Republic of Iraq

Ministry of Higher

Education and

Scientific Research

Tikrit University

College of Education for Human Sciences

Department of English Language

Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (ELT)

M.A Students/ Methods of Teaching English

BY

Asst.Prof. Ibtisam Jassim Muhammed

THE QUEST FOR NEW METHODS

The teaching of English as a second or foreign language became an increasingly important activity after World War II. Immigrants, refugees, and foreign students generated a huge demand for English courses in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Australia. The role of English as a language of international communication had expanded rapidly by the1950s.

There was much greater mobility of peoples as a result of growth in air travel and international tourism. English was increasingly important in international trade and commerce. The role of English was supported by the growth of radio, film, and television. White (1988, 9) comments:

Whereas in medieval times English was the language of an island nation and French was the language of a continental one, in the twentieth century English has become the language of the world thanks to the linguistic legacy of the British Empire, the emergence of the USA as an English-speaking superpower and the fortuitous association of English with the industrial and technological developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Britain, applied linguists developed a methodology that drew on the oral approach that had been developed in the twenties and thirties linked to a carefully graded grammatical and lexical syllabus.

The methodology had the following characteristics:

- A structural syllabus with graded vocabulary levels

- Meaningful presentation of structures in contexts through the use of situations

- to contextualize new teaching points

- A sequence of classroom activities that went from Presentation, to controlled Practice, to freer Production (the P P P method) .

This became known as the situational approach or the structural-situational approach or Situational Language Teaching and was the mainstream teaching method in British language teaching circles from the 1950s. A well-known course-book series based on this method is Robert O'Neill's Kernel series (Longman 1978).

From the early days until the mid-1960s ... English was taught in these schools as a discrete subject aimed at providing students with a reading knowledge of English through the study of English grammar and selected textsand applying such grammatical principles and whatever vocabulary was required to the comprehension of texts often with the help of a bilingual dictionary. (Ho1994, 222–226)

Later this was replaced by a "TESL/TEFL" approach based on a structural syllabus and a situational drill-based methodology. The structural-situational approach was also used in Australia as the basis for English teaching programs for immigrants from the 1950s (Ozolins 1993). In the United States in the 1960s, language teaching was also under the sway of a powerful method – the Audiolingual Method. Rivers (1964) stated the assumptions of audiolingualism as:

- Habits are strengthened by reinforcement.

- Foreign language habits are formed most effectively by giving the right response, not by making mistakes.

- Language is behavior and behavior can be learned only by inducing the student to behave.

CHANGING NEEDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN EUROP

But a missing element in the enthusiasm for new methods was a consideration of the extent to which teaching methods addressed learners' needs. Jupp and Hodlin raised this issue in 1975:

In 1969, the Council of Europe (a regional organization of European countries designed to promote cultural and educational

cooperation), in order to promote the more effective learning of foreign languages within the community, decided that:

• If full understanding is to be achieved among the

countries of Europe, the language barriers between them

must be removed;

• Linguistic diversity is part of the European cultural heritage

and that it should, through the study of modern languages, provide

a source of intellectual enrichment rather than an obstacle to unity;

of Europe 1969, 8) In order to respond to these concerns it became apparent that policies could only be based on information

about societies' needs. Van Els, T. Bongaerts,

G. Extra, C. Van Os, and A. Janssen-van Dieten (1984, 159) pose the questions that were considered at this time:

• Does the community consider it important that all its members

know a foreign language, or is this considered necessary only

for certain professional domains?

• How many languages, and which languages, are felt to be necessary?

• How great is the demand for each individual language? Does everyone need the same skills, or the same level of command per skill?

• Is there a stable needs pattern?

Although individual countries responded to these issues in different ways, one important response was initiated by the Council of Europe, which proposed that a "unit-credit system" be used as a framework for developing language teaching programs for adults. This was defined as follows: An educational system in which the syllabus, curriculum or body or material (knowledge and skills) to be studied, learned or acquired, is broken down into a number of quantum units of work, each with its own precise definition of the terminal behavior to be achieved by the learner, all of the units being accompanied by a carefully constructed system of credit ratings. (Kingsbury 1971, 11).