mary has two brothers. Sami has a book. Khalid has a pencil. The teacher has a classroom. He has a brother. She has a sister. It has a door. The boy has a desk. The girl has a bag, etc.

2. What is this English boy's name? His name is..... What is his father's name? His father's name is..... What is his mother's name? His mother's name is..... What is his sister's name? His sister's name is..... What is his brother's name? His brother's name is..... What is his uncle's name? His uncle's is etc.

3. How many books are there on the table? There are two. How many pencils are there on the table? There are three. How many keys are there on the table? There are five. How many papers are there on the table? There are six, etc.

Studying these examples reveals the systematic presentation of the various structural patterns of the textbook. Such a method of presentation is necessary because the textbook presentation is based on a purely conversational approach.

As a corollary, the teacher's aim in the learning process becomes the establishment of the structural patterns of the textbook rather than finishing the lessons of the textbook. Parallel to this, the student's goal becomes the accomplishment of the patterns.

C. Imperative drill. Some linguistic forms like "Write your name, close the door, open the window, stand up, sit down, etc." require the performance of actions. Here students should play an active part. This type of listening associated with the actions performed has three principal advantages:

1. Because it requires motor activity, it makes the learning process interesting.
2. It indicates whether the students understand what they hear.
3. It provides students with a sense of achievement.

Hence the action verbs found in the textbook should be selected and reserved for times when laxity and monotony have developed, for they give variety and arouse interest.

b. The receptive productive work. While in the purely receptive work, the student receives calmly and performs action silently. Here students are required to utter verbal answers in response to what the teacher says. Thus the beginning of this stage constitutes the initial steps towards speaking the language.

Then after the students produce the patterns orally in a systematic, intensive way, as will be shown in the next section, they should listen to the patterns in a different context. This type of activity is called Selective Listening.⁷¹ It provides the students with the opportunity to listen to the patterns as naturally produced in a conversation, a story, or a description. Further, when the reading stage is reached later, the teacher should draw his students' attention to the patterns as produced visually before them.

Speaking. Oral work (speaking and oral reading inclusive) is considered by the Ministry to be the most important teaching activity.

In the first year, for example, oral work occupies five periods out of six per week. In the second and third years four periods out of six are devoted to the same activity.

Furthermore, the data from the interviews indicate that the teaching situation in the Preparatory Schools is distinguished by a great emphasis on oral work. Speaking, for example, occupies most of the lesson time of eighty-six per cent of the interviews.

Speaking, as the observations have shown, takes the form of conversations, mostly based on the reading lessons. Questions to test comprehension after silent reading are developed into a conversation dealing with the subject of the lesson and the students' experiences.

The discussion of the development of speaking ability is divided as follows:

71 This term was supplied by Robert Maston, Professor of Linguistics at the American University of Beirut, in a lecture on May 27, 1955.

- a. The relation of speaking to listening.
- b. The process of pattern establishment.
- c. Using the textbook exercises.
- d. Using grammatical terms.
- e. Conversation.
- f. Oral composition.
- g. Pronunciation.

a. The relation of speaking to listening. It is a fact that listening always precedes speaking in the learning of a language. Hence a certain period should elapse between the two activities.

Afif Bulos said that production following assimilation should not be hurried. ⁷² This implies that students in the first year should listen sufficiently before they attempt to speak. The teacher should therefore, not worry about their inability to produce correctly and fluently during the time when listening is the main activity. In fact, as Charles Fries said, the ability to recognize always exceeds the ability to produce. ⁷³ The gap between the two abilities, however, should not be so wide that the learner may understand a lecture but be unable to produce a sentence correctly. In this connection the observations revealed that the speaking ability of some of the students in the Preparatory Public Schools of Syria lags far behind their ability to understand.

b. The process of pattern establishment. In all the exercises whose objective is to develop speaking ability, the main function of the teacher is to establish the patterns of the language. The fol-

72 Afif Bulos, The Teaching of English to Arabic Speaking Students, p. 6.

73 Charles Fries, the Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language, p. 8.

lowing question naturally arises: What are the steps to be followed in establishing a linguistic pattern on the productive level?

Robert Maston divides the steps into two sets:

1. Teaching pattern learning.⁷⁴
2. Testing pattern learning.

Each of these sets is divided into five steps as follows:

1. Teaching pattern learning. The teaching of pattern learning includes five steps.

- A. Awareness. This step may be named listening, which is equivalent to the conscious and unconscious oral assimilation discussed in the last section.

- B. Repetition. Repetition here means repetition of the pattern by the students. It is of two types:

1. Immediate repetition. Students here are to repeat the pattern immediately after their teacher in an attempt to mimic him, while watching the teacher perform acts associated with the pattern. For example,

I am writing.

I am eating.

I am drinking. etc.

2. Remote repetition. The second step is to have students produce the pattern to be learned without the help of the teacher's words. That is, the pattern is to be associated with the situation only. For example, they see the teacher producing the movements of

74 The underlined headings of the following steps were supplied by Robert Maston, Professor of Linguistics at the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, May 27, 1955.

writing, and they respond: I am writing. They see him reading and they respond: I am reading.

In advanced stages, when the teacher is faced with numerous sentences whose meanings cannot easily be conveyed by gestures or situations created in the classroom, he can suggest the sentence which the students should produce by saying a principal word of it. For example, he says thinking, and the students say the pattern, I am thinking, buying -- I am buying, etc.

C. Memorization. Repetition of the sentences leads eventually to automatic memorization of the pattern without any conscious attempt to memorize.

D. Catenization. According to Maston catenization is the art of reproducing, with fluency and without conscious calculation, the units of speech. ⁷⁵ In fact, this is only a small step beyond memorization, and is distinguished by fluency of production.

Both memorization and catenization are, therefore, not teaching techniques, but names associated with certain states of mental conditioning.

E. Substitution. In this step, students are to substitute some new words for the familiar ones learned within the frame of the pattern. For example, students may go on to say:

I am sleeping.

I am climbing.

I am looking at the picture. etc.

75 Robert Maston, Professor of Linguistics at the American University of Beirut, in a lecture on May 27, 1955.

This step is a good basis for homework assignments. Students may be given a list of words to be substituted in the patterns which have been studied in the lesson.

Recommendation. The teacher may choose the following sentence from lesson ten of Gatenby's Book One:

A donkey is coming along the road.

In the above it is recommended that students be asked to substitute the following words one by one in place of the word coming and a donkey:

running
walking
going
a man
a cat
a dog

A more complex substitution is illustrated by the following sentence from lesson fifteen of Book One:

Every evening after tea, Mr. Brown sits in a comfortable chair and reads the evening paper.

It is recommended that students put the correct forms of the following verbs in place of sits, keeping the underlined words unchanged:

read
go
stop
think
swim

2. Testing pattern production. Learning the pattern isolated within a limited number of words is not a complete mastery of it. Complete mastery is the automatic production of the pattern in normal conversation.

The following five steps are thought to lead to the above-mentioned objective:

A. Concordant response. In the foregoing steps, the students have not uttered a sentence in answer to an oral question. All responses have been to a situation demonstrated or a word forming a part of the sentence to be uttered. This procedure contributes towards fusing the various linguistic forms with various concrete situations.

It is necessary, in addition, that the linguistic forms be fused with oral stimuli if they are to function properly in normal conversation.

For instance, suppose that the students have learned to say the following sentences when they perceive the corresponding situation:

The book is on the table.

The pencil is under the desk.

The paper is near the wall.

The teacher can now call upon them to connect their responses with the following questions:

Where is the book?

Where is the pencil?

Where is the paper?

One can readily see the advantage of this technique of presentation in the teaching of a question form directly after a vivid concrete stimulus in the form of the preceding exercise.

In the light of this discussion the following is recommended:

A question pattern should never be taught before the answer pattern is well learnt.

The application of this rule may lead students to be able to produce statements more easily than they can ask questions. This is recommended for the first year.

B. Contrastive production. In this step, students learn the various contrastive forms of the pattern. That is, they learn how to construct the negative and the interrogative forms of the past, present and future tenses. For example, the teacher says: "Where is the book?" and the students answer: "It is on the table. It is not on the floor."

Teacher: Where is the pencil?

Student: It is on the desk. It is not on the table.

Teacher: Where is the chalk?

Student: It is on the floor. It is not on the table.

2. The teacher says: "Where is the key now?" and the students answer: "It was on the table. It is on the desk now."

Teacher: Where is the pencil now?

Student: It was on the table. It is on the desk now.

Teacher: Where is the paper now?

Student: It was on the table. It is on the desk now.

3. The teacher picks a student and says:

Teacher: What are you doing?

Student 1: I am writing. I am not reading. I was playing.

Teacher: What are you doing?

Student 2: I am drawing. I am not reading. I was playing.

Teacher: What are you doing?

Student 3: I am thinking. I am not reading. I was playing.

4. The following examples are to show the teachers how to use some of the textbook lessons for the purpose of contrastive production:

Lesson eighteen.

Teacher: Mrs. Brown is telling Mary a story.

Student(s): Mrs. Brown is not telling Mary a story.

Teacher: Jack is listening too.

Student(s): Jack is not listening.

Teacher: George goes on with his work.

Student(s): George does not go on with his work.

Teacher: Alice walks (looks) through a looking-glass.

Student(s): Alice does not walk (look) through a looking-glass. etc.

The same material can be used for the purpose of establishing the future tense pattern as follows:

Teacher: Mrs. Brown is telling a story.

Student(s) Mrs. Brown will be telling Mary a story.

Teacher: Jack is listening too.

Student(s): Jack will be listening too.

Teacher: George goes on with work.

Student(s): George will go on with work.

Teacher: Alice walks (looks) through a looking glass.

Student(s): Alice will walk(look) through a looking-glass. etc.

C. Construction by analogy. Analogous sentences can be constructed in accord with the frame of the pattern. This teaching technique is recommended for advanced stages because construction of analogous sentences requires a fairly broad background in vocabulary and a deeper

comprehension of the structures of the language. For example, sample sentence: A bird is in a tree.

Analogous sentence: Five boys are on the street.

Sample sentence: The boy and his dog are near the wall of the school.

Analogous sentence: A man and his donkey are near the door of the prison.

Sample sentence: I would like to buy a notebook from this bookshop.

Analogous sentence: I would like to borrow a book from this library.

The following example taken from lesson twenty-four shows how fairly complex sentences analogous to those of the textbook may be produced:

Sample sentences: Jack is sitting at a table. He is hungry and wants his tea. George is taking a chair to the table. Perhaps it is for one of his sister's friends. We don't know their names, but they live next door.

Analogous sentences: George and his sister are writing on the blackboard. They are tired and want to rest. George is taking a piece of chalk from the box. Perhaps the chalk is his sister's. We don't know what they are called, but they live a hundred meters away from our house.

It can be seen that a sentence has many analogous sentences varying in the degree of their similarity, to the original sentence.

This teaching technique eventually enables the students to construct correct sentences on the one hand, and to adopt the style of the

sentences with which they are dealing on the other.

D. Contextual production. This step constitutes a review of the pattern(s) practised in a context. Descriptions, conversations, and short stories in particular are helpful in learning the pattern in a context.

The teacher should have at his disposal many short stories centered on the various patterns of the textbook, as the textbook lacks such stories. Its reading material, however, can serve as a review of the patterns in a proximate context.

Stories told by the teacher should be reproduced again by students. In such reproductions, emphasis is to be placed on correct production of the patterns.

E. Complete production. Correct production of the pattern in a story context or in a conversation context is the final stage. Its end result is complete and fluent production of the pattern in conversation.

It can be noted that the last stage is actually a transitional step towards practising conversation.

C. Using the textbook exercises. After the foregoing discussion of the process of pattern establishment which is the foundation of the teaching method for the development of speaking ability, the possible usefulness of the textbook exercises should be definitely determined. If they prove to be worthwhile, a method for their use is called for.

An examination of these exercises shows that, in general, they tend to be based on conscious intellectual comprehension of the patterns. The following exercises indicate this tendency.

1. Exercise one in the first lesson of the textbook.

"Supply the missing words:

1. This _____ a pencil.
2. What is _____?
3. It's _____ book?
4. Is _____ a box?
9. Stand _____.
10. _____ down."

This exercise seems to aim at developing the student's ability to recall what he has learned, to err, to guess, and to hit the correct solution. Such an exercise, given as it is, may have a detrimental effect. It leads students to break the linguistic ties between the items of the language such as a and book, stand and up, sit and down, etc. Hence it encourages students to build their language structure in a conscious artificial and logical, as opposed to psychological way.

The exercise can be made more useful as follows:

"Supply a suitable word in each of the following blanks:

1. This is a pencil.
This is a _____.
This is a _____.
2. Is this a book?
Is this a _____?
Is this a _____?
3. It is a pencil.
It is a _____.
It is a _____."

Action and interrogative items such as stand up, sit down and what is _____? are best omitted at this stage.

Through this technique of presentation the essential items constituting the pattern are always kept together in order to contribute towards a better automatic production. Further, students are provided with a model which they may easily and naturally use in the construction of other sentences.

2. Other textbook exercises reveal the bias toward an intellectual understanding of the language:

A. Exercise C. Page 32

Put a or an in the following:

1. There is ___ city on the river.
2. ___ orange is ___ fruit.

B. Exercise B. Page 37

Change small letters into capitals where necessary:

1. He is a boy and i am a girl.
2. there are a lot of things on b --- 's desk. etc.

C. Exercise D. Page 57

Re-arrange to form sentences:

1. I'm late early not I'm.
2. get up you at do 9 o'clock. etc.

D. Exercise D. Page 86

Put I instead of the words printed in italics, and make any necessary changes in each sentence:

1. What does she do?
2. He never gets up late. etc.

The above exercises appear to be designed for the purpose of gaining analytical knowledge about English, and not for the development of the ability to speak. They are based on the traditional learning

of the language through the application of the rules, and are thus mainly suitable for one who wishes primarily to understand the construction of the language.

In dealing with the exercises of the textbook, the following guiding principles are recommended:

1. The teacher should treat each of the sentences of the exercises as a sample sentence representing a pattern, and drill his students in this pattern.

2. He should never allow the students do the exercises alone first. The teacher should do them first with student co-operation. The objective is not to make them reflect; rather it is to aid them to imitate the teacher in making the sentences according to a given model.

3. The teacher should not place much emphasis on these exercises. If he feels that he is satisfied with his students' achievement through the other teaching techniques, he may profitably skip the exercises entirely.

d. Using grammatical terms. Grammatical terms are descriptive words used to express the nature of a linguistic unit (a word or a sentence), or to indicate the category to which the unit belongs. Past, present, negative, noun, adjective, compound sentences, etc. are all names pointing out a certain condition or linguistic category.

Their function is to facilitate ability to differentiate between any two or more modes or constructions. Hence they help towards better classification of the patterns and more correct association of these patterns with categories of life situations.

Consequently, it is suggested that they should be used, but only as a means to an end, and not as an end in themselves. Before

introducing a grammatical term, the teacher should ask himself this question:

Does this term contribute towards better mastery?

The following is a list of some grammatical terms which help students in their study of the patterns and in using English-English dictionaries:

- A. Noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb and preposition.
- B. Transitive and intransitive.
- C. Past, present and future.
- D. Simple, continuous, perfect, and past participle.
- E. Affirmative, negative, and interrogative.
- F. Singular, plural, feminine, masculine, neuter (things and animals)
- G. Sentence, word and letter.

This list is the outcome of direct experience in the teaching of English to Arabic speaking pupils. It contains what is thought to be the minimum number of grammatical terms dealing with the main categories of the language.

Other grammatical terms should be replaced by explanatory statements of the case when needed. Some of these explanations may be given in Arabic.

In this connection, it should be mentioned here that observations showed that some of the teachers in the classes visited encouraged the learning of grammatical terms to be attached to the various linguistic forms and cases even when the students seemed to have mastered the patterns involved with little or no knowledge of the terms.

The Ministry in the present prescribed program is in agreement with the idea that in the initial stages of learning, grammatical terms should be avoided as much as possible.

In closing it should be re-emphasized that the sole objective of the use of grammatical terms should be to gain knowledge of the language and not knowledge about the language. A student's knowledge of the terms, therefore, should never be tested. Instead of asking a student for the term attached to a certain case, word pattern, or structure, he should be asked to use the words concerned in sentences, to answer certain questions, to construct a sentence in accordance with a model, or to change a sentence from one case to another.

e. Conversation. Conversation, according to the present prescribed program, should follow reading, and its function is to link the language learnt to the experiences of the students.

Interviewees indicated that conversation is a regular learning experience occupying two periods per week or ten to twenty minutes in each lesson.

Observations show that conversation took the form of questions to test comprehension after reading. These questions were reportedly designed to fit in with the students' everyday experiences.

The process of speech learning can be divided roughly into the following activities:

1. Pattern establishment.
2. Conventional conversation.
3. Normal conversation.

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76 The terms, Conventional conversation and Normal conversation, are taken from Harold Palmer, The Oral Method of Teaching Languages, Synoptic chart.

1. Pattern establishment. This topic was discussed earlier in this study (pp. 79-87).

2. Conventional conversation. Harold Palmer defined Conventional conversation as dialogues between teacher and student arranged so as to have certain specific results.⁷⁷ Conversation, therefore, should be rigidly controlled in accord with a certain definite plan.

The following are some of the methods for controlling the range of conversation:

- A. Pattern control.
- B. Word control.
- C. Topic control.

A. Pattern control. Here the teacher selects a certain pattern and starts to converse with his students accordingly. For example, the teacher selects the present simple tense as a pattern for conversation. He may start as follows:

Teacher: Where do you go everyday?

Students 1: I go to school.

Teacher: At what time do you go to school?

Student 2: I go at seven o'clock.

Teacher: With whom do you go?

Student 3: I go alone. Sometimes I go with my firends George.

Teacher: What do you take with you?

Student 4: I take my books, notebooks and pencils.

Teacher: Who teaches you at school?

Student 5: Mr. _____, Mr. _____, and Mr. _____.

77 Ibid., p. 63.

Teacher: Who teaches you English?

Student 6: Mr. _____ teaches me English. etc.

The conversation continues like this until the teacher is convinced that sufficient practice has been given on the pattern at hand.

It should be noted that complete sentences are expected from students in answer to the question because the objective of such controlled conversations is to elicit complete statements in order to train students in the production of such statements.

B. Word control. Here more freedom in sentence construction is given to students. The only restriction is that sentences produced are expected to contain the word at hand. In making the sentences, each student, as P. Gurry said, is advised to introduce a slight variation which focusses his attention on what he is saying. ⁷⁸ The following are examples illustrating this technique, using the words shine and summer:

1. Shine.

Teacher: When does the sun shine?

Student 1: The sun shines during the day.

Teacher: And the moon?

Student 2: The moon shines at night.

Teacher: The stars?

Student 3: The stars shine at night also.

Teacher: Is the sun shining now?

Student 4: Yes, it is shining now.

Teacher: Does the sun shine everyday?

Student 5: Yes, the sun shines everyday. etc.

2. Summer.

Teacher: What is the hottest season?

Student 1: Summer is the hottest season.

Teacher: When do our summer holidays begin?

Student 2: Our summer holidays begin next month.

Teacher: Do you like summer?

Student 3: Yes, I like summer.

Teacher: Why?

Student 4: Because it is hot. etc.

It should be noted that in the pattern control technique, words are changed but the pattern is fixed. In the word control technique, patterns are changed but the word is fixed. Hence the following is suggested:

Teach new words within learned patterns, and teach new patterns around learned words.

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C. Topic control. The limitation here is only that a selected topic be discussed within the range of the students' vocabularies and patterns. In advanced stages this may constitute a transitional stage towards normal conversation.

An examination of the textbook lessons shows that the conversational part in each lesson is based on a particular topic such as "The class-room", "In School", "Eating and Drinking", "Going to Work", etc.

Each topic is built around a picture. Some statements are given to interpret the contents of the picture, and this is followed by a piece of conversation. The conversation is presented in the form of questions

and answers on the picture accompanying the statements.

In the light of the previous discussion of pattern establishment and conventional conversation, it is suggested that the conversations of the textbook be used as review exercises following practice in pattern establishment and conventional conversation as discussed above.

3. Normal conversation. The production of normal conversation is one of the principal aims of English teachers.

It is thought that competence in normal conversation cannot be achieved by the end of a three-academic-year period with six lesson-periods a week some of which are devoted to reading and writing. That is, the students' standard of achievement in the preparatory schools is not expected to exceed that required for conventional conversation. Since this study does not deal with experiences beyond the first three years, another study is required to examine the problems peculiar to the further study of English.

f. Oral composition. Oral composition is a teaching technique analogous to conventional conversation controlled by a topic. It is designed, however, to train students in the construction of sentences centered around a particular subject for the purpose of producing these sentences as written composition.

According to Nell Young and Frederick Memmott oral composition in the elementary stages of learning takes the form of training students in the construction of one sentence on a certain subject as illustrated below:

"Aim. To induce each child to compose one sentence upon a given topic.

Teacher: Close your eyes, children, and think of one thing you saw on your way to school. Begin your sentence with "I saw". (After waiting a moment) Mary, tell us what you saw.

Mary: I saw a boy driving a fony.

Hilda: I saw my papa in his shop.

Bert: I saw my mother waving good-bye to me.

Martin: I saw my little sister crying to go to school with me." 80

After practising this simplest type of composition, the teacher should lead his students to construct two sentences upon a given subject as follows:

"Aim. To induce each child to make two sentences upon a given topic.

Teacher: Close your eyes and think of one thing you saw on your way to school this morning (the teacher waits a moment).

Fred: I saw a boy riding a horse back.

Teacher: That is a fine sentence, Fred. Can you tell me one more interesting sentence about this boy?

Fred: He was making his horse gallop.

Teacher: You have given two very interesting sentences, Fred. Can you tell both your sentences and make one story.

Fred: A saw a boy riding horse-back, and making his horse gallop." 81

Writing these statements on the blackboard, and giving a number to each of them helps to establish the sentence sense. Grouping sentences that treat one idea establishes the paragraph sense on the oral level.

In this connection, Young and Memmott suggest that the teacher, when noticing sentences getting off the track, should help his students to concentrate on the subject at hand. 82 Leavitt suggests that three

or four sentences contributed by each speaker are sufficient for lower classes. 83

80 Nell Young and Frederick Memmott, Methods in Elementary English, p. 38.

81 Ibid., p. 41.

82 Ibid., p. 102.

83 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p. 84.

In advanced stages, Leavitt suggests that about five students be asked to deliver their compositions on a certain day. This enables the rest of the students to participate in corrections and comments.⁸⁴ Corrections and comments should be made when the speaker finishes his sentences. Interruptions should not be allowed at all.

Oral compositions practised in class can be used as homework assignments for written compositions in advanced classes.

In closing, the teacher's attention is drawn to the importance of linking the subjects of compositions to the students' experiences -- what they see, practise, hear, etc.

g. Pronunciation. It is unfortunate that the teaching of pronunciation is entirely neglected in the prescribed textbook.

Furthermore, in the prescribed program there is no mention of a method to teach pronunciation systematically. Observations showed that many mistakes in pronunciation of the English sounds were made by students.

Edward Safir stated that learning English as a foreign language is a process which involves re-adjustment of the muscles of the speaker's vocal apparatus, his nerves and experience as well.⁸⁵

In this section, problems in pronunciation of English by the Arabic students arising from the differences in the sound systems of Arabic and English are considered.

Phonemic differences. Pike defined a phoneme as a significant sound unit.⁸⁶ A phoneme changes the meaning of the word if it is replaced

84 Ibid., p. 83.

85 Edward Safir, Language, p. 46.

86 Kenneth Pike, Phonemics, p. 245.

by another phoneme.

Arabic and English have different phonemes, and due to the fact that some sounds are separate phonemes in English, but belong to single phonemes in Arabic, an Arab student from Syria will have the following difficulties when trying to pronounce some of the English words in the list below. In each case the Arabic phoneme corresponds to two separate English phonemes, one of which is not represented in the Arabic language. The uniquely English phoneme in each case is marked by an asterisk:

Consonant Phonemes

<u>Arabic</u>	<u>English</u>
(b)	(b) <u>b</u> in, <u>b</u> it, <u>b</u> ig, <u>b</u> ull, <u>b</u> ay (p)* <u>p</u> in, <u>p</u> it, <u>p</u> ig, <u>p</u> ull, <u>p</u> ay
(f)	(f) <u>f</u> ine, <u>f</u> ife, <u>w</u> ife * (v) <u>v</u> ine, <u>l</u> ive, <u>w</u> ives
(s)	(s) <u>s</u> in, <u>s</u> ought, <u>s</u> ick, <u>s</u> ing (θ)* <u>th</u> in, <u>th</u> ought, <u>th</u> ick, <u>th</u> ing
(ʃ)	(ʃ) <u>sh</u> ee <u>p</u> , <u>sh</u> are, <u>sh</u> in, <u>sh</u> ee <u>t</u> (t)* <u>ch</u> ea <u>p</u> , <u>ch</u> ai <u>r</u> , <u>ch</u> in, <u>ch</u> ea <u>t</u>
(k)	(k) <u>k</u> ill, <u>c</u> oa <u>l</u> , <u>r</u> oc <u>k</u> , <u>s</u> in <u>k</u> (g)* <u>g</u> ill, <u>g</u> oa <u>l</u> , <u>r</u> u <u>g</u> , <u>s</u> in <u>g</u>
(n)	(n) <u>s</u> in, <u>k</u> in, <u>s</u> un, <u>r</u> an (ŋ)* <u>s</u> in <u>g</u> , <u>k</u> in <u>g</u> , <u>s</u> un <u>g</u> , <u>r</u> an <u>g</u>
(ʒ)	(ʒ) <u>b</u> e <u>dg</u> er, <u>m</u> a <u>g</u> or, <u>l</u> e <u>d</u> ger (ʒ)* <u>plea</u> su <u>r</u> e, <u>mea</u> su <u>r</u> e, <u>lei</u> su <u>r</u> e
(z)	(z) <u>b</u> ree <u>z</u> e, <u>s</u> i <u>z</u> e, <u>z</u> o <u>n</u> e (t) <u>b</u> rea <u>th</u> e, <u>clo</u> th <u>e</u> , <u>th</u> e <u>n</u>

Vowel Phonemes

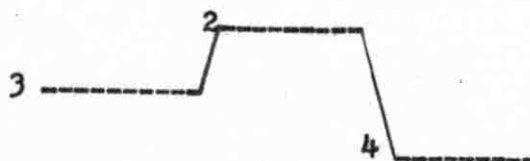
<u>Arabic</u>	<u>English</u>
(i)	(i) <u>beat</u> , <u>bead</u> , <u>read</u> , <u>sheep</u> (i)* <u>bit</u> , <u>bid</u> , <u>rid</u> , <u>ship</u>
(o)	(o) <u>coat</u> , <u>boat</u> , <u>coast</u> , <u>low</u> (o)* <u>caught</u> , <u>bought</u> , <u>cost</u> , <u>law</u>
(u)	(u) <u>pool</u> , <u>cool</u> , <u>fool</u> , <u>lute</u> (u)* <u>pull</u> , <u>wool</u> , <u>full</u> , <u>look</u>
(e)	(e) <u>mate</u> , <u>gate</u> , <u>tail</u> , <u>sail</u> , <u>raid</u> (e)* <u>met</u> , <u>get</u> , <u>tell</u> , <u>sell</u> , <u>red</u>
(a)	(a) <u>destruction</u> , <u>lust</u> , <u>must</u> , <u>slum</u> (a)* <u>distraction</u> , <u>last</u> , <u>mast</u> , <u>slam</u>
(w)	(w) <u>put</u> , <u>look</u> , <u>good</u> , <u>cook</u> (o)* <u>pot</u> , <u>lock</u> , <u>god</u> , <u>cock</u>

Arabic phonemes that have no equivalents in English like (ü), (é), (è), (ê), etc. present no problem.

Intonational differences. According to Charles Fries, levels of intonation are considered to be four in number:

- _____ No. 1 extra high.
- _____ No. 2 high.
- _____ No. 3 medium - voice level
- _____ No. 4 low

Level number three is the normal pitch level of the voice in English. Whether in question or in statement the normal American speech intonation curve is as follows:



That is, it starts with the third level, rises up near the end, and then goes down. For example,

I told him to come over
3 2 4

What did you tell him?
3 2 4

When will he come?
3 2 4

Tom has gone
3 2 4

The two-four intonation curve is even found in isolated words, as in the following:

2 doctor 2 practice 2 English 2 oxen 87
4 4 4 4

In Arabic the question intonation curve is different from that of the statement. It is the sole determinant of inquiry. Hence, Arabic-speaking learners cannot at first recognize that the sentences

You are a man.

Are you a man?

are respectively a statement and a question regardless of intonation.

Teachers should drill their students on correct production of the intonation curve. They should also draw the attention of their students to the fact that word-order is an important determinant of meaning in English.

87 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, pp. 21-23.

88 Supplied by Robert Hawling, Director of the English Special Form class, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, Interview, October 29, 1957.

Rhythmic differences. According to Charles Fries, in American English, heavy stresses of the sentences occur at about equal intervals of time. If many syllables intervene between stressed syllables, they are obscured by rapid pronunciation. If, however, only a few syllables occur they are allowed more time, for example:

1. The Doctor's a Surgeon.
2. The Doctor's a good Surgeon.
3. The Doctor's a very good Surgeon.
4. The Doctor's not a very good Surgeon.

The underlined syllables are strongly stressed, and the time between them is almost the same in the four examples. This kind of reduction causes foreigners to find it difficult to understand the stream of English speech. Hence they think that the English native speaker tends to speak too fast. Giving more weight to the intervening syllables while maintaining the same speed is a greater help to the understanding of the foreign speaker than slowing down the rate of spoken words per unit of time.

It is regretted that there is no analysis available of the rhythm of spoken Arabic in Syria.

It can be said that there exist three essentials of correct recognition of meaning and correct production of the English sounds. They are the following:

1. The phonemes of the language.
2. The intonation of the language.
3. The rhythm of the language.

89 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, pp. 23-24.

The teacher should concentrate his attention on these three characteristics. Short periods throughout the academic year, devoted to drill on these essentials are recommended. Exercises treating this phase of the language should not be written, as the objective of such exercises is the development of the students' ability to develop good oral production.

In closing, Ne^{ll} Young and Fredrick Mam^{ott} have recommended that the teacher make a record of the words that are mispronounced by his students. Further, he should list the names of students who have specific difficulties in pronunciation. ⁹⁰ It is suggested that the exercises be built around such difficulties.

5. The Problem of Translation. In the prescribed program, it is insisted that Arabic be avoided as far as possible in the English classes of the Preparatory school. Only very difficult words or structures, whose meanings are impossible to render clearly in English, are to be translated. As soon as this has been done, the Arabic equivalents should be dropped and the class should concentrate on the English ones.

Data from the interviews, however, indicate that translation into Arabic is considered a basic means for giving meanings. A similar conclusion was reached from the observations, in which all teachers were observed to resort to translation in varying degrees.

Presumably the monolingual method of teaching English is an ideal, difficult to achieve. This is because it requires training and experience on the part of the English teachers. They must be skillful

90 Ne^{ll} Young and Fredrick Mem^{ott}, Methods in Elementary English, p. 230.

enough to create real or vicarious situations that can function as substitutes for the Arabic equivalents.

According to Charles Fries, teachers who translate when teaching English as a foreign language take for granted that each word in the vernacular has an exact equivalent in English.

A simple Arabic word, however like ktab which is a symbol of a concrete thing does not cover exactly the same area of meaning as that of its English equivalent book. The English word can be used to form a booking clerk, a book keeper, to book a seat, a book stall, etc. but ktab is never used in such situations. Fries stated that except for some highly technical words, there is no exact word for word correspondence in meaning between any two languages.

It is also often mistakenly assumed that a word has one basic meaning, and that all other meanings are figurative or illegitimate. The following examples, show the multiplicity of meanings of some common words:

Get

1. Where did you get the money?
2. I don't get your meaning.
3. The news got about.
4. She got ahead in class.
5. Please let me get by.
6. He did not let me get off.

Time

1. What time is it?
2. We had a bad time.
3. This is a good time to speak.

4. The watch kept good time.
5. That is ten times better.
6. They consulted a time table to find out the times of the trains.

Running

1. The man was running, not walking.
2. The chauffeur left the engine running when he parked the car.
3. The watch was running, about a minute fast each day.
4. Only two candidates were running in the last election. 91

These sentences make it clear that the contexts determine the real meanings of a word. They further indicate that learning the Arabic equivalents of English words is a practice that may lead to using English words within Arabic patterns.

In actuality, the most deleterious effect of translation comes through the Arabic words that have more than one equivalent in English. The following sentences illustrate this fact:

1. I do not know; my answer depends on the envelopes (circumstances is meant).
2. Will you take lunch with me on my arithmetic (account is meant).
3. The English language is a fence in his way (barrier is meant).
4. The child has many games (meaning toys).
5. It is wintering outside (raining is meant).

The above-mentioned errors are primarily caused by learning

91 Charles Fries, Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, p. 39-41.

English through translation. The speakers have extended the limited areas of meanings covered by the English words to the limits of the wider areas of meaning covered by the Arabic ones.

Furthermore differences in the structures of Arabic and English are another source of trouble, as follows:

1. I have not seen him from Monday; (instead of: I have not seen him since Monday).
2. I went ago five days; (instead of: I went five days ago).
3. I have not eaten since five days; (instead of: I have not eaten for five days).
4. I am afraid from the dog; (instead of: I am afraid of the dog).
5. I saw a dream; (instead of: I dreamt).
6. He went on his legs; (instead of: He went on foot).
7. Went the boy to school; (instead of: The boy went to school).

These mistakes actually made by adult students at the Middle East Airlines School, are the result of imposition of Arabic structure on the English structures. Any new Arabic-speaking student is apt to commit these mistakes. The danger is that they will be encouraged and established by translation rather than eliminated by sufficient drill in the correct English patterns.

The pedagogical implication of the foregoing discussion is the exclusion of translation from the teaching-learning process. The question that may arise is:

Can it be done?

Teachers, as was shown, have been using translation for years, as an easy way to give meanings in a class where audio-visual aids and

skill in using the mono-lingual method are lacking.

The teachers, therefore, should be provided with procedures that will help them to eliminate the need for translation. They should further be enabled to judge the point at which translation becomes a detriment to the students' ability to produce and recognize the language.

To begin with, the teacher should keep in mind that the tendency of students to translate is a natural seeking to understand a new experience in terms of the old. Thus there is nothing intrinsically bad about translation.

Translation, however, becomes a real obstacle on the path to mastery of the language when it is established firmly as a habit on the part of students, that is, when it becomes the sole means for understanding any structure, form or pattern of the language. To measure the intensity of this habit two criteria may be used:

1. The amount of time devoted to translation at a given stage of the learning activities.
2. The type of mental process used in recognition of the meaning of a given sentence. That is, is it a single operation (English-English) or a double operation (Arabic-English)?

In the third year Preparatory, students should be able to think in English. This implies that their mental activity while listening, talking, reading, or writing is a single operation: fusing the linguistic symbols with situations, experiences, etc., and not with Arabic equivalents. According to James Tharp, translation as a teaching activity should be eliminated, otherwise the students will not be able "to read large amounts of material with speed and comprehension to a degree

approximating vernacular reading."⁹²

In the light of the above statement, the question of the English teachers becomes: How much translation are we allowed to do?

Robert Howling suggests that translation is necessary only in the first stages of learning.⁹³ Charles Fries, in the intensive course for teaching English to adults of Latin America insists that the language of the pupil should be avoided as much as possible.⁹⁴ Pauline Rojas in her book written for use in secondary schools, approves of the use of translation for explanatory purposes and for checking pupil comprehension when a certain situation does not define the meaning of a linguistic item associated with it.⁹⁵ Lawrence Faucet thinks that translation is an excellent method for examining students' comprehension.⁹⁶ Harold Palmer thinks also that the complete exclusion of translation is an uneconomical and unnatural procedure.⁹⁷ Leslie Leavitt has said that translation may be used when non-translation leads to confusion or excessive loss of time.⁹⁸

92 James Thrap, Encyclopedia of Educational Research, p. 471 A.

93 Director of the Special Form English class at the American University of Beirut. Interview, January 15, 1958.

94 Charles Fries, The Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, p. 7.

95 Pauline Rojas, Teacher's Guide Volume I & II, Preface, p. VII.

96 Lawrence, Faucet, The Teaching of English in the Far East, p. 117.

97 Harold Palmer, The Scientific Study of Language, p. 93.

98 Leslie Leavitt, Principal of the International College, Interview, November 12, 1958.

In comment, it can be said that the value of the monolingual approach has been professed implicitly in all of these opinions. There exists however, no complete agreement on the method or the amount of translation the teacher is allowed. The teacher is therefore in need of some techniques and guiding principles to help him adopt the monolingual approach as thoroughly as possible:

1. The teacher should have at his disposal sufficient audio-visual aids to illustrate the meanings of all the object and action words that may be anticipated.

The English teaching staff in every school should, therefore make a survey of all the object and action words in the prescribed textbooks. Then, with the co-operation of the students, he should collect charts, photos, pictures, objects, specimens, etc. representing the words.

These aids should be classified in categories, each category for a textbook of the prescribed series. The aids for a certain textbook should be arranged in alphabetical order and kept in a labelled locker.

The pictures, charts, photos, etc. should all be mounted on thick pieces of cardboard so as to render them relatively permanent. Objects which would be damaged by repeated handling should be adequately protected.

2. The meanings of new words can be explained by one or more of the following methods presented by Leavitt:

A. By direct association; B. by translations; C. by definition;
99
D. by synonym and antonym; and, E. by use in a sentence.

99 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p. 38.

A. By direct association. The visual aids collected and classified should be used for this purpose. If the word is an action word, the teacher may produce an action or gesture to indicate the meaning of the word. He should beware, however, of multiple interpretations of certain pictures.

B. By translation. According to Leavitt, the teacher should resort to translation when he thinks that non-translation leads to confusion or excessive loss of time.

When the teacher doubts that his students have understood the exact meaning of a word, he should give the Arabic equivalents. In doing so he should study its main differences in structures and usages in English as compared with Arabic, and he should draw his students' attention to them.

As prescribed in the present program, once the Arabic equivalent is given, the teacher should drop it and concentrate on the English one. The method of establishing patterns should be used in this connection to help establish the proper patterns and to draw the students' attention away from the Arabic.

Where it seems appropriate, it is probably a good practice to encourage students to draw pictures instead of writing the Arabic words.

If the habit of writing English words on one side of the page and Arabic words on the other side is firmly founded, teachers should insist that students write at least one sentence for each English word given. Leavitt says:

100 Leslie Leavitt, Principal of the International College, Beirut, Lebanon. Interview, November 12, 1958.

"Vocabulary should be connected with the text, not isolated; its most common meanings should be taught first; many illustrations should be given; frequent revisions should be insisted upon. If word lists are made, the teacher must inspect the notebooks at intervals and check both accuracy and neatness."¹⁰¹

In translating English sentences, word for word translation should be avoided. Only the general meaning of the sentence should be given. Thus students are to be led little by little to view the structures of each of the two languages as completely different.

In the reading lessons, no whole chapter or paragraph should be translated. If students cannot understand the reading lesson reasonably well, then it is beyond their scope of patterns and vocabulary.

C. By definition. This can be an effective method for giving meaning, but its use is restricted primarily to advanced students, because it demands a broad vocabulary to understand a new word through the use of other well-known words. Hence, if he uses them, the teacher should modify the definitions stated in standard dictionaries to fit the backgrounds of his students. Thorndike Century Beginning Dictionary¹⁰² by E.L. Thorndike is very helpful in this respect, as it is written in simple language for the use of beginners.

D. By synonym and antonym. Leavitt says:

"Not all words have synonyms, and as few words have exactly the same shade of meaning, a wrong impression may be given. This method is good for supplementing,¹⁰³ -- supplementing other techniques.

101 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p.36.

102 D. Appleton-Century, Inc., New York, 1945.

103 Leslie Leavitt, The Teaching of English to Foreign Students, p.38.

E. By use in a sentence. It should be emphasized that giving meanings by one or more of the above-stated techniques constitutes only the initial step in learning a word on the productive level.

New words should be used in sentences. "This is one of the most valuable methods because it gives practice in the use of the word and practical use is our ultimate objective."¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, sentences on a certain word should be presented in harmony with a certain pattern so as to facilitate understanding them, and constructing analogous sentences, as follows:

A. George was sick, so I went to his house and visited him.

- My teacher was sick also, so I went and visited him.

- He visited America last summer.

B. My son went to visit his friend George.

- She went with her mother to visit her teacher.

- The class went to visit the museum.

Creating a situation. It should be noted that none of the techniques so far given for teaching the meanings of words actually re-creates a life-like situation. It is doubtful that using a word in a sentence or two defines clearly the essential meaning and usage of the word.

The following is an illustration of how the meanings of three abstract new words may be given in English through the creation of life-like situations:¹⁰⁵

104 Ibid.

105 These examples were tried on adult employees of the Middle East Airlines Company who had studied English for a year.

A. Teaching the word Idea.

Situation 1. "There was a fire in this room. No one could go out of the room. Then a student said, 'Let us jump from the window,' we all said, " oh..... that is a good idea."

Comments. Although the situation was repeated twice, students seemed unable to understand the meaning of the word.

Situation 2. "A child was walking across the street very slowly. A car came near him. He was afraid. He stopped. But a policeman shouted at him, 'Hurry up.' A man was looking from his shop. He said, 'Oh that is a good idea.'"

Comments. The example was repeated twice, and students seemed to have a vague idea of the meaning.

Situation 3. "A mechanic at the hangar cut his finger. He was crying. Red blood was flowing from his cut. Then one of his friends said, 'Stop the blood. Put your thumb on the cut.' I said, 'Oh, that is a good idea.'"

Comments. The example was repeated twice. Then one of the students shouted FIKRA which is the closest equivalent.

B. Teaching the word Promise.

Situation 1. "Once a rich man saw a poor boy. The boy said, 'Please give me five piasters.' The man said, 'I have no money now. Come to my house tomorrow. I promise to give you five piasters.' On the next day, the boy came to the house of the man. The man gave him five piasters as he promised."

Comments. At this point, one of the boys stood and said in Arabic, "Sir, I can not tell the meaning of this word in Arabic. But I

can give you a similar example to yours. "My foreman said, 'Come tomorrow to me. I promise to give you five pounds.' I came tomorrow, but he did not give me like he promised."

C. Teaching the word Excellent.

Situation 1. "We were five boys. Each of us wrote a lesson.

The teacher said,

Khalid got 60..... poor,
George got 70.....good,
Hasan got 80..... very good,
Mustafa got 90.... excellent."

Comments. A student said, "It means very, very good."

Although teachers may object to using this technique on the grounds that it is uneconomical, it is believed that it is one of the most effective natural methods for rendering meaning for the following reasons:

1. It associates the word with life like situations, thus helping to show the essence of its meaning.

2. It shows where, how, and when a word is used.

3. It serves as a review for numerous other words and patterns.

6. Creating an English-speaking Environment. One of the characteristics which distinguishes a course in a foreign language is that what is learned in the English class can be applied outside the class in everyday life. Hence, in an English-speaking environment, opportunities to use the language exceed greatly those in the officially prescribed sessions. In advanced stages such opportunities may become the

principal sources of improvement in the language.

Consequently, the need for creating an English-speaking environment where English is taught as a foreign language is very great. In fact, one of the fundamental obstacles for students at the Preparatory Public Schools is the lack of opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write the language. This is because Arabic is used extensively as a medium of communication and instruction, and as a result very little need exists for using English other than in the English language class itself. Therefore it is the duty of the English staff in every public school to create as many situations and opportunities to speak the language as possible. The following is a list of recommendations that are thought good in this respect:

1. Creating and English speaking environment in class. Because all the Syrian English teachers have learned English as a second language, they are naturally inclined to speak Arabic more freely than English. Thus they may habitually tend to prefer Arabic when communicating with their students. Teachers should beware of this. In class they should try to speak English as much as possible, and should never speak Arabic unless they are obliged to, in order to explain something for which the use of English would be futile. They should not respond to students who speak Arabic to them after their first year of instruction in English.

It is suggested that the teacher make a wooden square on which Speak English is written. This square is awarded to the first student who speaks Arabic during the class period. It is passed on to the next

one, and so on. The student with whom it remains at the end of the lesson may be required to pay twenty-five piasters to the student society at school.

106

2. Creating an English speaking environment outside the class.

The teacher should be faithful to his educational purposes. If he believes that an English speaking environment is essential for better learning of English, he should contribute towards this end. That is, he should speak English outside the class as well as in it. Further, he should encourage his students to speak and write their notes, messages, etc. in English, by setting the example himself.

3. Creating and English speaking environment in social activities. These are social activities conducted by students under the supervision of the teacher.

It is suggested that an English club be organized for these activities. A teacher should act as an advisor for this club, which might be headed and directed by a student elected for this purpose. In the present prescribed program the following is mentioned:

Every Preparatory school is strongly recommended to establish an English club where activities linked to the English language are to be practised. A club will be a meeting place for the pupils for extramural activities. A library of English supplementary Readers can be established in the club besides a collection of gramophone records, films and filmstrips and pictures and photographs.

107

106 This idea was successfully used a few years ago by a teacher in Hama.

107 See Appendix A, pp. 144-145.

In connection with an English club, it is suggested that one of the rules be students speak only in English while they are inside the club. A sign reading Speak English might be posted near the door to remind students of this rule.

Other activities of the club could be:

1. Inviting teachers from other schools or authorities to give short English talks on various subjects. 108
2. Holding listening sessions involving English plays, conversations, talks, etc. Both students and teachers could be invited to attend.
3. Showing films or filmstrips.
4. Writing a column in English in the school newspaper.
5. Helping backward students to prepare their English homework.

In closing, teachers are reminded that these are only a few devices to create an English-speaking environment. It is hoped that they may serve as prototypes for the development of their ideas by the teacher himself to suit his particular educational purposes and environmental conditions.

D. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE STATUS OF TEACHERS

1. Introductory. The following section is devoted to some suggested procedures for the improvement of the general status of teachers by means of in-service training and orientation.

2. An in-service training programme. The proposed in-service programme is a course which aims at providing the English teachers in Syria with basic pedagogical linguistic knowledge.

There exist two possible ways of conducting the course:

First, it is felt that a total of twelve weeks of in-service training conducted during the summer is sufficient to provide a teacher of English with the basic linguistic knowledge needed. For this purpose, two teaching centers, each headed by an instructor, might be set up, one in Damascus and the other in Aleppo. Each of the instructors would be responsible for teaching about a hundred teachers. Fifty teachers could be trained from the first of June to the fifteenth of July, and the other fifty from the fifteenth of July to the thirtieth of August.

Each group of fifty could be divided into classes of twenty-five.

Three periods of fifty minutes each could be given daily to each group. Thus the teaching load of the instructors would be six periods a day. Since there are about 200 teachers of English in Syria, this proposal would train all of them in one summer.

Second, it is suggested as an alternative plan that the inspector schedule a month in each of the nine district-centers of the country over an academic year, which lasts for about nine months.

Every night, five times a week, a session of three hours headed by the inspector could be held for the teachers of the district. This plan has the advantage of providing an opportunity for the inspector to attend some lessons during the day for the purpose of observing and advising teachers at work.

A combination of the two schemes might be found feasible.

The contents of the Course. The proposed in-service training course should be a survey of the basic thoughts and theories of modern linguistic science and linguistic pedagogy. It should include all of the techniques and practices that help to put the results of linguistic science into effect.

It is suggested that the theoretical part of the course deal with the following:

1. The nature and definition of language.
2. The relation of writing to speech.
3. The change of language through time and place.
4. The meaning of language mastery.
5. The relation between vocabulary and patterns.
6. The differences between Arabic and English.
7. The effects of translation.
8. Various theories on learning a language.
9. Various theories on learning reading and writing.

The practical part of the course should deal with the following:

1. The teacher in the classroom.
2. The objectives of English teaching.
3. The initial teaching-learning activities.
4. Techniques for teaching listening.
5. Techniques for teaching speaking.
6. Techniques for teaching reading.
7. Techniques for teaching writing.
8. How to eradicate translation.
9. How to use the prescribed textbook.

These lists of proposed contents for the course are seen as flexible suggestions which can be modified and enriched by supplementary ideas gained from the inspectors' reports and their experiences with the teachers and their problems.

3. Improved supervisory practices. In an interview the English Language Inspector summarized his duties and functions as follows:

1. He is responsible for the selection, transfer, and promotion of the English language teachers.

2. He bans or recommends the use of any English textbook.

3. He visits the teachers of English at work to supply teaching suggestions.

4. He writes official reports about the teachers and their progress and submits them to the chief of inspectors.

Supervisory practices as checked by observation. The following procedures of inspection are the results of a personal tour with the inspector to a preparatory school in Damascus on February 9, 1958:

1. The inspector entered the classroom and sat in a back seat.

2. He wrote down, in his notebook, an outline of the lesson and a few detailed observations. This was followed by filling out an official report form. Under General observations, he summarized the criticism of the lesson. Then, under Progress Since Previous Inspection, remarks were put down comparing the teacher's previous practices with the practices being observed.

3. During the recess period following the lesson, the inspector

conferred for about thirty minutes with the teacher about the lesson which had been taught.

Later, in commenting on the conference, the inspector said that he felt responsible for guiding the teachers to a better knowledge of linguistic pedagogy. He said that he used to supply his advice once, twice, thrice or more. In cases where teachers showed no progress, he resorted to the following means of punishment, beginning with the least severe and continuing down the list as required:

Reprimand.

Reproach.

Warning.

Five per cent deduction from montly salary.

Ten per cent deduction from monthly salary.

Discharge.

In conclusion, the inspector said that the standard of the teachers was horrible, and that an in-service training course was needed.

Comments on the conference. From the afore-mentioned observations and comments, some of the implicit underlying assumptions of the Syrian Inspectorate Activities may be inferred:

1. The function of the inspector is not only to guide teachers but also to evaluate their efficiency, to rate them in reports, and to punish them for failure to follow instructions.

2. The manifest use of punishment for not complying with the inspector's instructions establishes the certain conviction in all parties concerned that teachers are looked upon as negligent workers who need an authority to tell them what to do and not to do.

3. The interest in the progress which is made between two observations implies that the inspector conceives one of his functions to be the correction of the teacher's faults.

4. The corrective linguistic notions were suggested by the Inspector to the teacher in an authoritative manner. Some seemed rather meaningless to the teacher, since he lacked a comprehensive linguistic background.

5. Due to the fact that visits are few and last for only a few minutes, no rapport is established between the teachers and the inspector. The main objective of the teachers, therefore, becomes to conceal their mistakes and difficulties from the inspector.

Recommendations for the improvement of the English language supervision in Syria. The following is a summary of procedures suggested to improve the situation within the frame of reference of the present system:

1. Supervision, as Krimly stated, is called tafteesh in Syria, which is equivalent to snoopervision. Thus it implies looking about
110
in a sneaking manner for regulation violations. Supervision, however, according to Barr et. al., has the purpose of the improvement of the quality of instruction primarily through promoting the professional
111
growth of teachers and secondarily through correcting their deficiencies.
112

2. The inspector should consider himself a democratic leader. This means implicitly that the inspector should consider teachers as

110 Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 2.

111 Barr et. al., Supervision, p. 5.

112 Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 119.

human beings who have the potentialities to grow if they are guided in accord with certain psycho-social principles.

3. To be qualified for leadership in school supervision the inspector must not only have a background in linguistic science and pedagogy, but he ".... must possess a thorough understanding of educational theories and practices."¹¹³

4. The number of visits per teacher should increase. At least three visits should be scheduled: one at the beginning of the year, the second around the middle, and the third near the end. In the cases of some teachers these might be as much as a visit a month, until the teacher achieves substantial progress. If this recommendation is to be carried out, the need for increasing the number of supervisors and relieving them of their administrative work is obvious.

5. Each visit should be long enough to allow the formation of a reliable statement on the teacher's abilities and his competence, and to establish rapport with him. It should be performed in such a way that the least disturbance results. Krimly said:

The wise inspector can very well enter quietly with a smile and a simple nod, sit in the back of the room near a student, listen politely with interest, take as few notes as possible, then slip out in the same quiet manner, if the recitation is still in progress, or else he may genuinely but briefly, say some nice words to the teacher.¹¹⁴

According to Krimly, announced visitations, motivate the teacher to show his best in the presence of the inspector. The joy of

113 Ibid., p. 121.

114 Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 132.

success and the good impressions the teacher leaves on the inspector may create confidence in the teacher and lead him to more success later.

6. For observations to be fruitful, they should be followed by a conference during which the inspector suggests to the teacher some procedures to be followed.

7. The inspector should enter the conference with the objective of analyzing the teacher's work and assisting him in preparing a program for developing and improving himself.

Good points must be emphasized and should constitute the first step of the discussion. The inspector's commendations should always be sincere, lest the teacher should consider them flattery. 115

Points to be corrected should also be mentioned simply. They should always be supported with explanatory statements.

The teacher should be given ample opportunity to give the reasons for the methods he follows.

The inspector should listen carefully to the teacher, and should make an attempt to understand the reasons given. It is quite possible that the inspector himself might learn something from the teacher!

The following questions suggested by Krimly for the use of inspectors give the teacher a chance to evaluate his own accomplishment:

What do you think of the lesson? where do you think you succeeded? If you were to teach the lesson again, what modifications would you propose? Don't you think we grow by reflecting on our own mistakes? 116

They further help the teacher to view the inspector as a co-worker whose sole objective is to provide assistance through the utilizations of his background knowledge in education and psychology.

115 Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 144.

116 Thomas Briggs, Improving Instruction, p. 357. Quoted by Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 145.

According to Krimly, the inspector should avoid a heated debate because it may result in a defensive mind, hostility, and ego involvement.¹¹⁷ In revealing his opinion, the inspector may well initiate his recommendations in the following manner:

The suggestion: "If I were you,....."
The question: "Have you ever tried....?"
The reference: "Now, in Rochester they...."
The reminiscence: "I had good luck once by...."
The recall: "Do you remember the lesson we saw....?"
The anecdote: "Did you ever hear the story about..?" 118

In closing, the inspector should always keep in mind that any discussion with the teacher for the purpose of guidance should be based on sound psycho-educational principles. In general, it is thought that the democratic method of conducting a conference is more likely to be successful in achieving its objectives than the authoritarian method, as the authoritarian method is devoid of the give and take which characterize productive learning situations.

E. SUMMING UP

Many procedures for the improvement of English teaching for Beginners in the Syrian Sector have been suggested in this chapter. The underlying criteria utilized in making the suggestions are inexpensiveness, usefulness, and practicality.

First, no expensive procedures are suggested. The suggested teaching aids are relatively cheap and within the budget of a normal school.

117 Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 46.

118 Thomas Briggs, Improving Instruction, p. 376. Quoted by Khalid Krimly, School Supervision in Syria, p. 148.

Second, the suggested procedures are useful for the Syrian teachers because they are designed to help them develop English proficiency step by step within the scope of the prescribed textbook and instructions.

Third, in making the suggestions, limitations imposed by the physical and social structures of the teaching situations in the Syrian sector have been taken into consideration.

The suggestions are of two kinds: Proposals to assist the teachers in their daily teaching activities; and proposals for improving their general status.

The foundation on which the teaching suggestions are based is the establishment of the linguistic pattern. The chapter emphasized that one of the important functions of the English teacher in the Syrian Preparatory Public Schools is to help the students to develop the patterns of the prescribed textbook within the scope of the vocabulary of the textbook. It was shown how a variety of exercises and drills contributes towards the achievement of this objective. Some of these exercises and drills are designed for the development of listening ability and still others for the development of speaking ability. The whole teaching-learning process is discussed in detail to show the steps to be followed from the initial activities stage to the normal conversation stage. Pertinent problems such as the proper use of the textbook exercises and the related reading and conversational materials, the proper use of grammatical terms, and the improvement of pronunciation, are treated extensively. The discussion of the practical teaching procedures includes analysis of the problem of translation and ends with a consideration of ways to create an English speaking environment.

The study closes with a discussion of proposals for an in-service training course and improved supervisory practices.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In conclusion it can be said that English teaching in the Syrian Sector is characterized by the existence of a large number of untrained teachers who nevertheless seem aware somewhat of many modern linguistic ideas. It is hoped that this study may help them to adopt definite guiding principles and teaching procedures for dealing more effectively with the language teaching situations which confront them.

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SYLLABUS OF 1957

THE PREPARATORY STAGE

General Aim

The aim of teaching English in the Preparatory School is to produce, in three years, an individual who is able to listen with understanding to spoken English, to speak current English correctly, to read with recognition the common words and structures of English and to write a few sentences about a simple subject or incident. In the Preparatory Stage the pupil should be prepared for these four aspects of the language, and the preparatory school instruction should form one unit. These pupils whose education is to terminate by the end of the Third Year Preparatory will have acquired the basic knowledge of the language that will help them in their various vocations, whereas those who will proceed to the secondary stage will have established a sound basis of English and will be able to build their secondary education on it.

I. The First Year Preparatory

I - Speech-Training as Basis of Work in the First Year Preparatory. On first introducing English in the First Year the method is

mainly based on speech-training. Speech here has two functions, first the pupils are trained to listen to English, and secondly they are trained to speak English.

Language, therefore, has to be introduced, in the first half of the First Year, through speaking. To attain this end the early lessons have to be introduced with the utmost accuracy on the part of the teacher. The topics of conversation have to be mastered by the teacher himself particularly as regards pronunciation, stress and intonation.

Before ever conversing with the pupils the teacher has to be able to speak fluently, naturally and clearly, as he will always be the model that the pupils imitate.

Language according to present-day linguists, is looked upon as various groups of words or patterns. Until recently the attention of those engaged in language research was mainly focused on vocabulary. According to one method it was assumed that English was composed of individual words, and if these words were learnt the pupils would easily understand and read the language. At present, however it has been found that the order and arrangement of words in the English sentence are the main difficulties of a foreign language learner. The combination of a number of words in a certain order is called a pattern or a structure; and the basic patterns of English have been discovered and graded as models. Beginners should be trained in these patterns through conversation; and this is the main task of the teacher in the First Year Preparatory.

Emphasis in that year should be laid on speech so as to introduce the fundamental patterns. Speech should be ahead of reading and

writing. According to a linguist, "the pupil in that stage, should never meet anything in print which is unfamiliar to him in speech. This rule should be strictly followed in the first half of the First Year.

In teaching these patterns the teacher of English has to utilize his skill as an educator. Language here should be demonstrable, and for each pattern introduced the teacher should use his skill as a demonstrator.

The pupils should be able to associate the sound of a word, a structure directly with the object or the action meant; and for this end the teacher has to use various means of illustration or audio-visual aids and to stage appropriate situations. Such aids and situations should be planned before the lesson, and the language used should be real and active.

A lesson based on this method should never be mere reproduction of the sentences in the prescribed books, it requires all the resources of the teacher to choose the right audio-visual aids or means of illustration and to create the necessary situations; and the success or failure of such a lesson will distinguish the good from the bad teacher.

To be well-qualified to teach according to this method teachers are recommended to apply their knowledge of phonetics systematically. Gramophone records for the reproduction of the fundamental Patterns of English are now in use. It has been proved through experiment that such records can be used for the benefit of beginners, and teachers are recommended to get these records and play them several times to their classes. Besides the interest these records will arouse in the students, they are bound to add to the atmosphere of English conversation in class.

In addition to this speech-training there are other oral activities that can be practised in the First Year stage. The pupils interest in song, rhyme, word-games and drama should be utilized.

This is the stage where a little rhyme or verse or song can be a great ehlp to correct pronunciation and intonation. It is not necessary for the pupils to know every word in a given rhyme or song.

A general idea of the meaning is sufficient. Playing a record of the song or rhyme creates a pleasurable atmosphere, besides providing an accurate model for imitation.

Another useful activity is dialogue which forms an introduction to little plays.

The importance of chorus work at the initial stage need hardly be emphasized. Besides saving time and rallying the pupils interest when it begins to flag, it provides a welcome change from the daily routine of the English lesson. Care, however should be taken lest chorus work should dteriorate into mechanical parrot-work. A few brief questions will suffice to ascertain whether the pupils understand what they repeat after the teacher.

Another danger of chorus work is that individual faults of pronunciation or tone or stress may be undetected in group repetition. To guard against this danger chorus work may be done in small groups, the teacher listening attentively to detect faulty performance and to correct it.

2. Reading and Writing

In the Initial Stage (First Half of the First Year Preparatory).

The Oral Stage prepares the way for reading practice. Oral activities familiarize pupils with words and structures in their spoken

form. This creates a functional language background that helps the reading process. It is a mistake to hurry pupils into reading before such a language background has been created. Pupils should at first understand what words and structures mean in the spoken form. And from this they can proceed to reading.

Thus after a number of patterns have been mastered by the pupils reading can be introduced. For reading material at this stage, some of the sentences already learnt during previous conversation lessons are to be taken as a basis for reading. The unit of reading should always be the sentence; and from the sentence develops the study of words and syllables. Reading here is the natural step which follows the mastery of the patterns already introduced as spoken language.

The teacher starts his reading lessons by writing some sentences on the blackboard or by preparing some others on cards printed in large bold letters. The teacher's writing on the blackboard should be of the printscript kind and should be according to one uniform style. The cards should be prepared by the teacher on strong cardboard if possible so that they may be used for future revision. As mentioned before, the reading material should be based on sentences or structures already familiar to the pupils as speech. Reading from the blackboard or the cards will prepare the way for reading from the books.

Likewise the pupils should begin writing by copying sentences or structures and not by copying individual letters or words only. Here it is essential to note that it is of the utmost importance to the teacher himself to develop the ability to write neatly and clearly without undue waste of time. It is most essential also that his or her

handwriting on the blackboard or on the cards be of one recognized type, as this forms the first model for the pupils. Printscript is the recognized form in the First Year Preparatory; and four principles have to be considered in teaching handwriting to the pupils:

First: The sentences should be written on lines,

Second: The letters should be of one uniform size,

Third: The vertical strokes of letters should all be at the same angle, and,

Fourth: There should be proper spacing between words.

3. Reading and Writing in the Second Half of the First Year Preparatory

It is assumed that the pupils in the first half of the school year will have read either from the blackboard or from cards most of the words and structures previously learnt in the oral stage. In the second half of the school year more reading material is to be given and more periods should be assigned to reading. Here comes the transition step to reading from the books and we should be quite clear about the steps to be taken in any reading lesson so as to insure the best result.

It is now agreed that comprehension is the most important aim of reading. The process of reading should always be divided into two major steps: first silent reading and secondly reading aloud. In the first step the learners have to practise reading for themselves and the teacher has to make sure that his pupils understand what they have read.

In the second step the pupils can read or reproduce aloud what they have already read silently. In the preparatory school no reading aloud should be performed until the material itself has been accurately understood. Reading aloud is a further step in which is demonstrated the ability to produce a sentence or short passage aloud, with the right intonation and stress.

This principle has to be followed not only in this stage but also throughout the higher classes of the preparatory and secondary education.

If we agree with on this assumption as regards the two steps of a reading process it follows that a reading lesson should proceed along the following lines:

1. Pronunciation by the teacher and reproduction by the pupils of words and patterns newly introduced into the section.

2. Silent reading by the class, making use of the Arabic equivalent or English synonyms given in the book.

3. Comprehension test by means of which the teacher can make sure that the pupils have understood the passage.

4. Model reading by the teacher.

5. Reading aloud by the pupils with full attention to right phrasing and intonation.

6. Further practice in vocabulary and patterns by oral reproduction.

Needless to say, these steps are quite flexible; the teacher may occasionally find it more convenient to devise more steps, or conversely, to drop one or more of the steps given.

As regards writing in the second half of the First Year, the pupils at this stage can be trained to do more exercises in handwriting and in simple form of dictation, answering to questions, filling-in spaces completion of sentences and simple sentence-building. The printscript form of writing is to be continued until the end of the first year and good handwriting should be required in the written exercises.

4. Translation in the First Year Preparatory

Translation should not be considered a means of teaching English in the Preparatory Stage. We must remember that language is a skill; and skill can be acquired only by practice. Arabic should be avoided as far as possible not only in the early stage but also throughout the periods of the preparatory and the secondary schools. From past experience we have realised that too much translation encouraged both teacher and pupil to depend wholly on Arabic. Indeed many of the English lessons were a word-for-word rendering of the English text into Arabic form, and Arabic was used freely to the detriment of English.

A new English word or structure may be translated into Arabic or first being introduced especially if it is difficult or impossible to give its meaning in English. Yet once a word or a structure has been introduced the teacher's duty is to drop the Arabic equivalent and focus his pupil's attention on the English word or structure. In an English lesson the rule is that the pupils hear, speak, read and write English only, Arabic should be an exception. Linguistic exercises have to be devised so as to drive home patterns and structures

already dealt with in conversation and reading. Arabic should never be used in such exercises.

5. Grammar in the First Year Preparatory

If the pupils are to be brought up on practising the language as speech little need will be felt for the study of grammar. In fact grammar may tend to be a retarding factor rather than a helping one at this stage when the language is being introduced.

As yet a large number of the pupils will naturally compare Arabic with English structures. Such comparison, after a long period of practice, should not be ignored, and the teacher can give his pupils a few grammatical terms such as singular and plural, present, past and future, pronouns, subject, and predicate, etc. It should be remembered, however, that the study of grammar is of little value as regards the active use of the language and that such elementary terms are not to be provided until the pupils have felt the need for them after a long period of practice.

In using such grammatical terms in the following syllabus we are referring to language patterns and not grammatical rules. The pupils may get any long practice in a certain pattern without knowing the grammatical term itself. Such terms are used in the syllabus for the benefit of the teacher; but except for the simplest terms the pupils need not be taught the grammatical terms in detail.

6. Variety in One Lesson in the First Year

It is essential to note that the division of the study of a language into Reading, Conversation, Grammar, Written Work, etc., is

purely artificial, and it is never intended to give the impression that each of these phases of language learning is an end in itself. Teachers should always remember in class that what they are teaching is a language, and not merely a separate branch of it. In real life language is one whole, and the teacher should always keep this concept of language before him.

It follows from this that varied activities during each English lesson are highly desirable, not only because they prevent or reduce monotony and fatigue but because they impress the idea of the unity of the language on the learner's mind.

Each period in the preparatory stage should be divided into two or three different activities of the language. Thus a lesson in the first two months can be divided into the following:

25 minutes	Speech Training
10 minutes	Rhymes, Games, etc.
10 minutes	Reading

Later the lesson can be divided as follows:

25 minutes	Speech Training
10 minutes	Reading
10 minutes	Writing

Later in the First Year lessons can be varied as follows:

20 minutes	Reading or Writing
25 minutes	Conversation or Recitation

Such variety in one period should be introduced in the lessons throughout the Preparatory Stage.

The teacher's time-table should be subdivided according to the above divisions.

THE SYLLABUS

First Year Preparatory
(Six Period per Week)

First Half of the Year

Oral Work: 5 periods per week

Written Work: 1 period per week

Oral work should include:

- Giving and carrying out orders.

- Speech-training and conversation within the vocabulary and structures of the set book.

- Reading from cards or from the blackboard.

- Rhymes and songs, with the help of the records.

Written work should include:

- Transcription and handwriting.

Second Half of the Year

Oral Work: 4 periods per week

Written Work: 2 periods per week

Oral Work should include:

- Reading from the set books.

- Conversation based on the vocabulary and patterns of the set book, as well as on simple objects, situations and topics.

- Listening to simple poems and songs. And delivering them in chorus or individually. Gramophone records should be used wherever possible.

Training in Language Patterns:

The following patterns should be practised:

- Questions and answers in the affirmative and negative.
- Verb patterns (simple and continuous tenses)
- The use of certain Nouns, Pronouns, Adverbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions as prescribed.

- The Numerals.

Written work should include:

- Handwriting.
- Answering questions on the reading conversation lessons.
- Dictation of short passages from the set book after preparation in class or at home.
- Filling-in spaces with or without word lists.
- Completion of sentences.
- Sentence-building, as preparatory to composition writing.

II. The Second Year Preparatory

Work in the Second year is the continuation of work in the First. The main principles regarding speech, reading, writing, translation and grammar are to be strictly followed. More variety of exercises both oral and written should be introduced.

In the Second Year, however, emphasis is definitely laid on

Reading and the reading lesson is to proceed along the steps outlined in the First Year syllabus. Here, however the reading lesson can also be introduced through a conversation or summary of the material already covered. After reading a certain short story the teacher can summarize the whole story or get the pupils to summarize it.

The conversation following a reading lesson is of the utmost importance and this has to be planned. It should be a means to link the language learnt to the pupils' experiences. If the subject deals with persons or objects unfamiliar to the pupils the teacher is advised to apply the patterns and ideas to the pupils surroundings. Here again audio-visual aids and means of illustration are of great importance. Records, films and filmstrips can be used to keep up the pupils' interest in their work.

As regards handwriting the printscript has to give way to the cursive type of writing. The translation from the printscript to cursive type may be hard; but it has to be achieved by the end of the Second Year. In this period the pupils have to imitate recognized models, and the teacher has to write and correct the pupils' work in one uniform cursive type.

The principles laid previously for the First Year about translation have to be strictly followed in the Second Year. No translation is to be given. Arabic is to be resorted to only on introducing a word or a pattern; but the efforts in conversation and linguistic exercises should be directed to link the sound of words or patterns to the actual object of situation. The Arabic equivalent should be dropped as soon as possible.

The principles laid down for the First Year regarding grammar are to be strictly followed also in the Second Year. The scope of the language patterns is now to be widened so as to include irregular plurals, more conjunctions, prepositions, and adverbs. More practice should be given to the verb patterns, irregular verbs and passive and active. Needless to say, the pupils need not be acquainted with these grammatical terms. The teachers should consider them only as convenient labels of the pattern themselves.

Linguistic Exercises both oral and written in the Second Year are to be of a wider scope. Through such exercises the language patterns already learnt in reading are to be practised so that they may become part of the pupils' speech.

Some of the exercises are either preventive or remedial. In them the special difficulties of an Arabic-speaking pupil in learning English should be anticipated.

The correct forms of such difficulties should be repeated intelligently so as to correct any mistake that may have occurred or to guard against these mistakes before they ever take place.

The same types of linguistic exercises set for the First Year are to be given to the Second Year. Added to these there should be guided compositions, easy descriptions and very short dialogues and stories.

Second Year Preparatory

(Six periods per week)

Oral work: 4 periods per week

Written work: 2 periods per week

Oral work should include:

- A. Reading from the set books, as well as from suitable supplementary books available.
- B. Speech training and conversation based on the vocabulary of the set books as well as on simple objects, situations and topics.
- C. Listening to simple poems and songs, and reproducing them in chorus and individually. Gramophone records should be used wherever possible.
- D. Training in language patterns.

The following patterns should be practised:

- Singular and plural.
- Some irregular plurals.
- More conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions as indicated in the vocabulary.
- Practice in the verb patterns including the perfect tenses (present and past).
- Some irregular verbs.
- Active and passive voices (in the simplest forms).
- More question words.
- Subject and predicate.
- Simple clauses.

Written work should include:

- Cursive handwriting.
- Dictation on seen and unseen passages.
- Filling-in and completion exercises.
- Answering questions on unseen passages.

- Exercises based on the prescribed patterns.
- Vocabulary exercises, including the use of synonyms and opposites.
- Guided composition (between 6 and 10 lines) including easy descriptions, dialogues and stories.

III. The Third Year Preparatory

In the Third the principles laid in the First and Second Years should be strictly followed.

Here the reading lesson will be the basis of every other activity. The steps outlined in the First and Second Year syllabus may be followed, but the teacher can drop two or three of them on occasion. He may find his pupils, at times, in need of more practice in the new patterns and here he can lay more stress on the first step. At other times he may find the pupils anxious to read two sections together and this is permissible.

At the beginning of the Third year pupils are supposed to have acquired the mastery of most of the fundamental patterns of English. Consequently they can be very easily directed to read supplementary readers by themselves. School libraries are to be supplied with such Readers and it is part of the teacher's duty to see to it that these supplementary readers are read by the pupils in their free time. In case such readers are not kept in the school library the teacher can devise a plan by which a few books are purchased by a class, and every pupil is to be asked to read the books in turn. In this way the pupils will gain speed in reading and will enjoy reading new stories.

More language activities based on the reading lessons can be practised. Besides conversation which should be continued along the

lines laid in the Second Year syllabus, it is now time for story-telling and play-acting. As regards story-telling the teacher is recommended to get acquainted with a number of stories that can be reproduced with interest. Pupils can also be asked to tell stories of their own. Dramatizing a story and acting part of it is another activity that requires a great deal of preparation on the part of the teacher but will surely stimulate the pupils as actors and audience.

In that stage more film and filmstrips can be shown. Radio talk can be utilised and records of more advanced song and rhyme can be used. The language thus can be linked up to the experience of the pupils in their every day life.

In the Third Year more care is to be taken of handwriting. Marking written work should be done in the teacher's best handwriting and every written exercise should be considered a handwriting exercise.

As regards translation the principles laid in the First and Second Year syllabus have to be strictly followed.

As regards grammar the principles set for the First and Second Year hold good for the Third Year. More practice, however, has to be devoted to more difficult patterns such as Direct and Indirect Speech and Punctuation.

The Scope of Linguistic Exercises will be widened in the Third Year so as to include punctuation exercises, paragraphs on familiar topics, questions on unseen passages, simple description, narrative and dialogue, and simple friendly letters.

Every Preparatory School is strongly recommended to establish an English Club where activities linked to the English language are to

be practised. A club will be a meeting place for the pupils for extra-mural activities. A library of English Supplementary Readers can be established in the club besides a collection of gramophone records, films and filmstrips and pictures and photographs.

Third Year Preparatory

(Six periods per week)

Oral work: 4 periods per week

Written work: 2 periods per week

Oral work should include:

- A. Reading from the set books, as well as from suitable supplementary books available.
- B. Conversation based on the vocabulary of the set books, as well as on suitable topics.
- C. Acting, or play-reading, of simple plays or dramatization from the reading books.
- D. Listening to and delivering short poems, stories, and talks on familiar topics.
- E. Training in language patterns.

The following patterns should be practised:

- General revision of verb patterns in the active and passive voice.
- Sequence of tenses.
- Direct and indirect speech (Simple types).
- Punctuation.

Written work should include:

- Vocabulary exercises of various types.
- Exercises based on the prescribed patterns.
- Punctuation exercises.
- Paragraphs on familiar topics.
- Questions on unseen passages.
- Simple descriptions, narratives and dialogues.
- Simple friendly letters.

APPENDIX B

THE TRIAL QUESTIONS

Administered to five teachers in Aleppo

1. When you started teaching English, did you start by speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?
2. At what point, in the teaching process do you teach the alphabet? Why? Any difficulty?
3. Do you use any particular method in the teaching of reading? Why? Any difficulty?
4. Do you ask your students to translate from English into Arabic, when speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?
5. Do you ask your students to translate from Arabic into English? Why? Any difficulty?
6. How do you teach a new word? Do you give the Arabic equivalents? Why? Any difficulty?
7. How do you teach a grammatical rule? Why? Any difficulty?
8. What occupies most of your time, speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?
9. Do you devote some regular time to conversation? Why? Any difficulty?
10. In general what are the difficulties that face you in the teaching of English?

Responses to the Trial Questions

1. When you started teaching English, did you start by speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?

Responses

Speaking. It is the best approach, and no difficulty is involved.

4

Multiple approach, but the very initial steps are reading some words of the textbook. This is proved scientifically to be the best. It involves no difficulty because every skill reinforces the other.

1

Responses

2. At what point in the teaching process do you teach the alphabet? Why? Any difficulty?

After two to four weeks. This is the best because students would have mastered enough words and sentences which help them to fit the small units (letters of the alphabet) in the larger units (words and sentences). This method involves no difficulty. 1

In the beginning of the second term. (He could not give reasons and felt irritated.) 2

No alphabet at all, because it has no use. 1

When learning spelling is begun. (He felt irritated at the question why? and he did not answer it.) 1

3. Do you use any particular method in the teaching of reading? Why? Any difficulty?

No particular method. Drill on the new structures and sentences, oral reading by teacher, silent reading by students followed by questions to test comprehension, and then oral reading by students. 3

No particular method. Silent reading by students followed by questions to test comprehension, oral reading by teacher, and then oral reading by students. 2

4. Do you ask your students to translate from English into Arabic when speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?

No, but difficult words and sentences. No difficulty. 3

No, because it is not good. (He considered question on difficulty a silly one.) 2

5. Do you ask your students to translate from Arabic into English? Why? Any difficulty?

No, because it does not help learning English. 4

No. 1

6. How do you teach a new word? Do you give the Arabic equivalents? Why? Any difficulty?

Responses

- By action or by showing the object which it represents. No Arabic equivalent is given, and no difficulty is involved. (He could not give reasons.) 3
7. How do you teach a grammatical rule? Why? Any difficulty?
- Rule, then examples on it. This is the normal method used everywhere. It is the easiest to follow. 3
- Examples, then the rule. This is the best up to date method and it involves no difficulty at all. 2
8. What occupies most of your time, speaking, reading, or writing? Why? Any difficulty?
- Speaking because the Ministry insists on it. 4
- Reading. (They were not willing to answer the question why? or any difficulty?) 1
9. Do you devote some regular time to conversation? Why? Any difficulty?
- Yes, about two periods a week. (They requested not to be asked the questions why? or any difficulty?) 2
- Yes, about twenty minutes every lesson. This is good, based on personal experience. No difficulty is involved. 2
- No, it is taught through the lesson in the form of questions and answers on the reading lesson. This is good because it does not involve conscious effort. 1
10. In general what are the difficulties that face you in the teaching of English?
- Low salary. 5
- Transfer of teachers. 4
- Laziness of students. 4
- Sizes of classes. 3
- Strikes. 2

APPENDIX C

THE REVISED QUESTIONS

a. The Teaching Procedures and skills.

1. Presumably, you have a prescribed textbook which you are expected to finish by the end of the school year, with your students who do not know English at all:
 - A. Do you start by reading the alphabet written on the first page, or reading the first lesson or what else?
 - B. Do you teach your students how to read or write those words or sentences?
 - C. For how long does this activity last?
 - D. What follows next?
2. Later in the academic year, how do you teach a new lesson (lesson 5, 7, 8) of the textbook?
3. According to the author of the textbook, speaking and reading go hand in hand with writing in the textbook. Do you follow the same procedure?
4. Do you devote some regular time to conversation?
5. What occupies most of your time, speaking, reading, or writing?

b. The Teaching of the alphabet.

At what point in the teaching process do you teach the alphabet?

c. The Teaching of Meanings.

1. How do you teach a new word in the lesson?
2. How do you teach an abstract new word like new or bad?
3. Do your students have notebooks in which they write the English words and their Arabic equivalents?
4. Do you ask your students to translate from English into Arabic, when reading, speaking or writing? What do you ask them to translate?

5. Do you translate for them? What do you translate?
6. Do you ask your students to translate from Arabic into English? What do you ask them to translate?

d. The Teaching of grammatical rules.

How do you teach a grammatical rule?

e. The ingenuity of the teachers.

1. Do you think the schedule of the study sessions and other instructions issued and prescribed by the Ministry are best for your teaching purposes?
2. To what extent are you able to adhere to them?
3. Have you made any discoveries, which have helped a great deal in the teaching job, and which would help also other teachers? What are they?

f. Special problems and difficulties?

What are your problems and difficulties?

Check list

1. Sizes of classes.
2. Extent of audio-visual aids.
3. The nature of the English language itself.
4. Disciplinary problems.
5. Memory of students.
6. Laziness of students.
7. Individual differences.
8. Overcrowded curriculum.
9. Lack of interest on the part of students.
10. Need for linguistic knowledge on how to teach English.
11. Any others (please state them).

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