ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
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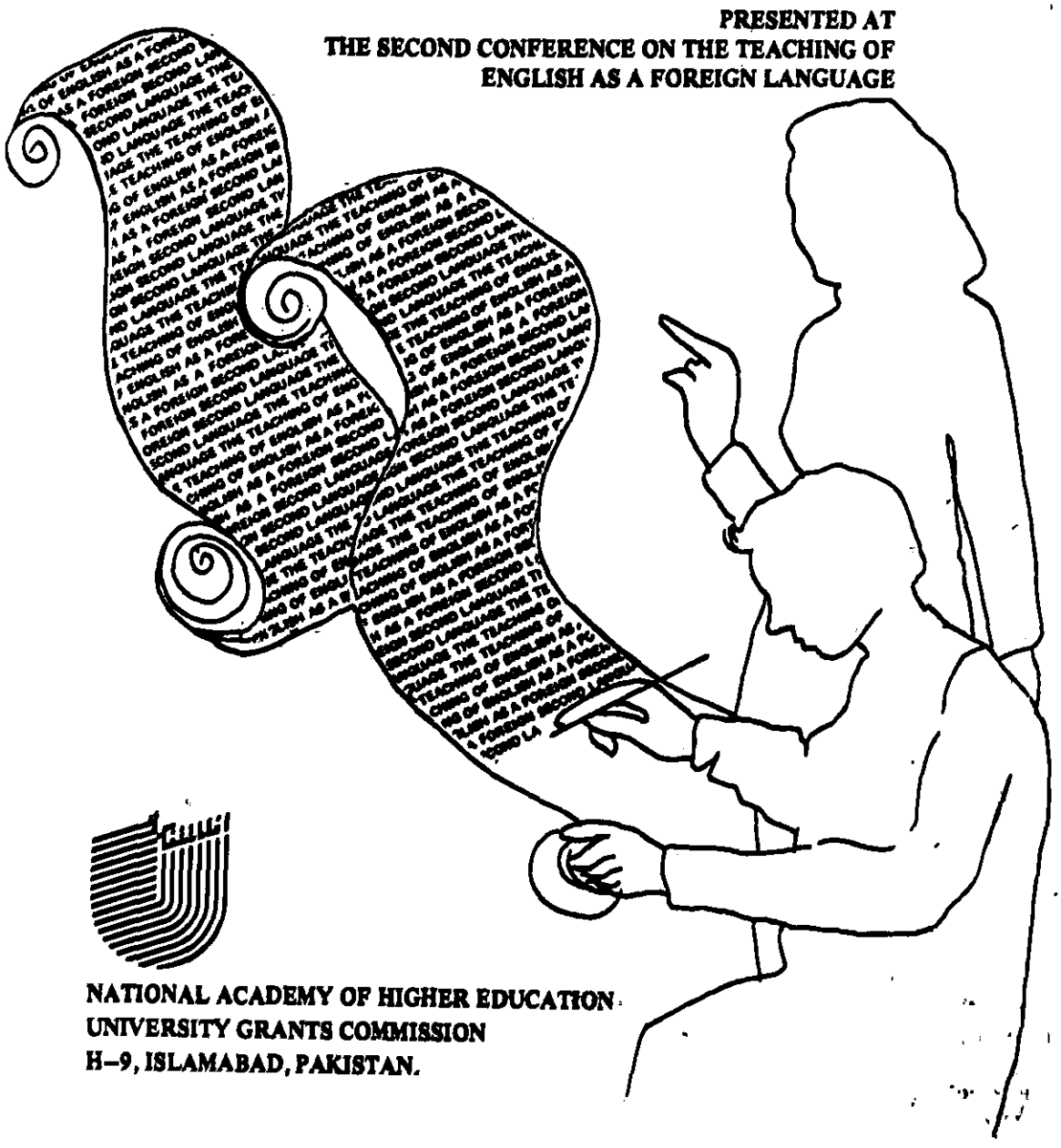
THE SECOND CONFERENCE ON THE TEACHING OF
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE



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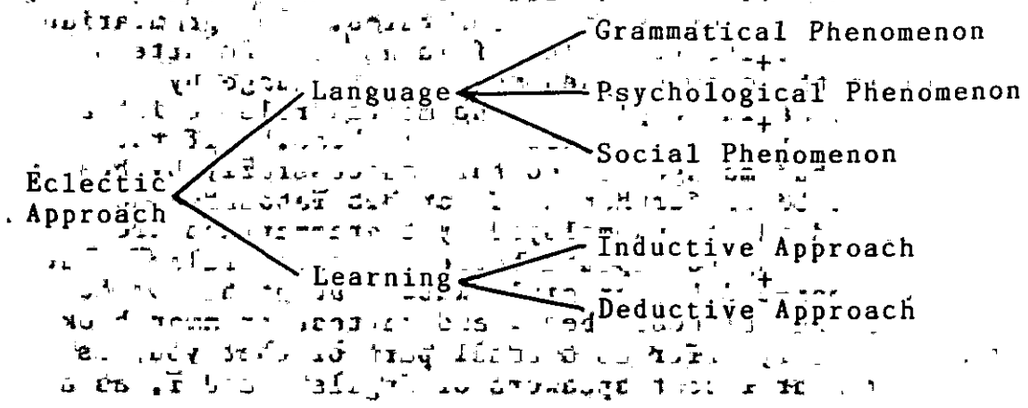
native speaker of English, already "know." But again we must not be too dogmatic about this. An explicit rule may help the learner towards constructing the more complex mental or internal rule for himself. Someone had said, very wisely I think, that "We are not faced so much with a choice between teaching by rules and teaching by discovery as with a problem of finding teaching rules that will enhance the probability of discovery."

So, to sum up, we do not really know enough about language or about learning to be too dogmatic. A good teacher will not view language as just a grammatical phenomenon, just a psychological phenomenon, or just a social phenomenon. He will view language as all three. He will not be too dogmatic about whether to teach by rules or whether to teach by discovery. He will combine an inductive and a deductive approach.

In other words, a good language teacher will be eclectic in his approach. An eclectic approach is one in which we do not confine ourselves rigidly to one method. We take from each method whatever is relevant and useful to our teaching situation. This does not mean that the teacher can just do what he likes. It implies a thoughtful and balanced selection of techniques and approaches. Previous methods may still have something to offer us. We must not throw away the baby with the dirty bath water for the sake of a new idea. In answer then to such typical questions as "Should I give grammar rules?" "Should I use Urdu in the classroom?", the sensible answer will be, "Yes, to a certain extent." We can perhaps summarise what I have said by the following simple diagram:



SYLLABUS DESIGNS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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The last decade has witnessed a great deal of discussion of syllabus design for teaching English as a foreign language, and we hear about the wide varieties of syllabus design such as the notional-functional syllabus, the situational syllabus, the structural syllabus, the grammar-based syllabus, and, of course, the current trend in syllabus design--the communicative syllabus.

A syllabus is primarily concerned with what is to be learned, but as Corder (1975) points out, it is more than just an inventory of items. In addition to specifying the content of learning, a syllabus, or curriculum, provide a rationale for how that content should be selected and ordered (McKay, 1980). In Wilkins' words (1979),

> . . . syllabuses are specifications of the content of language teaching which have been submitted to some degree of structuring or offering with the aim of making teaching and learning a more effective process.

Language learning curriculum designs have traditionally been organized along grammatical lines with learning units bearing such labels as "the simple present tense" or "the relative clause," which reflect an emphasis on language form. Another type of syllabus design which has predominated in many parts of the world in the last twenty-five years is the "structural

syllabus," a particular type of the grammatical syllabus. The structural syllabus gains importance from the American structuralist school, specifies structural patterns as the basic units of learning, and organizes these according to criteria such as structural complexity, difficulty, regularity, utility, and frequency.

Closely associated with the structural syllabus has been the Audio-lingual method, which derives its basic tenets from both structural linguists and an operant conditioning view of language learning. Thus, teachers who have to function in the framework of a structural syllabus find that their primary task is the production of formally accurate language through the use of highly controlled, tightly structured, and sequenced pattern practice drills. It is important to note that the structural syllabus and the methods which are allied with it do not preclude the learning meaning, but the emphasis has clearly been on the internal formal properties of sentences and the manipulation of structural patterns.

The situational syllabus which has emerged from attempts to make the language learning content more relevant to student needs posits the situation in a nonlinguistic category, as the fundamental unit of organization of instruction. In the situational syllabus (Van Ek, 1976), the language patterns to be learned are contextualized in a dialogue or reading passage which may be constructed around some sort of situation, but the fundamental unit of curriculum organization is clearly the structural pattern. A situation such as a restaurant, an airplane, or the post office is used as a basis for presenting language content.

The notional-functional syllabus emphasizes what speakens communicate through language, and derives its content from an analysis of the learner's need to express certain meanings (Wilkins, 1976).

One last point to be made before developing ideas on curriculum development is that while writers on the subject have noted the shortcomings of the structural syllabus (Allen and Widdowson, 1975; Johnson, 1977; Van Ek, 1976; Widdowson, 1978), they all agree to the importance of teaching the formal aspects of language.

Perhaps Wilkins (1976) states it best when he declares, "it is taken here to be almost axiomatic that the acquisition of the grammatical system of a language remains a most important element in language learning."

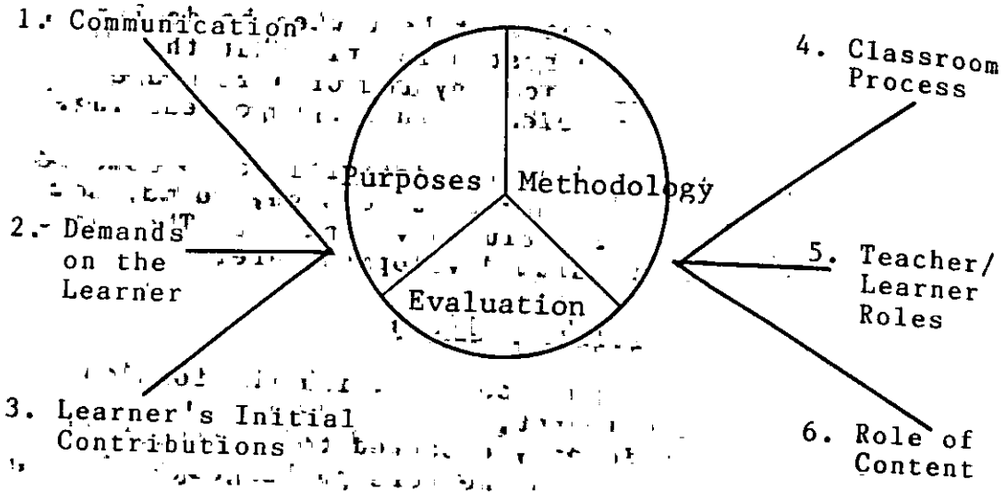
Having provided a few brief definitions to some key terms to a discussion of curriculum design, we may now turn to the topic of curriculum development. The basic steps involved in curriculum development are:

Needs Analysis

1. An analysis of the purpose for which the foreign language is being learnt,
2. The level of proficiency expected to be attained,
3. The situations in which the foreign language will be used; and
4. The strengths and weaknesses of the students, including an assessment of their cultural and economic environment.

The Curriculum

Linked with these variables are a general analysis of the aims and goals of the curriculum. In a country like Pakistan these have to be understood and interpreted in light of the government's language policy and the administrative and government support expected for a language programme. Other variables to be taken into consideration in the designing of a curriculum are the availability of resources. Besides requiring a framework of teaching items, a curriculum also involves materials production and teacher training.



(Breen and Candlin, 1980)

Generally speaking, the theory of curriculum development involves such variables as:

1. A list of the language items to be taught, such as phonology, structure, and vocabulary;
2. An analysis of the various language skills to be developed through the various stages of learning, listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
3. The tasks a student will be able to perform, having gone through the various stages of language learning;
4. A description of the various activities involved in the learning of the foreign language;
5. An analysis of the testing and evaluation procedures;
6. Materials production and materials adaptation;
7. Teacher training;
8. Preparation of teachers' guides.

Besides these variables, curriculum development for English language involves taking into consideration the age of the learners, the period of time over which a

language programme is to last, and the goals and scope of the programme. (For instance: Will the learners be able to develop the listening and speaking skills only? Will they be able to read?) The setting of these aims enable the curriculum developers to select and grade the material level-wise, select the items which have to be learnt, and assess the skills which have to be learnt at each level. The curriculum developers also have to take into consideration the integration of the language skills, as the learner progresses in the foreign language, and grade the material accordingly. These have to be brought together in real-life situations. Upon completion of a language programme, the pupils ought to be able to continue to increase their skills by themselves, and be able to specialize in any aspect of the language.

SUMMARY

To sum up, we can say that curriculum development in an English language programme should be based on:

--learning the sound system of the language,
--learning the basic word-order structures and the function words,
--learning the inflections which are most common,
--learning vocabulary which they can use in their immediate surroundings.

In accordance with the current practice of curriculum development, the aim of curriculum ought to be the development of "communicative competence," implying therefore that students ought to be able to relate themselves and their environment to the language they are using.

Some other variables which ought to be mentioned in relation to curriculum development are the sequencing of materials from one level to the next, and also the grading of materials, even within the situational teaching approach. Finally, there is the content of the study materials in relation to time. Sometimes the content may be spread over a longer period, or condensed into a shorter period depending on the level, proficiency, and motivation of the learning group. To sum up, we can say that different curriculum types require different sorts of linguistic knowledge and teaching skills, and these variables have to be taken

into account by curriculum planners. What is most important, however, is the realistic appraisal of the learning group and the community the student comes from. New materials may or may not be produced for a new curriculum; teachers themselves have to be trained to adapt appropriate existing materials or to enrich them judiciously, in harmony with their students' interests. Needs have to be linked to resources by curriculum developers; and there is no point in producing beautiful syllabuses which cannot be implemented due to lack of resources.