

The Audio-Lingual Method: An Easy way of Achieving Speech

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Abstract

The Audio-Lingual method aims to develop communicative competence of students through dialogues. Dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat are used to form habits in learners that will allow them to develop quick and automatic responses. Drills are useful in foreign language teaching in that they give students the opportunity to perform what they have learnt. The objective of this study is to demonstrate how the use of Audio-Lingual method facilitates learning a foreign language.

Keywords: The Audio-Lingual method, Habit formation, Drills, Communication

Introduction:

The Audio-Lingual method, which was proposed by American linguists in 1950s, was developed from the principle that "a language is first of all a system of sounds for social communication; writing is a secondary derivative system for the recording of spoken language" (Carroll, p.1963). Thus, the purpose of the Audio-Lingual method is to use the target language communicatively. According to this method, speech is given priority in foreign language teaching. The Audio-Lingual method teaches language through dialogues that focus on habit formation of students. Larsen-Freeman states that students will achieve communicative competence by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language (2000, p.45). The Audio-Lingual method considered language simply as form of behavior to be learned through the formation of correct speech habits (Thornbury 2000, p.21). In other words, the goal of this method is to form native language habits in learners (Dendrinos, 1992).

Similarly Richards and Rodgers stress that foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation, and good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes (2001, p.57). Dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat, are often used to form habits. Hence, as Larsen-Freeman (2000) says the more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning.

The Audio-Lingual method mainly consists of the following features:

- The teacher reads a dialogue by modeling it. It has been always motivating to put the subject matter in context, and students stand a better chance of retaining what they

have learnt. Students learn the target language within a concrete context that will enable them to relate what they learn to real-life learning environments. Teachers as a role model will encourage and inspire the students to strive for learning the target language.

- Students repeat the dialogue. Through repetition students can use the target language automatically, and fluently as well. In this method it is desirable that students form a habit formation to use the target language with ease, therefore, the more they repeat, the easier they will speak the target language without thinking.
- Some words or phrases are changed in the dialogue. Drills used in this method will allow the students to have practice. Through drills such as single-slot substitution, multiple-slot substitution, and transformation students are given the opportunity to produce speech in the target language, furthermore, these patterns will let them see how language functions. Students learn how to respond correctly when they practice the drills.

The Audio-Lingual Method and Speech Development

The Audio-Lingual method focuses on oral skills. It aims to improve students' speaking achievement. Language items are presented to students in spoken form without reference to the mother tongue so that they can learn language skills effectively. The goal of the Audio-Lingual method is, via teaching vocabulary and grammatical patterns through dialogues, to enable students to respond quickly and accurately in spoken language. The dialogues are learnt through repetition and such drills as repetition, backward build-up, chain, substitution, transformation, and question-and-answer are conducted based upon the patterns in the dialogue (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.45). Tim Bowen explains the contributions of this method to language learning as:

"Most teachers will at some point require learners to repeat examples of grammatical structures in context with number of aims in mind: stress, rhythm, intonation, 'consolidating the structure', enabling learners to use the structure accurately through repetition, etc. Question and answer in open class or closed pairs to practise a particular form can also be argued to have its basis in the audio-lingual approach, as can, without doubt, any kind of drill." Nunan is of the opinion that Audio-Lingual method "has probably had a greater impact on second and foreign language teaching than any other method. It was, in fact, the first approach which could be said to have developed a 'technology' of teaching and based on 'scientific' principles" (2000, p.229).

Conclusion

The Audio-Lingual Method aims to develop communicative competence of students using dialogues and drills. The use of dialogues and drills are effective in foreign language teaching as they lead the students to produce speech. Repetition of the dialogues and the drills will enable students to respond quickly and accurately in spoken language.

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