

## **Audio-Lingual Method in ELT**

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**Abstract:** The Audio- Lingual Method is one of the teaching methods of English in 1940s-1950s. Majority of the English teachers also preferred the Audio-Lingual method. This method of teaching had an interesting story and with the advent of new technology audio lingual method turn out to be the part of the history of English language teaching methods. The following paragraphs give a brief description about the audio lingual method.

**Keywords:** Audio- Lingual Method, English, English language teaching.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Audio-lingual method can be described as a method which thrives on listening-speaking-reading and writing skills with decreasing importance. The listening and speaking skills are given priority. The instructors in this method believe that the spoken language comes first and then the written skills. Further, they assume that if the foreign speaker of English does not have the basic skills of language, he will not be able to understand the complex structure of literature. Therefore, the speech gains the topmost priority in this method of language teaching. The method has been set on the theory of Behaviourism founded by B F Skinner which assumes that learning language is like learning a new 'behaviour'[1,2].

Therefore, the learners are 'organism' who learns a new language based on the model of Behaviourism. A foreign language serves as 'stimuli to the learner who is an 'organism. Depending on his behaviour, the positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement is given to him/her. If the instructor wants to make the particular behaviour reoccur, he would reinforce the behaviour or else curb down by not showing any interest. Thus, the method would heavily depend on repetition, drill and the accurate instruction of the instructor for its success.

### **AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD**

The emergence of this method has a very interesting history. Unlike other methods of language learning, Audio-lingual method has its root in the World War II. The United States entered into the World War II and started to feel the need of foreign language tuitions. They wanted to teach the soldiers the basics of all the major languages such as German, French, Italian and Chinese so that the soldiers are better equipped to face the situation in the World War II. The Government

of America commissioned all the universities to develop a foreign language programme so that the army personnel can be trained in the foreign languages. The aim of this programme was to enable its students the conversational proficiency in variety of foreign languages. Although, this drive to teach foreign languages for army personnel lasted only two years, it began a new mode of teaching language in America. The, then linguists like Leonard Bloomfield and his colleagues tried to set a language teaching method in the form of "informant method" [3] "which served as a source of phrase and vocabulary and who provided sentences for imitation, and a linguist, who supervised the learning experience" (p.51). Later in 1939, Charles Fries, the director of the first English Language Institution in the United States set forth his principles in *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945) in which the problems of learning a foreign language were credited to the clash of different structural systems (i.e. differences between the grammatical and phonological patterns of the native tongue and the target language)[4]. This led to the development of Oral Approach, the Aural-Oral Approach and the Structural Approach by the linguists at Michigan. It advocated "aural training first, then pronunciation training, followed by speaking, reading and writing" [4]. The culmination of all these approaches in the mid-fifties came to be known as Audiolingualism. Audiolingualism claimed to have distorted language teaching from an art to a science, which would enable learners to attain mastery of a foreign language successfully and efficiently[5].

Audiolingualism derives its theoretical support from *structural linguistics* proposed by American linguists in 1950s. The structural linguistics is nothing but a reaction against traditional grammar method of teaching a foreign language. The linguists discovered

new sound types and new patterns of linguistic invention and organization, a new interest in phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax developed[6].

A sophisticated methodology for collecting and analyzing data developed, which involved transcribing spoken utterances in a language phonetically and later working out the phonemic, morphological (stem, prefixes, suffixes etc), and syntactic language. Another important tenet of structural linguistics was that primary medium of language is oral; therefore 'speech is language'. Brook [7] went on to say that "language is primarily what is spoken and only secondarily what is written".

The books like *English 900* and the *Lado English Series* speak voluminously about the wide spread of the audio-lingual method in American universities and among the linguists in the 1960s. But it fell out of the practice as the time moved on. The Audiolingualism was attacked as being unsound both in terms of language theory and learning theory. The practitioners found that the practical results fell short of expectations. The students were found to be out of skills in real world situations after acquiring the skills from this method[8]. Many found this method as boring and unsatisfactory[9].

## CONCLUSION

Audiolingualism holds that in learning language speech comes first. Therefore, one should observe the way a native speaker and his skills and then learn to get a hang of the structural pattern of the second language. Audiolingualism also focuses on the language as being formal, rule-governed system which can be organized to maximize teaching and learning efficiency.

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