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Yet, we hope that it will be of some use to anybody who intends to teach conversation at school and to write a paper dealing with the same or a similar topic. Added to that, it can help the course-designer and the text-book writer when new editions of the present textbooks, or altogether new books are published.

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- Al-Hammash's Textbooks and Teacher Guides analyzed in this paper

Moreover, since games, like songs, have an element of fun, games can also be useful. The teacher should be able to promote game-playing in the class, a procedure that will definitely lead to both enjoyment and benefit. Regrettably, Al-Hammash has completely overlooked in his textbooks this most useful element of songs and games.

- 7- Conversation and Culture: Another limitation of the current textbooks is that they do not reflect English culture. As it is known, knowledge of the cultural context is an asset in learning a foreign language. Language learning is much influenced by attitudes towards cultural aspects of language. In one sense, language cannot be properly learned without the learner's familiarity with features of the culture of the people who speak that language, since language and culture are inextricably connected. The best way to learn a language is to learn it from the horse's mouth. Hence, we find ourselves in an agreement with Quirk & Smith (1964, p.146) who say that "knowledge of the cultural context is a help in learning the language."
- 8- Authentic and Non-Authentic English: The dialogues presented by Al-Hammash et al. regrettably lack authentic texts wherein authors tend to use phrases, expressions and information that the overseas visitor to Britain is likely to find useful. For instance, many Iraqi learners who endure long years of classroom English probably recall the shock when they arrive in England and have to cope with informal English all around them. Their problem is not in asking the right questions or indulging sociabilities but in understanding the replies and how to steer through the intricacies of the English language as it is actually used by English people in an English environment. Their textbooks back home have not prepared them to this kind of English, namely authentic English.
- 9- Conversation in writing; As the pupil sits for his final ministerial examination secure in the sense that he will not be responsible for conversation, he has definitely neglected this element in his study altogether. It is our suggestion here that questions covering conversation should be included in the examination. This can be done by asking pupils some tail questions or asking them to write imaginary dialogues between or among fictitious people in given situations.

We, the authors, do not claim that this is a perfect paper in its field.

- fering to correct mistakes. The teacher has also to check that pupils have grasped the pattern correctly together with its pronunciation.
- 5- Cliches and inventiveness: After the teacher has hopefully managed to make his pupils imitate the dialogue, he should know that a new more ambitious errand is ahead of him. He should be able to make his pupils speak independently from the model dialogues in the textbooks. Here is the crux of the matter: to make pupils speak spontaneously. So far where, according to Al-Hammash where the teacher's mission comes to an end, for us it only commences. This means that the teacher should know that blind memorisation of a dialogue does not assist pupils to make use of the patterns and expressions in the dialogue. As a result, the teacher should try to make pupils' memorisation meaningful; he should ask pupils to use the principle of substitution. For instance, he should ask pupils to use their own real names instead of the names that appear in the dialogue. He can also let pupils change the names of places that appear in the dialogue. Furthermore, he can make pupils drop words, expressions and phrases from the original dialogue and substitute them with materials related to their personal life. This substitution can also be carried out through the use of magazine pictures which represent one of the most useful visual aids available to teachers, especially if we know that Al-Hammash's textbooks lack pictures to a large extent.

It is to be noted that with the advance of time in conversation teaching, the teacher should do less talking himself and let his pupils practise more talking. After he has taught/ shown them the rules of the game, let him watch while they play.

- 6- Songs and Games: Our enemy is always the dull class, since a lively class is always useful and beneficial. In order to put more life into the class, songs and games are the best means. Songs easily attract pupils. Pupils enjoy songs and are expected to make much benefit from them. They usually learn new words and phrases, and get an insight into English culture which can finally facilitate their acquisition of a sense of a language away from mechanical repetitions of words and phrases. Due to the element of fun in singing songs, the pupils can easily memorise songs, and they usually do so with perfect pronunciation as they have listened to these songs on cassettes recorded by native speakers.

on the hope that they will be heavily stressed when new editions of the present textbooks, or altogether new books are published.

- 1- Model reading: We stress the importance of the use of the cassette tapes, especially if we know that such a stuff is available at schools, although unused. This will train the pupil's ears to the pronunciation of native speakers and save pupils from the evils of slow reading (see Jerrom & Szkutnik, 1980, pp. v-vi). It will also familiarise the pupils with the musicality and therefore intonation of the English language. Model reading also lets pupils get perfect pronunciation, pause words, exclamations, interjections, rejoinders... etc.
- 2- Explanation of meanings: The grammar-translation method is valid in clarifying some abstract notions. This means that mother tongue is used in an attempt to save effort and time. When meanings of words are concrete enough, teachers are expected to use their acting abilities so as to help pupils realise the meanings of words. Things like gestures, synonyms, antonyms and teaching aids can be used for explaining the meaning of the difficult words. A good teacher should know how to, enliven his class because there is a sizeable number of teachers who deplorably lack the ability to arouse pupil's interest and enthusiasm in the subject. In such a dull class, the pupils inevitably lose interest and are therefore distracted from any class activities carried out by the teacher. The teacher, on the other hand, is either unaware of the dullness he is creating in the class and so he carries out his lecture almost completely in isolation from the pupils or he is aware of the situation but is either indifferent or very little able to do anything.
- 3- Choral and individual repetitions: Since Iraqi classes are quite sizeable in the number of pupils, it is suggested that the class should be divided into smaller groups to enable the teacher to manage the class and to make him sure that all the pupils are participating, repeating chorally, and learning. Moreover, dividing the class into smaller groups will enable the teacher to detect the pupils' mistakes and correct them on the spot. It is after all, a truth universally acknowledge that the smaller the group is the larger the benefits are.
- 4- Acting the dialogue: To put the dialogue into action, the teacher should take the first role and the pupil the second role, then the roles should be reversed, and finally two pupils are to play the roles while the teacher is listening, watching and, whenever the occasion arises, inter-

pupils have their turn at the wheel. Stone (1975, p. 19) supports our view by stating that "the more versatile and varied a teacher can be in his approach, the more of his students he can reach out to individually, keeping in mind that he can never altogether be all things to all men but not losing sight of it as an ideal".

As for the explanation of the meanings of difficult words, the grammar-translation method is regrettably used, although Al-Hammash stresses the importance of the Aural-Oral approach, and he considers this method as a revolt against the grammar-translation one.

As for acting out dialogue, teachers sometimes let pupils do it in front of a supervisor. The acting of the dialogue and even the oral practice are not conducted in a creative spontaneous way but in a mechanical static way. From personal communication with some teachers we have gathered that they carry out their plans without the dialogues due to their lacking of time, and, as we have indicated above, the oral performance is not a part of the final ministerial examinations.

Ideally, the dialogue is expected to be appropriate from pupils' viewpoint. This means it is supposed to be realistic and sounds like real speech rather than something written. The authors must take into consideration this realistic aspect (element) of the dialogue. As a result, the dialogue should be near to informal language with respect to the use of abbreviations, contracted forms, phrases of hesitation, and sometimes grammatically incomplete sentences like in the following example:

- What are you doing?
- Eating.
- Wher's mother?
- Well,... of course... you know she sometimes goes to the neighbours and stays there long.

(for the same view, see also Al-Azzawi & Hassan, 1985, p. 34).

Last but not least to mention the dialogue, so that the pupils would learn it properly; is supposed to be highly dramatic with a lot of sense of humour. Dull dialogues make pupils hate them and take less benefit from the teacher at a time when dramatic and humorous dialogue arouses the pupils' interest and makes them learn too much and too fast.

Findings and Suggestions

We, the writers of this paper, suggest the following steps for teachers

of the meanings of difficult words, (3) choral and individual repetition and (4) enacting the dialogue by pupils.

After a thorough study of Al-Hammash's textbooks, we assert our praise of the achievement of Al-Hammash et al., although we believe that these textbooks do not take into consideration many vital elements of language teaching, such as authentic English conversation (see Lado, 1964, p. 89; Barkho & Zorah, 1985) culture (see Quirk & Smith, 1964, p. 146; Al-Muttaibi, 1973, p. 56; Wilkins, 1978, p. 47; Corder, 1982, pp. 68-72; Taborn, 1983, p. 211) pictures and illustrations (Al-Jibouri, 1978, pp. 107-125 and Kerop, 1978, pp. 126-129), and songs and games (see Byrne 1977, pp. 92, 99).

It should be stressed here that Al-Hammash's methods are not followed properly. Our visits to schools have provided us with certain observations that shed light on a definite gap between Al-Hammash's theories and what is actually practised at schools. Teachers do not pay due attention to the dialogue and conversation activities in their classes because they are mainly concerned with sending their pupils to the ministerial examinations. Teachers endeavour to make their pupils well-equipped with what is good and helpful in written examinations, and since the ministerial examinations are wholly written examinations, teachers do not bother about their pupil's oral abilities. They, however, do care about their pupil's oral performance only in order to demonstrate that when a supervisor is on his annual tour.

On the other hand, even when teachers take the dialogue and conversation aspect into consideration, their method of teaching the dialogue has more loopholes than merits. Teachers usually read the dialogues slowly, and this creates in pupils a feeling of dullness and boredom. Added to that, this slow reading leads to the ruining of the correct pronunciation as far as the weak and strong forms are concerned. It further damages the stress, intonation and rhythm of the sentences. The result is usually represented by pupils' acquisition of bad and incorrect habits of language learning. Hence, we would like to say that teaching, unlike lecturing, is not a monologue, it is a dialogue. It means participation on the part of two parties, namely the teacher and the pupils. It appears that there are teachers who take up a lot of the class time in talking and explaining, but never testing, drilling, remedying and reinforcing or otherwise letting the

the University of Baghdad. He is already a student at the University of Tokyo. He is looking forward to his arrival. The stewardess is informing the passengers that the plane will shortly be landing at the Baghdad International Airport. So the passengers must extinguish their cigarettes and fasten their belts. The expressions in this dialogue reinforce polite requests.

3.6: This dialogue consists of two parts. The first part is about two friends, Andy and Peter who want to have dinner out. They are asking someone in the street about a nearby cheap restaurant.

The second part is about a person named John and his friend Peter who are walking along Bond Street in London. They run into another friend called Hisham Ali, an Iraqi friend of John's. Hisham has just come back from Iraq. It should be noted that the expressions used in this dialogue reinforce *invitation* and *introduction*.

5.6: This dialogue is about two friends John and Mustapha. They meet outside the university building. They are waiting for another friend called Hisham. Mustapha needs to buy some gifts for his friends and family back home in Iraq. The expressions in this dialogue reinforce some patterns related to 'Suggestions', 'Similarity' and 'Difference'.

7.6: This dialogue is about two persons, Andy and the receptionist. Andy Hall is asking about Mr. Gray's office. The expressions reinforce location, i.e., asking people about the way to certain places. They also explain how to show the way to such places.

9.6: This dialogue is about a conversation between a nurse who likes her job very much, and a person who is asking several questions on her liking or disliking of her job. The expressions emphasize the following topics: obligation, likelihood and releasing people from obligation.

11.6: This dialogue is about two persons: a doctor and a patient called Susan. According to the result of the blood test Susan has inflammation of the appendix. The treatment should be carried out through the use of injections, otherwise she will need an operation. The expressions reinforce greetings, obligation and leave-taking.

Discussion

By studying Al-Hammash's Books 6, 7, and 8, we can infer that Hammash's methodology to teach conversation to advanced classes in Iraq schools is based on these principles: (1) model reading, (2) explanation

tures'. The use of the preposition 'on' and the definite article 'the' is emphasized.

- 8.5: This dialogue is between a wife and her husband inside a ward in an Iraqi hospital. A wife is visiting her husband and asking him about his health. Open-ended questions and yes-and-no questions are used.
- 9.4: This dialogue is about handing in an essay on compulsory education in Iraq.
- 10.1: This dialogue is inside a shoe-shop. Expressions reinforce the use of asking for permissions.
- 11.7: This dialogue is between a pupil and his teacher about a car accident. The use of past simple tense is emphasized.
- 12.6: This dialogue is about talking about Al-Qadisiya film. The present tense is given much emphasis.
- 13.5: This dialogue is about an invitation. Two persons are talking on the telephone. Expressions for invitation are emphasized.
- 14.1: This dialogue is about the conversation between the secretary of a club and a person who wants to join the club.

And here we take certain parts of Book 8 of the series which is used for the 6th. Year Secondary School.

Book 8 has 6 dialogues. They are the same as those presented in the previous books in that they deal with everyday situations and they use conversational forms. However, they are a little bit longer and more difficult. These dialogues are consecutively arranged in every other unit starting from unit one.

The following steps are suggested by the authors of the book for teaching the dialogues: (see Al-Hammash, et al 1982).

- 1- Explanation of the situation: Introducing all new words and conversational forms.
- 2- Making the pupils listen to the recording with their books open or without the books. Book 8 is the only book which has units accompanied by cassette recordings.
- 3- Enacting the dialogue by pairs of pupils, correcting serious errors only.

Now let's shed some light on certain parts of Book 8 and discuss them in detail:

- 1.6: This dialogue is about two passengers who are travelling by plane. One of the passengers has got a scholarship to do Arabic studies at

view by saying that" the resourceful teacher will not wish to teach with one hand tied behind his back. He will regard conversation not as an aid to teaching but as an end in itself", (see also Byrne, 1977, p. 53).

Book 7 of the same series contains fourteen dialogues. The dialogue in each unit comprises of a situation where in different elements of language are introduced in a given social setting. Care in these dialogues is taken of free conversation.

The following steps are suggested by the authors of the book :

- 1- Saying the dialogue, then presenting it with the appropriate visual aids through dramatisation.
- 2- Repetition of the dialogue chorally and individually.
- 3- Enacting the dialogue.
- 4- The teaching of any dialogue should be spread over a period of two weeks.

Now we are going to deal with certain parts of Book 7 of the series in detail:

- 1.6: The dialogue is an interview between a student and an army officer. The student has applied to join the Iraqi Air Force. The expressions reinforce greetings and leave-taking. They also reinforce purpose and reinforce greetings and leave-taking. They also reinforce purpose and certainty.
- 2.6: This dialogue is between a mother and her son. The mother encourages her son to study, and not to practise music. Expressions used to convey astonishment are of the following types: "what on earth Good Heavens!".
- 4.6: This dialogue is taking place inside one of the Iraqi Airways offices. The dialogue is about booking a ticket in an air flight. Expressions include open-ended questions and preferences.
- 5.1: This dialogue concerns the conversations that take place at breakfast table of an English family. It is their son's birthday. These expressions are emphasized by such phrases as, 'Happy birthday, Many happy returns of the day.'
- 6.5: This dialogue is between a mother and her son Martin. The topic is on shopping. Some commands are used as well.
- 7.5: This dialogue is between two friends who have not seen each other for a long time. Emphasis is given to the trains and times of their depa-

several class periods the teacher is expected to present the dialogue and have the pupils repeat it chorally and individually. In the following several class periods, pairs of pupils should be able to act out the dialogue.

The dialogue activity in Book 6 of *The New English Course for Iraq* is different from that in Books 1 to 5 in that the fifteen pieces of dialogue presented in Book 6 are linked together in one story which often involves the participation of more than two speakers. Emphasis in the fifteen dialogues is still on everyday conversational topics commonly used in contemporary life, namely, cars, traffic, engines, family, economy, films, and so on. (See Al-Hammash et al. *Book 6, Teachers Guide*, 1985).

The episode in Book 6 goes as follows: "Samir and Suha are a newly-married couple. Suha is keen on saving some money for their new life together. Samir is keen on buying a car. Of course he cannot afford to buy a brand new car, so he buys a very cheap old one Suha's parents make fun of the car Samir actually buys. When Samir decides to take them all for a ride, the car mobility ceases in the middle of the street. With the help of traffic warden they find out that the car has run out of fuel. When Samir goes to get some petrol two talent-scouts from a film agency see the car and get interested in it as an antique piece. They offer to buy it to use it in one of their films. The entire family becomes proud of the car. It seems to us, from the structural point of view that the expressions in the dialogues reinforce the use of tenses, whereas from the linguistic point of view, greetings, leave-taking, obligation, apologizing and polite requests are emphasized.

The following steps are suggested by the authors of the book:

- 1- Explaining the dialogue very briefly and touching upon all new words and structures that may occur in the dialogue.
- 2- Saying the dialogue and having the pupils repeat after the teacher chorally and individually.
- 3- Having the pupils enact the dialogue.

A close look at the above-mentioned steps entails that both presentation and controlled practice are stressed. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the language produced by pupils in the classroom occurs under highly artificial conditions. Perhaps the biggest problem for the teacher is to bridge the gap between this artificial use of language and the genuine use of it outside the classroom. Hence, it is believed that free practice must go hand in hand with theory. Ball (1960, p. 145) supports our

evil and better than nothing, especially if we remember a wise housewife's strategy that you should not throw away your dirty water unless you get fresh one. And as the world thrives by its economising and not by its spendthrift, so memorising accepts the husbandry of language as Shakespeare's ideal man in *Sonnet 71* keeps the husbandry of nature.

The following steps were recommended by Al-Hammash et al. (*Teacher's Guide to Book (1) of the New Course 1980*) to help the pupils memorise the dialogue :

- 1- The teacher should divide the class into two groups, each group taking one role, then he should reverse the roles.
- 2- The teacher should take the role of the dialogue and ask a pupil to take the other role. He should do this with as many pupils as the time of the lesson allows.
- 3- The teacher should ask groups of pupils to say the dialogue.

Finally the teacher should remember that blind memorisation of dialogue does not help pupils to make use of the phrases and expressions in the dialogue. Blind memorisation, it should be borne in mind, is a skill that helps the pupil to learn foreign language, but it is not part of his creative genius which develops his ability to use the language. The important thing in language-learning is to acquire familiarity with language. This familiarity can be brought about by practising the language through its main four skills rather than memorising certain words, idioms and phrases. The pupils, moreover, in order to master a language, should be made aware of the language and this comes as a result of making them understand the meaning rather than memorise the meaning of the words. The teacher should, therefore, try to make the pupils memorisation meaningful and not something mechanical. Added to that, to make pupils creative and not mechanical in their learning of the new language, the teacher should ask them to use their personal names instead of the fictitious ones that appear in the dialogue. In short, we must try to encourage our pupils to put their newly learned language into action. Hubbard et al (1986, p. 187) reinforces our view by saying that "much more time should be spent on practice than presentation" (for the same view see also Byrne, 1977, p. 2).

It could be noted here that Al-Hammash's technique of teaching a dialogue should be spread over two or three units. Therefore, in the first

Analysis

For teaching dialogues at the primary level, Al-Hammash et al the authors of the New English Course for Iraq (1979, 1980, 1981 editions) recommend the following steps:

1- Model Reading: Pupils are to have their textbooks closed. This means that they should be listening so that they would be able to comprehend. Ideally, the teacher should draw pupils' attention to two things in particular, viz. pronunciation and stress.

2- The teacher is expected to visualize and/or illustrate by verbal and/or, whenever it becomes possible and necessary, audio-visual means, the setting of the dialogue, the characters, and what-not, the place where and the time when the dialogue is taking place, as say for instance, in the street at 9 pm, at a butcher's at 11 am. The following dialogue extract which comes from the first water of the textbook (see Al-Hammash et al 1980) in question is a case in point:

Teacher Good afternoon.

Pupil :Good afternoon.

Teacher :My name is Ali. What's your name?

Pupil :My name is Zeki.

Teacher :Where do you live?

Pupil :I live in Mosul.

Teacher :Is it a nice place?

Pupil :Yes, it's very nice.

- 3- The teacher is supposed to explain the dialogue by acting out the exchanges, using visual aids and pupil's mother tongue in order to save time and effort, although it is recommended that unless the occasion arises, the teacher ought to use no language other than the foreign language, which is English in our case. This is so because to learn a new language is simply to practise it. The teacher is also required to explain the meaning of what he thinks to be difficult so as to deepen his pupils' understanding of the dialogue.
- 4- Choral and individual repetition. After the presentation of the new unit the teacher is to begin every lesson with choral and individual repetition of the dialogue.

As sarcasm is the least significant sign of intelligence, so in a likewise manner we adopt the principle that memorising is the least significant sign of genius. Yet, memorizing, no matter how blind, is a necessary

Teaching' Conversation, to Advanced Classes
in Iraqi Secondary Schools: An Assessment

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Introductory

The Iraqi pupil who in the end will obtain a secondary-school degree which will enable him to join university, learns English for eight years, that is if he never repeats a year or more due to his failure in the final examinations or any other reason. For the Iraqi pupil, a committee of specialists in language, methodology and curricula has prepared a series of textbooks entitled *The New English Course for Iraq*. This series includes eight textbooks, a textbook for each year, from the fifth year elementary level when the pupil starts learning English up to the sixth year of secondary level when the pupil is supposed to have completed his school education, and has become, after passing the ministerial examination, qualified to join a university or an institute according to his academic record.

Each textbook of the eight-textbook series includes various language-learning activities. On the other hand, there is a companion book for each year of the preparatory level entitled *Literary Reader* whose purpose is to introduce the pupil to literature although at a simplified level. This paper, as its topic, 'Teaching Conversation to Advanced Classes in Iraqi Secondary Schools' denotes, will stick to the dialogue activity which is one among other activities and will leave the other activities aside. The dialogue activity will be discussed at full length in the last three textbooks of the series, as this paper deals with the spoken aspects of language teaching only.

In the final analysis, the aim of this paper is to assess the current methods of dialogue teaching AL-Hammash's Textbooks used in the Iraqi secondary schools, to pin-point its limitations, and to suggest some remedial procedures. This paper, however, is an original fieldwork mainly based on a teaching experience in elementary, intermediate and secondary school as well as on actual visits to school.