

THE USE OF AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract. The audio-lingual method (ALM) dominated English language teaching (ELT) in the mid-20th century. This article explores the core principles of the ALM, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relevance in modern language learning. While largely superseded by communicative approaches, the ALM’s legacy offers valuable insights. The article concludes by highlighting the importance of a balanced approach in ELT that promotes both accuracy and fluency within a context of meaningful communication.

Keywords: Audio-lingual method, English language teaching, pronunciation, fluency, communication, grammar, drills, behaviorism, communicative approach.

Audio-lingualism is a method of teaching foreign languages that focuses on learning grammar and pronunciation, especially for speaking and listening. It is based on the idea that learning is a process of habit formation, and it uses a lot of repetition and drills to help students learn. In an audio-lingualism classroom, the teacher spends most of the time drilling students on grammar and pronunciation. They also focus on correcting students’ errors.

Audio-lingualism was developed in the 1950s and 60s, when there was a need for large-scale language teaching programs. However, it is not as common today, as other methods, such as communicative language teaching, have become more popular.

The audio-lingual method (ALM) for language learning, similar to the older “direct method.” Both methods avoid using students’ native languages and prioritize direct instruction in the target language. However, ALM differs by focusing on grammar drills rather than vocabulary building. Teachers model correct sentences, and students repeat them. New vocabulary is introduced within these practiced structures. Unlike the direct method, ALM lacks explicit grammar explanation. Instead, students memorize grammatical forms through repetition.

Audio-lingual teaching method is defined as a method which emphasizes on repetition of the words to help the students to be able to use the target language communicatively. The purpose of the repetition/drills is to breakdown the troublesome sentences into smaller part. Drilling is a key feature of audio-lingual approaches to language teaching which placed emphasis on repeating structural patterns through oral practice.

The Core of the ALM:

- Speaking and Listening Take Center Stage: The ALM prioritized spoken English. Students practiced dialogues, mimicked pronunciation patterns, and engaged in drills to internalize grammatical structures.

- Grammar by Osmosis: Formal grammar explanations were scarce. The idea was to learn grammar through consistent exposure and practice in spoken language.

- Limited Native Language Use: The classroom primarily functioned in English, minimizing reliance on students’ native tongues.

- Accuracy Above All: Emphasis was placed on mastering correct sentence structure and achieving native-like pronunciation.

The ALM had its merits. Repetitive drills could refine students’ pronunciation, and speaking activities could boost confidence and fluency in basic conversation. However, limitations emerged:

- Meaning Lost in Repetition: The focus on drills often resulted in rote learning, lacking real-world context and genuine communication.

- Stifling Creativity: The emphasis on accuracy and mimicking could limit students’ ability to express themselves creatively and develop independent language skills.

- Reading and Writing Left Behind: ALM primarily focused on spoken English, neglecting crucial skills like reading and writing.

- The Fear of Mistakes: Constant correction could discourage students and create anxiety about making mistakes, hindering fluency development.

The audio-lingual method is a language teaching method that emphasizes speaking and listening skills. It is based on the idea that learning a language is similar to learning a habit, and that the best way to learn is through repetition and practice. In an audio-lingual classroom, the teacher spends most of the time drilling students on grammar and pronunciation. Students repeat phrases and sentences over and over again, until they can produce them automatically. The teacher also focuses on correcting students’ errors immediately.

The audio-lingual method has been criticized for being too mechanical and for not giving students enough opportunities to communicate in real-world situations. However, it can be an effective way to help students develop good pronunciation and grammar skills. Specific ways that the audio-lingual method can help students improve their speaking skills:

- Repetition helps students to memorize phrases and sentences. This can help them to speak more fluently and confidently.

- Drills help students to practice using grammar correctly. This can help them to avoid making mistakes when they speak.

- Error correction helps students to learn from their mistakes. This can help them to improve their pronunciation and grammar over time.

Conclusion

The audio-lingual method, a product of its time, offers valuable lessons for language learning. While its emphasis on drills might seem outdated, pronunciation practice and focused activities remain valuable tools. Modern approaches, however, recognize the importance of communication, context, and a well-rounded development of all language skills. By combining the best of both worlds, we can create more effective and engaging ways for students to learn English.

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