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The Usage Of An Audio-Linguistic Method Of Learning English As A Foreign Language By Intermediate Students

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the aspects of audio-lingual method of language learning. As a conclusion, the main advantages of the method, in the case of its application as an integral part of the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language, and disadvantages that may occur in the case of its autonomous or remote use. Thus, we can say that the audio-lingual method will be a weighty addition to the general methodology of teaching English as a foreign language.

KEYWORDS

Audio-lingual method, behaviorist theory, target language, cramming, army method, methodology, vocabulary, oral skills, drilling.

INTRODUCTION

The audio-lingual method, Army Method, or New Key, is a method used in teaching foreign languages. It is based on behaviorist theory, which postulates that certain traits of living

things, and in this case humans, could be trained through a system of reinforcement. The correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback while incorrect use of that trait

would receive negative feedback.

This approach to language learning was similar to another, earlier method called the direct method. Like the direct method, the audio-lingual method advised that students should be taught a language directly, without using the students' native language to explain new words or grammar in target language. However, unlike the direct method, the audio-lingual method did not focus on teaching vocabulary. Rather, the teacher drilled students in the use of grammar.

Applied to language instruction, and often within the context of the language lab, it means that the instructor would present the correct model of a sentence and the students would have to repeat it. The teacher would then continue by presenting new words for the students to sample in the same structure. In audio-lingualism, there is no explicit grammar instruction: everything is simply memorized in form.

In a sense, this method is based on cramming. At the initial stage of training, the student repeatedly repeats the phrase he heard after the teacher. And as soon as the pronunciation reaches the desired level, the student is allowed to insert some phrases from himself, but further work comes down to the same principle - heard and reproduced. This method works well for people with strong auditory perception.

Today there are more than 100 methods of learning foreign languages, most of which are not very effective, and are a common way of earning money for enterprising people. Such as Booknomy and Tedbook, which are more appropriate for auditory learners.

The idea is for the students to practice the particular construct until they can use it spontaneously. The lessons are built on static drills in which the students have little or no control on their own output; the teacher is expecting a particular response and not providing the desired response will result in a student receiving negative feedback. This type of activity, for the foundation of language learning, is in direct opposition with communicative language teaching.

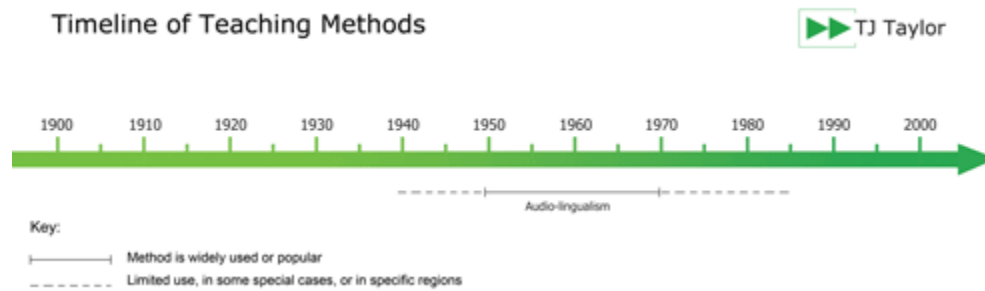
Charles Carpenter Fries, the director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, the first of its kind in the United States, believed that learning structure or grammar was the starting point for the student. In other words, it was the students' job to recite the basic sentence patterns and grammatical structures. The students were given only "enough vocabulary to make such drills possible." Fries later included principles of behavioural psychology, as developed by B.F. Skinner, into this method.

The method is the product of three historical circumstances. For its views on language, it drew on the work of American linguists such as Leonard Bloomfield. The prime concern of American linguists in the early decades of the 20th century had been to document all the indigenous languages spoken in the US. However, because of the dearth of trained native teachers who would provide a theoretical description of the native languages, linguists had to rely on observation. For the same reason, a strong focus on oral language was developed.

At the same time, behaviourist psychologists such as B.F. Skinner were forming the belief that all behaviour (including language) was learnt through repetition and positive or

negative reinforcement. The third factor was the outbreak of World War II, which created the need to post large number of American servicemen all over the world. It was, therefore, necessary to provide these soldiers with at least basic verbal communication skills. Unsurprisingly, the new method relied on the

prevailing scientific methods of the time, observation and repetition, which were also admirably suited to teaching en masse. Because of the influence of the military, early versions of the audio-lingualism came to be known as the “army method.”



As mentioned, lessons in the classroom focus on the correct imitation of the teacher by the students. The students expected to produce the correct output, but attention is also paid to correct pronunciation. Although correct grammar is expected in usage, no explicit grammatical instruction is given. Furthermore, the target language is the only language to be used in the classroom.

For example: Teacher: I ate the sandwich.
Student: I ate the sandwiches.

Teacher: He bought the car for half-price.
Student: He bought it for half-price.

Teacher: Tell me not to smoke so often.
Student: Don't smoke so often!

The following example illustrates how more than one sort of drill can be incorporated into one practice session:

“Teacher: There's a cup on the table ... repeat

Students: There's a cup on the table

Teacher: Spoon

Students: There's a spoon on the table

Teacher: Book

Students: There's a book on the table

Teacher: On the chair

Students: There's a book on the chair etc.”

However in the late 1950s, the theoretical underpinnings of the method were questioned by linguists such as Noam Chomsky, who pointed out the limitations of structural linguistics. The relevance of behaviorist psychology to language learning was also questioned, most famously by Chomsky's review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior in 1959. The audio-lingual method was thus deprived of its scientific credibility and it was only a matter of time before the effectiveness of the method itself was questioned.

In 1964, Wilga Rivers released a critique of the method in her book, *The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher*. Subsequent research by others, inspired by her book, produced results which showed explicit grammatical instruction in the mother language to be more productive. These developments, coupled with the emergence of humanist pedagogy led to a rapid decline in the popularity of audiolingualism.

Philip Smith's study from 1965-1969, termed the Pennsylvania Project, provided significant proof that audio-lingual methods were less effective than a more traditional cognitive approach involving the learner's first language.

Despite being discredited as an effective teaching methodology in 1970, audio-lingualism continues to be used today although it is typically not used as the foundation of a course but rather has been relegated to use in individual lessons. As it continues to be used, it also continues to be criticized. As Jeremy Harmer notes, "Audio-lingual methodology seems to banish all forms of language processing that help students sort out new language information in their own minds." As this type of lesson is very teacher-centered, it is a popular methodology for both teachers and students, perhaps for several reasons but especially because the input and output is restricted and both parties know what to expect. Some hybrid approaches have been developed, as can be seen in the textbook *Japanese: The Spoken Language* (1987-90), which uses repetition and drills extensively but supplements them with detailed grammar explanations in English.

Butzkamm and Caldwell have tried to revive traditional pattern practice in the form of

bilingual semi-communicative drills. For them, the theoretical basis, and sufficient justification, of pattern drills is the generative principle, which refers to the human capacity to generate an infinite number of sentences from a finite grammatical competence.

Skills are taught in the following order: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Language is taught through dialogues with useful vocabulary and common structures of communication. Students are made to memorize the dialogue line by line. Learners mimic the teacher or a tape listening carefully to all features of the spoken target language. Pronunciation like that of native speaker is important in presenting the model. Through repetition of phrases and sentences, a dialogue is learned by the first whole class, then smaller groups and finally individual learners.

Reading and writing are introduced in the next stage. The oral lesson learned in previous class is the reading material to establish a relationship between speech and writing. All reading material is introduced as orally first. Writing, in the early stages, is confined to transcriptions of the structures and dialogues learned earlier. Once learners mastered the basic structure, they were asked to write composition reports based on the oral lesson.

The theory emphasizes the listening-speaking-reading-writing order.

Listening is important in developing speaking proficiency and so receives particular emphasis. There are strong arguments, both physiological and psychological, for combining speaking practice with training in listening comprehension.

Speaking is effective through listening. By hearing the sounds, articulation is more accurate, with differentiation of sounds, memorization and internalization of proper auditory sounds images. Development of a feel for the new language gains interest for the language.

There has been practically no study or experiments to determine how much time should be taken between listening experience and speaking practice.

Listening comprehension is most neglected in language learning. It is generally treated as incidental to speaking rather than as a foundation for it. Texts, guides and course of study contain tests for evaluating progress in listening comprehension, but they rarely contain specific learning materials designed for the systematic development of this skill.

Here are some materials that can be adapted for improving listening comprehension:

- The dialogue should be presented as a story, in the foreign language, using simple language.
- The meaning of some of the new words and expressions that will appear in the dialogue should be explained through gestures, visual aids, synonyms, etc. The idea is to teach the content in the story.
- Different role-plays can be used to present the dialogue.
- Without stopping, the dialogue can be gone through to hear how the entire conversation sounds at normal speed.
- True and false activity can improve comprehension.
- The entire dialogue can be repeated at normal rate speed. The student can close his eyes to eliminate distractions

and increase his listening concentration.

- A listening comprehension test can be given.
- Listening comprehension practice can be given using dialogues from other courses of study or recorded materials that contain most of the language that has previously been learned by the students.
- The speaking practice would begin after listening comprehension. The students will be ready to speak at this time. Speaking practice can proceed according to sequence.

Memorization of techniques suggested represent an approach that will enable student to memorize larger segments at a time and perform dialogues as a whole with more confidence. In the meantime, if teachers are willing to use their imagination and experiment with new techniques, many ways can be found to emphasize the audio in the method.

This extensive memorization, repetition and over-learning of patterns was the key to the method's success, as students could often see immediate results, but it was also its weakness. It was also claimed that the methodology did not deliver an improvement in communicative ability that lasted over the long term.

In general, we can say that the audiolingual method will be a significant addition to the general methodology of teaching English as a foreign language. Among the advantages of this method, one can note a clear formulation of learning goals, defining ways to achieve these goals through various exercises, mastering grammar through models and

speech patterns, consistent inclusion of regional geographic information in classes, widespread use of technical means and the development of special exercises. However, if it is used autonomously, a certain range of disadvantages will affect, for example, the monotony of speech exercises, the predominance of mechanical teaching methods, meaningless memorization of structures, which can lead to a misunderstanding of the purpose of the lessons by students, as well as the lack of interconnection in teaching the main types of communicative activity. In addition, the audiolingual method can be effectively implemented exclusively in the system of full-time educational process, even with the innovative development of various ICTs, incl. audiovisual systems included in distance learning platforms, replacing a teacher who is a native speaker with a computer significantly reduces the communicative efficiency of learning any foreign language, in particular English, as a foreign language.

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