

THE VARIOUS METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOL

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**Annotation:** *language education is a dynamic and evolving field, marked by a rich tapestry of teaching methods designed to impart proficiency in English. This comprehensive exploration delves into various approaches that have shaped language instruction over time, illuminating both traditional and contemporary methodologies. By scrutinizing the Grammar-Translation Method and the Direct Method, as well as delving into the Audio-Lingual Method, Visual Teaching Method, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method, this study aims to provide educators with a nuanced understanding of these approaches and guide them in crafting inclusive and effective language learning environments. The Audio-Lingual Method, deeply rooted in behaviorist theory, once thrived on repetitive drills and pattern practice without explicit grammar instruction. Its decline, marked by criticism and the emergence of more effective teaching approaches, has not eradicated its influence entirely. Remnants persist in contemporary language education, often relegated to individual lessons, though they continue to draw criticism for their teacher-centered and mechanical nature.*

**Key words:** *audio-lingualism, Charles Carpenter Fries, visual aids, feedback, audiolingual methods.*

The audio-lingual method or Army Method is a method used in teaching foreign languages. It is based on behaviorist theory, which postulates that certain traits of living things, and in this case humans, could be trained through a system of reinforcement. The correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback while incorrect use of that trait would receive negative feedback.<sup>1</sup> This approach to

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<sup>1</sup> Reimann, Andrew. "Behaviorist Learning Theory". pp. 1–6. 2018.

language learning was similar to another, earlier method called the direct method.<sup>2</sup> Like the direct method, the audio-lingual method advised that students should be taught a language directly, without using the students' native language to explain new words or grammar in target language. However, unlike the direct method, the audio-lingual method did not focus on teaching vocabulary. Rather, the teacher drilled students in the use of grammar. Applied to language instruction, and often within the context of the language lab, it means that the instructor would present the correct model of a sentence and the students would have to repeat it. The teacher would then continue by presenting new words for the students to sample in the same structure. In audio-lingualism, there is no explicit grammar instruction: everything is simply memorized in form. The idea is for the students to practice the particular construct until they can use it spontaneously. The lessons are built on static drills in which the students have little or no control on their own output; the teacher is expecting a particular response and not providing the desired response will result in a student receiving negative feedback. This type of activity, for the foundation of language learning, is in direct opposition with communicative language teaching. Charles Carpenter Fries, the director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, the first of its kind in the United States, believed that learning structure or grammar was the starting point for the student. In other words, it was the students' job to recite the basic sentence patterns and grammatical structures. The students were given only "enough vocabulary to make such drills possible." (Richards, J.C. et-al. 1986). Fries later included principles of behavioural psychology, as developed by B.F. Skinner, into this method.

Drills and pattern practice are typical in this method:

Repetition: the student repeats an utterance as soon as she hears it.

Inflection: one word in a sentence appears in another form when repeated.

Replacement: one word is replaced by another.

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<sup>2</sup> Felder, Richard. "Foreign Language Annals". *Learning and Teaching Styles in Foreign and Second Language Education*. 28 (1): 21–31. 1995.

Restatement: the student rephrases an utterance.

Examples

Inflection: Teacher: I ate the sandwich. Student: I ate the sandwiches.

Replacement: Teacher: He bought the car for half-price. Student: He bought it for half-price.

Restatement: Teacher: Tell me not to smoke so often. Student: Don't smoke so often!

The following example illustrates how more than one sort of drill can be incorporated into one practice session:

“Teacher: There's a cup on the table ... repeat

Students: There's a cup on the table

Teacher: Spoon

Students: There's a spoon on the table

Teacher: Book

Students: There's a book on the table

Teacher: On the chair

Students: There's a book on the chair

etc.”

The method is the product of three historical circumstances. For its views on language, it drew on the work of American linguists such as Leonard Bloomfield. The prime concern of American linguists in the early decades of the 20th century had been to document all the indigenous languages spoken in the US. However, because of the dearth of trained native teachers who would provide a theoretical description of the native languages, linguists had to rely on observation. For the same reason, a strong focus on oral language was developed.

At the same time, behaviourist psychologists such as B.F. Skinner were forming the belief that all behaviour (including language) was learnt through repetition and positive or negative reinforcement. The third factor was the outbreak of World War II, which created the need to post large number of American servicemen all over the world. It was, therefore, necessary to provide

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these soldiers with at least basic verbal communication skills. Unsurprisingly, the new method relied on the prevailing scientific methods of the time, observation and repetition, which were also admirably suited to teaching en masse. Because of the influence of the military, early versions of the audio-lingualism came to be known as the “army method.”<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1950s, the theoretical underpinnings of the method were questioned by linguists such as Noam Chomsky, who pointed out the limitations of structural linguistics. The relevance of behaviorist psychology to language learning was also questioned, most famously by Chomsky's review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* in 1959. The audio-lingual method was thus deprived of its scientific credibility and it was only a matter of time before the effectiveness of the method itself was questioned.

In 1964, Wilga Rivers released a critique of the method in her book, *The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher*. Some of the critique, namely its contention that audiolingual methods originated from Skinnerian radical behaviorism, was shown by Peter J. Castagnaro in 2006 to be misinformed.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless at the time, research by others, inspired by her book, produced results which showed explicit grammatical instruction in the mother language to be more productive than audiolingualism. These developments, coupled with the emergence of humanist pedagogy led to a rapid decline in the popularity of audiolingualism.

Philip Smith's study from 1965-1969, termed the Pennsylvania Project, provided significant proof that audio-lingual methods were less effective than a more traditional cognitive approach involving the learner's first language.<sup>5</sup>

Despite being debunked as an effective teaching approach in 1970, the audio-lingual method persists in contemporary language education, albeit no

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<sup>3</sup> Wilfried Decoo, "On The Mortality of Language Learning Methods" Archived 2018-02-15 at the Wayback Machine. Speech November 8, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Castagnaro, Peter J. "Audiolingual Method and Behaviorism: From Misunderstanding to Myth". *Applied Linguistics*. 27 (3): 519–526. September 2006.

<sup>5</sup> James L. Barker lecture Archived at the Wayback Machine on November 8, 2001 at Brigham Young University, given by Wilfried Decoo. January 12, 2009.

longer as the primary foundation of courses. Instead, it is often relegated to individual lessons. Despite its continued use, this method faces ongoing criticism. Jeremy Harmer, for instance, highlights that the audio-lingual methodology tends to exclude language processing that aids students in internalizing new language information independently. This teacher-centered approach remains popular among educators and learners due to its predictable input-output structure.

Notably, hybrid approaches have emerged, such as the one found in the textbook "Japanese: The Spoken Language" (1987–90), which combines repetition and drills with detailed grammar explanations in English.

Efforts by Butzkamm and Caldwell seek to revive traditional pattern practice through bilingual semi-communicative drills. They base the theoretical justification for pattern drills on the generative principle, which underscores the human ability to generate an infinite number of sentences from finite grammatical competence.

### Main Features:

- Each language skill (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is treated separately.
- While writing and reading are not neglected, the primary emphasis is on listening and speaking.
- Dialogues play a central role, serving as the primary means of presenting language items.
- Pattern drills are essential for language teaching and learning.
- The language laboratory is introduced as a significant teaching aid.
- Similar to the direct method, the mother tongue is not heavily emphasized but is not entirely disregarded.

### Techniques:

- Skills are taught in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Dialogues with useful vocabulary and common communication structures are used to teach language.

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- Reading and writing are introduced after oral lessons, establishing a connection between speech and writing.

- Emphasis on accurate pronunciation through listening and mimicking.

- Writing initially involves transcriptions and later progresses to composition reports based on oral lessons.

Emphasizing the Audio:

- Listening is considered crucial in developing speaking proficiency.

- Speaking is viewed as effective through listening, fostering accurate articulation and memorization.

- The time interval between listening experience and speaking practice is not clearly defined.

- Listening comprehension, often neglected, is seen as foundational for speaking.

Aims:

- Oral skills are systematically used to emphasize communication.

- Practice is central to language learning within this method.

- Oral learning is stressed, even when reading and writing are introduced.

- Learners are expected to speak, read, and write in a strict order of material.

Advantages:

- Emphasis on rigorous development of listening and speaking skills.

- Effective use of visual aids in vocabulary teaching.

- Functional for larger groups.

- Emphasis on correct pronunciation and structure acquisition.

Disadvantages:

- Behaviorist approach is discredited.

- Inadequate attention to communicative competence.

- Overemphasis on language form, neglecting meaning.

- Unequal importance given to the four language skills.

- Teacher-dominated and mechanical, focusing on pattern practice, drilling, and memorization over organic usage.

- Learners have limited control over their learning and are often in a passive role.

In conclusion, the exploration extends to the Audio-Lingual Method, which emerged from behaviorist theory during World War II. Despite its initial popularity, it faced criticism for its lack of scientific credibility, leading to its decline. The Visual Teaching Method, responding to the demands of remote and hybrid classrooms, recognizes the importance of visual aids. Despite challenges in technology integration, visual teaching strategies offer benefits like improved attention and increased retention.

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