**4-The Situational Syllabus**

**4.1 Introduction**

A situational syllabus is often known as one in which the contents are arranged according to the situations in which certain language is likely to be employed. That is, the basic principle for the organization of the contents is situation, instead of grammar items (Wilkins, 1976). A situational syllabus makes it possible to select and sequence real-life situations rather than introducing grammatical items, vocabulary topics, or functions. This kind of syllabus looks something like this: At the bank- At the supermarket-At the hotel- At the library-At the dentist…etc.

**4.2 Assumptions behind Situational Syllabuses**

The theoretical assumption that governs situational syllabuses is attributed to the theory developed by John Rupert Firth who believes that language is not only an abstract system of structures , but also, a ‘ social process’, the meaning of language is determined by the context in which it occurs, and language has the capacity to get things done.(Cited in Johnson,2008:179-180).In the same line of thought Johnson (2008) states ‘language is best learned and remembered in when presented in contextual setting’. As for Wilkins (1976:16) the argument behind the use of the situational syllabus is rather direct. In spite of the fact that languages are usually seen as ‘general systems’, language is always used in social context and cannot be comprehensible in isolation of that context. The linguistic forms that we choose to communicate may be restrained to the characteristics of the social situation in which we act, and in any case, language is required so that it can be used in the encountered situations. Therefore, instead of guiding learning to the subject and its content, the learner and his needs are the ones under focus. The situations in which the learner is likely to need the language should be predicted, and then the language that he requires to perform linguistically in those situations is presented and taught.

**4.3 Critiques to Situational Syllabuses**

It seems to be very attractive to organize teaching material by situation to meet the learners’ specific communicative needs, since the syllabus designer will be able to define the situation, participants supposed to take part, and the communicative goals with some certainty. ESP material, such as for business or tourism students, can profitably be organized in such way. But situational syllabuses are less convenient for students of general English mainly because it is not easy to guarantee that language taught for one given situation will be useful for another one. In addition to that, selecting which situations are ‘key’ ones for a given group of general English is problematic since it is up to who the learners are (they are often different) and where the learning location is (Harmer,2001:298).