English Department

Method of Teaching English

Third stage

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Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching

Chapter Three/ The Audio-Lingual Method

AUDIO LINGUAL METHOD

Repeat after me.

apple

apple

© stellaELM

Definition

- The Audio-lingual Method is a method of foreign language teaching which emphasizes the teaching of listening and speaking before reading and writing. It uses dialogues as the main form of language presentation and drills as the main training techniques. Mother tongue is discouraged in the classroom.

Introduction

The Audio-Lingual Method, like the Direct Method we have just examined, is also an oral-based approach. However, it is very different, in that rather than emphasizing vocabulary acquisition through exposure to its use in situations, the Audio-Lingual Method drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. Also, unlike the Direct Method, it has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology. Charles Fries (1945) of the University of Michigan led the way in applying principles from structural linguistics in developing the method, and for this reason, it has sometimes been referred to as the 'Michigan Method.' Later in its development, principles from behavioral psychology (Skinner 1957) were incorporated. It was thought that the way to acquire the sentence

patterns of the target language was through conditioning— helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement, so that the learners could overcome the habits of their native language and form the new habits required to be target language speakers.
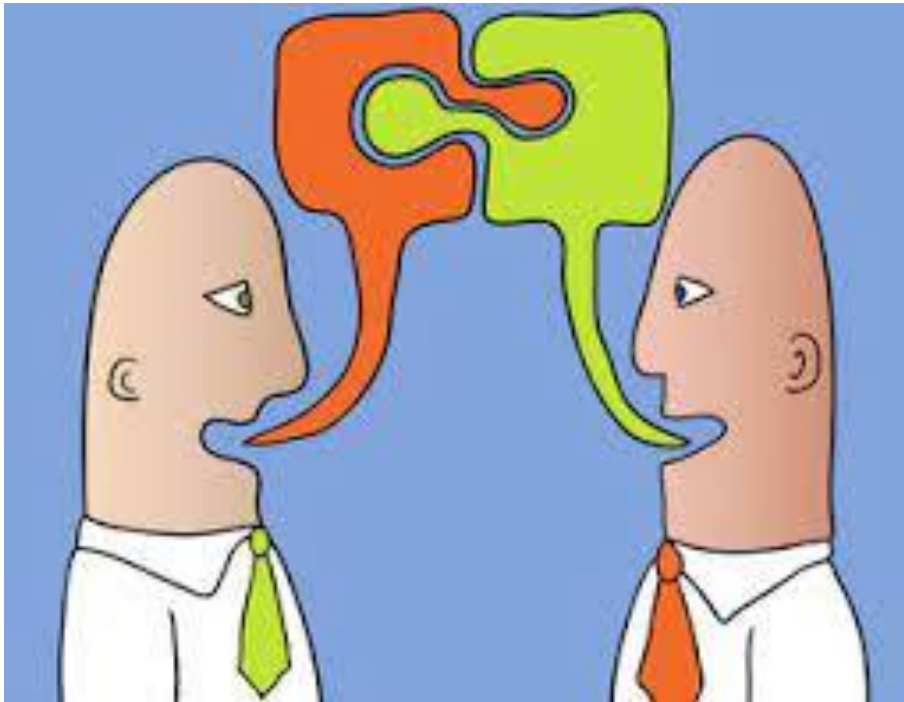
Based on the teacher experience, the following are the main principles that this method based upon:

1 The teacher introduces a new dialogue.

Language forms do not occur by themselves; they occur most naturally within a context.

2 The language teacher uses only the target language in the classroom.

Actions, pictures, or realia are used to give meaning otherwise. The native language and the target language have separate linguistic systems. They should be kept apart so that the students' native language interferes as little as possible with the students' attempts to acquire the target language.

3 The language teacher introduces the dialogue by modeling it two times; she introduces the drills by modeling the correct answers; at other times, she corrects mispronunciation by modeling the proper sounds in the target language.

One of the language teacher's major roles is that of a model of the target language. Teachers should provide students with an accurate model. By listening to how it is supposed to sound, students should be able to mimic the model.

4 The students repeat each line of the new dialogue several times.

Language learning is a process of habit formation. The more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning.

5 The students stumble over one of the lines of the dialogue. The teacher uses a backward build-up drill with this line.

It is important to prevent learners from making errors. Errors lead to the formation of bad habits. When errors do occur, they should immediately be corrected by the teacher.

6 The teacher initiates a chain drill in which each student greets another.

The purpose of language learning is to learn how to use the language to communicate.

7 The teacher uses single-slot and multiple-slot substitution drills. Particular parts of speech occupy particular 'slots' in sentences. In order

to create new sentences, students must learn which part of speech occupies which slot.

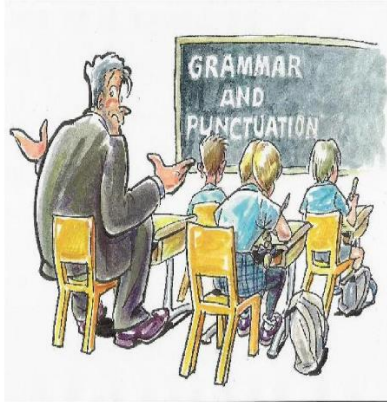8 The teacher says, 'Very good,' when the students answer correctly.

Positive reinforcement helps the students to develop correct habits.

9 The teacher uses spoken cues and picture cues.

Students should learn to respond to both verbal and nonverbal stimuli.

10 The teacher conducts transformation and question-and-answer drills.

Audio-Lingual Method

Dear students

The following ten questions cover all what is important in this method. Please read and memorize them all.

1 What are the goals of teachers who use the Audio-Lingual Method?

Teachers want their students to be able to use the target language communicatively.

In order to do this, they believe students need to overlearn the target language, to learn to use it automatically without stopping to think. Their students achieve this by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language.

2 What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

The teacher is like an orchestra leader, directing and controlling the language behavior of her students. She is also responsible for providing her students with a good model for imitation.

Students are imitators of the teacher's model or the tapes she supplies of model speakers. They follow the teacher's directions and respond as accurately and as rapidly as possible.

3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

New vocabulary and structural patterns are presented through dialogues. The dialogues are learned through imitation and repetition. Drills (such as repetition, backward build-up, chain, substitution, transformation, and question-and-answer) are conducted based upon the patterns present in the dialogue. Students' successful responses are positively reinforced. Grammar is induced from the examples given; explicit grammar rules are not provided. Cultural information is contextualized in the dialogues or presented by the teacher. Students' reading and written work is based upon the oral work they did earlier.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

There is student-to-student interaction in chain drills or when students take different roles in dialogues, but this interaction is teacher-directed. Most of the interaction is between teacher and students and is initiated by the teacher.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

There are no principles of the method that relate to this area.

6 How is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

The view of language in the Audio-Lingual Method has been influenced by descriptive linguists. Every language is seen as having its own unique system. The system comprises several different levels: phonological, morphological, and syntactic. Each level has its own distinctive patterns.

Everyday speech is emphasized in the Audio-Lingual Method. The level of complexity of the speech is graded, however, so that beginning students are presented with only simple patterns. Culture consists of the everyday behavior and lifestyle of the target language speakers.

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

Vocabulary is kept to a minimum while the students are mastering the sound system and grammatical patterns. A grammatical pattern is not the same as a sentence. For instance, underlying the following three sentences is the same grammatical pattern: 'Meg called,' 'The Blue Jays won,' 'The team practiced.' The natural order of skills presentation is adhered to: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The oral/aural skills receive most of the attention. What students write they have first been introduced to orally. Pronunciation is taught from the beginning, often by students working in language laboratories on discriminating between members of minimal pairs.

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

The habits of the students' native language are thought to interfere with the students' attempts to master the target language. Therefore, the target language is used in the classroom, not the students' native language. A contrastive analysis between the students' native language and the target language will reveal where a teacher should expect the most interference.

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

The answer to this question is not obvious because we didn't actually observe the students in this class taking a formal test. If we had, we would have seen that it was discrete-point in nature, that is, each question on the test would focus on only one point of the language at a time. Students might be asked to distinguish between words in a minimal pair, for example, or to supply an appropriate verb form in a sentence.

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

Student errors are to be avoided if at all possible, through the teacher's awareness of where the students will have difficulty, and restriction of what they are taught to say.

The Audio-Lingual Method

- Similar to the direct method:
  - They both are oral-based approaches – *pronunciation and ability of speaking in the target language is superior to other skills*
  - Grammar is learnt inductively
- Different from the direct method:
  - Not only vocabulary but also grammatical sentence patterns
  - Stronger theoretical base in linguistics (structural linguistics) and psychology (behavioural psychology)

The following techniques are the main techniques that used in this method. Please read them carefully.

• Dialogue Memorization

Dialogues or short conversations between two people are often used to begin a new lesson. Students memorize the dialogue through mimicry; students usually take the role of one person in the dialogue, and the teacher the other. After the students have learned the first person's lines, they switch roles and memorize the other person's part. Another way of practicing the two roles is for half of the class to take one role and the

other half to take the other. After the dialogue has been memorized, pairs of individual students might perform the dialogue for the rest of the class. In the Audio-Lingual Method, certain sentence patterns and grammar points are included within the dialogue. These patterns and points are later practiced in drills based on the lines of the dialogue.

• Backward Build-up (Expansion) Drill

This drill is used when a long line of a dialogue is giving students trouble. The teacher breaks down the line into several parts. The students repeat a part of the sentence, usually the last phrase of the line. Then, following the teacher's cue, the students expand what they are repeating part by part until they are able to repeat the entire line. The teacher begins with the part at the end of the sentence (and works backward from there) to keep the intonation of the line as natural as possible. This also directs more student attention to the end of the sentence, where new information typically occurs.

• Repetition Drill

Students are asked to repeat the teacher's model as accurately and as quickly as possible. This drill is often used to teach the lines of the dialogue.

• Chain Drill

A chain drill gets its name from the chain of conversation that forms around the room as students, one by one, ask and answer questions of each other. The teacher begins the chain by greeting a particular student, or asking him a question. That student responds, then turns to the student sitting next to him. The first student greets or asks a question of the second student and the chain continues. A chain drill allows some

controlled communication, even though it is limited. A chain drill also gives the teacher an opportunity to check each student's speech.

• Single-slot Substitution Drill

The teacher says a line, usually from the dialogue. Next, the teacher says a word or a phrase (called the cue). The students repeat the line the teacher has given them, substituting the cue into the line in its proper place. The major purpose of this drill is to give the students practice in finding and filling in the slots of a sentence.

• Multiple-slot Substitution Drill

This drill is similar to the single-slot substitution drill. The difference is that the teacher gives cue phrases, one at a time that fit into different slots in the dialogue line. The students must recognize what part of speech each cue is, or at least, where it fits into the sentence, and make any other changes, such as subject–verb agreement. They then say the line, fitting the cue phrase into the line where it belongs.

• Transformation Drill

The teacher gives students a certain kind of sentence pattern, an affirmative sentence for example. Students are asked to transform this sentence into a negative sentence. Other examples of transformations to ask of students are: changing a statement into a question, an active sentence into a passive one, or direct speech into reported speech.

• Question-and-answer Drill

This drill gives students practice with answering questions. The students should answer the teacher's questions very quickly. Although we did not see it in our lesson here, it is also possible for the teacher to cue the

students to ask questions as well. This gives students practice with the question pattern.

• Use of Minimal Pairs

The teacher works with pairs of words which differ in only one sound; for example, 'ship/sheep.' Students are first asked to perceive the difference between the two words and later to be able to say the two words. The teacher selects the sounds to work on after she has done a contrastive analysis, a comparison between the students' native language and the language they are studying.

• Complete the Dialogue

Selected words are erased from a dialogue students have learned. Students complete the dialogue by filling the blanks with the missing words.

• Grammar Game

Games like the Supermarket Alphabet Game described in this chapter are used in the Audio-Lingual Method. The games are designed to get students to practice a grammar point within a context. Students are able to express themselves, although in a limited way. Notice there is also a lot of repetition in this game.