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M.A. in Linguistics

Subject: Methodology



The Audio-Lingual Method

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2025-2026

Introduction

The Audio-Lingual Method is an oral-based approach to teaching foreign languages that emphasizes drilling students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. Unlike the Direct Method, which emphasizes vocabulary acquisition through exposure to its use in situations, the Audio-Lingual Method focuses on helping learners respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement, so that they can overcome the habits of their native language and form the new habits required to be target language speakers. The method has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology, with Charles Fries of the University of Michigan leading the way in applying principles from structural linguistics in developing the method, for this reason was referred to the method as 'Michigan Method'. Later in its development, principles from behavioral psychology were incorporated

Reviewing the principles

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.

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 is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Language must be used communicatively. Culture consists of the everyday behavior and lifestyle of the target language speakers.

6- 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. Pronunciation is taught from the beginning.

7- What is the role of the students' native language?

The target language is used in the classroom, not the students' native language.

8- How is evaluation accomplished?

It is discrete-point in nature, that is, students will be asked to distinguish between minimal pair

Sheep- ship / Put – pot

9- How does the teacher respond to student errors?

Student errors are to be avoided if at all possible.

Reviewing the Techniques

- Dialogue Memorization

Dialogues are used in lessons to teach students through mimicry, with students taking one role and the teacher the other. After memorizing the first person's lines, they switch roles and practice the other. The Audio-Lingual Method includes sentence patterns and grammar points within the dialogue, which are later practiced in drills.

- Backward Build-up (Expansion) Drill

The drill breaks down a long dialogue into parts, allowing students to repeat the last phrase and expand the rest. The teacher starts at the end of the sentence, maintaining natural intonation, and directs attention to the end, where new information occurs.

TEACHER: Repeat after me: post office. CLASS: Post office. TEACHER: To the post office. CLASS: To the post office. TEACHER: Going to the post office. CLASS: Going to the post office. TEACHER: I'm going to the post office. CLASS: I'm going to the post office.

- Repetition Drill

Students are asked to repeat the teacher's model as accurately and as quickly as possible. For example;

SALLY: Good morning, Bill.

BILL: Good morning, Sally.

SALLY: How are you?

BILL: Fine, thanks. And you?

SALLY: Fine.

Then she has the whole class repeat each of the lines of the dialogue after her model.

- Chain Drill

A chain drill is a controlled conversational activity where students ask and answer each other's questions. This method allows teachers to check each student's speech.

For example;

The teacher addresses the student nearest her with, '*Good morning, Adama.*' He, in turn, responds, '*Good morning, teacher.*' She says, '*How are you?*' Adama answers, '*Fine, thanks. And you?*' The teacher replies, '*Fine.*' He understands through the teacher's gestures that he is to turn to the student sitting beside him and greet her. That student, in turn, says her lines in reply to him.

- Single-slot Substitution Drill

The teacher instructs students to find and fill in sentence slots by repeating a line and substituting a cue, primarily for practice in dialogue. For example;

The teacher says '*I am going to the post office.*' Following this she shows the students a picture of a bank and says the phrase, '*the bank.*' She pauses, then says, '*I am going to the bank.*'

- Multiple-slot Substitution Drill

The drill involves a teacher providing cue phrases to students, the students must identify their part of speech, make changes, and fit them into the dialogue line. For example; the teacher says '*I am going to the post office.*' Then she gives them the cue '*she.*' The students understand and produce, '*She is going to the post office.*'

- Transformation Drill

The teacher gives students a certain kind of sentence pattern, and asks students to change one type of sentence into another. For example;

"They are going to the bank." The class replies in turn, '*Are they going to the bank?*'

- Question-and-answer Drill

The drill helps students practice answering questions quickly, with the teacher cueing them to ask questions, enhancing their comprehension of question patterns.

The teacher holds up a picture of a football field, and asks the class, *'Are you going to the football field?'* She answers her own question, *'Yes, I'm going to the football field.'*

- Use of Minimal Pairs

The teacher uses contrastive analysis to teach students to distinguish between pairs of words with only one sound. The teacher works on the contrast between /i/ and /i:/

Sheep/ ship

- Complete the Dialogue

Students learn a dialogue by erasing selected words and filling the blanks with missing words.

The teacher writes the dialogue on the blackboard. For example

- *'I need a.....'* students reply *'a pen'* she writes them out as the students say.

- Grammar Game

The games are designed to get students to practice a grammar point within a context.

the *'supermarket alphabet game.'* The game starts with a student who needs a food item beginning with the letter 'A.' The student says, *'I am going to the supermarket. I need a few apples.'*