

## **The AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD (ALM)**

### **Introduction**

An audio-lingual Method is 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 sentences 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 behavioural 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 from the new habits required to be target language speakers.

### **Objectives of 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 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.

### **Features of the Audio-Lingual Method**

- 1- Foreign language is the same as any other kind of learning and can be explained by the same laws and principles (Stimulus-Response- Reinforcement).
- 2- Learning is the result of experience and is evident in changes in behaviour. The aim is for linguistic competence and accuracy.
- 3- Foreign language learning is different from first language learning.
- 4- Foreign language learning is a process of habit formation.

- 5- Language learning proceeds by means of analogy (habit- formation involving discrimination and generalization) rather than analysis (deductive learning of rule, as the Grammar Translation Method) and involves attending to form and structure.
- 6- Errors are the result of first language interference and are to be avoided at all costs in the course of instruction. Teachers must specify what language the student will use and control student interaction with the language.
- 7- Focuses on all its practices and procedures shifted from reading, translating and deductive explanation of grammar rules to the listening, speaking and the inductive presentation of language patterns in the spoken language.

### **The Techniques of ALM**

Dialogues and pattern practice form the basis of audiolingual classroom practice. The use of them is a distinctive feature of the Audiolingual Method. The techniques used by the Audiolingual Method are:

1. Repetition drill: this drill is often used to teach the lines of the dialogue. Students are asked to repeat the teacher's model as accurately and as quickly as possible.
2. Single- slot substitution drill: the teacher says a line, usually from the dialogue. Next, the teacher says a word or a phrase (called cue). The students repeat the line from the dialogue which 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.
3. Question-and-answer drill : this drill gives students practice with answering questions. The students should answer the teacher's question 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.
4. Expansion drill : this drill helps students to produce longer sentence bit by bit, gradually achieving fluency. The main structure is repeated first, then students have to put cue phrase in its proper place. e.g.

5. 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.

6. Backward build-up drill: this drill is used when a long line of 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 backwards 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.

7. Chain drill : a chain drill gets its name from the chain of conversation that forms around the classroom 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 and 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.

8. 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.

9. 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. Another example of transformations to ask of students are: changing a statement into a question, an active sentence into a passive one, or direct into reported speech.

10. Use of minimal pairs : the teacher works with a pair of words which differ in only one sound; for example, 'ship/ sheep'. Students are first asked to find the difference between the two words and later 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.

11. Grammar game: 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.

12. Dialogue memorization: Dialogue 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 practising 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.

## **Advantages**

1. It was the first method which was based on scientific linguistic and psychological theories.
2. With its simpler techniques, this method widened the scope of the language learner.
3. Syntactic progression of language patterns receives more importance than vocabulary and morphology.
4. Language learning involved in learning different skills.
5. They promote the use of a simple technique

## **Disadvantages**

Despite these advantages, ALM started to be criticized in the 1960s from different sources: first, between 1966 and 1972 Chomsky initiated a prolonged and heated debate on the method's language and learning principles. Secondly, it was found that the ALM didn't act as the panacea

for teachers who started to complain that not all their needs were met by this method. In addition, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the mechanical drills in classes and called them tedious and tiresome. They complained that what they acquired was more like parroting and less like real communication the required outside of their classrooms.

For these reasons, since 1970 audio- lingual as a method came to its end, even though parts of it still continue to be used in the modern language teaching methods.