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Barbara L. Barnes

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PROPOSALS FOR MODIFICATION OF THE AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the limitations of the audio-lingual method and to investigate proposals for the modification of this method of teaching foreign languages in high school.

Five limitations of the method were established through a review of literature: 1. Preparation of foreign language teachers; 2. Passive responding and robot repetition in the foreign language classroom; 3. Rigid and lock-step nature of foreign language learning that does not allow for individual differences; 4. Involvement of the senses in foreign language learning; 5. Use of English explanations in the foreign language classroom.

A further extensive review of literature yielded information that allowed the researcher to offer proposals intended to modify the audio-lingual method.

Proposal I. Colleges and universities in the United States which train foreign language teachers should take the initiative to develop meaningful programs to prepare future teachers to meet the demanding role of foreign language teaching.

Proposal II. A variety of techniques and activities should be employed to eliminate passive responding.

Proposal III. Foreign language teachers should recognize their students' individuality and realize that the audio-lingual method can be adapted to a program that stresses individualized instruction.

Proposal IV. Associations other than hearing should be stressed at the outset of foreign language learning.

Proposal V. English should be used in the language classroom only when necessary, preferably in a portion of the classroom period set aside for that purpose.

Proposal VI. Electronic equipment should be thoughtfully used to full advantage in the foreign language classroom.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is no inherent magic in the teaching of foreign languages. (21:143) Evidence of this reality is the fact that high schools, colleges, and universities are relaxing or eliminating their language requirements. Indeed, language study is no longer a pre-requisite for a bachelor's degree or for an advanced degree in many institutions. And in the United States where students cry for relevant studies, foreign languages often take a back seat to sociology, ecology, and sex education.

> This is an age frustrated by economic squeeze and ardent cries for relevant curriculum expansion. Caught between the tensions of these opposing forces, the foreign language teacher is forced into the bitter awareness of his own ineffectual efforts and the need for thorough reevaluation so as to rekindle intellectual and pedagogical enthusiasm. (62:855)

In an effort to give credibility to foreign language programs and to foreign language learning today, one can find many valid reasons for studying a foreign language. There are many opportunities to work abroad in fields that are oversupplied in the United States. For example, at this time Germany needs teachers and construction workers. The Peace Corps also provides work in foreign countries but requires applicants to know how to speak the language of the

country in which they work. And large corporations such as IBM and Westinghouse employ Americans in their international offices.

There are even work opportunities at home that require the knowledge of a foreign language. Rachel Deutch reports that students with language skills in Washington, D.C. secure summer employment with travel agencies, the Department of State, and the International Bank. (16:641) Some other real-work possibilities for young people with a basic knowledge of a foreign language exist in radio, television, movies, beauty parlors, restaurants, and as overseas operators.

Study opportunities are plentiful all over the world. School bulletin boards in the United States are jammed with brochures and pamphlets offering scholarships for foreign study. But it would be difficult to study at a foreign school or university without knowing the language of the country.

Foreign travel for pleasure, no longer an isolated experience but a way of life for many Americans, is enhanced and made easier with a speaking knowledge of at least one foreign language.

In an attempt to prepare young people for the oppor-

tunities that foreign language study affords, the audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages, popular in American high schools today, emphasizes an aural-oral approach to language learning. The premise of this method suggests that while reading a language or understanding its grammar are valid skills, the most basic language skill is speaking. Therefore, oral communication is stressed.

Although many foreign language departments support this theory and subscribe to the method, educators claim that there are serious limitations in the audio-lingual method. These limitations hinder the method's effectiveness. Thus, the limitations of the audio-lingual method and a search for proposals that would attempt to modify them were the concern of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the limitations of the audio-lingual method and to investigate proposals for the modification of this method of teaching foreign languages in high school.

Need or Purpose of the Study

This study was important because the relevance of foreign language study in the high school curriculum is currently being questioned. Language study is relevant if languages are learned to fulfill the purpose for which language was created: to communicate. Communicating by means of language may take a spoken or a written form. And the basic philosophy of the audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages is that language should be learned for oral communication.

> Whether or not an individual becomes literate, the language he speaks remains throughout his life a dominant factor in his personality, the core of his inner thought, and by all odds the most utilized contact with his fellow man. We may safely conclude that language always has occurred and always will occur chiefly in its audio-lingual form. (8:24-25)

However, researchers and educators have shown that there are many factors which limit the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method. There is a need to modify the limitations which now hinder the method so that its basic philosophy might be made clearer and so that a more practical and valuable method of teaching foreign languages might result.

General Questions to be Answered

The questions answered by this study were:

1. What proposals can be offered to modify the limitations of the audio-lingual method?
2. How will these proposals enhance the audio-lingual method?
3. Do these proposals further the philosophy that language should be learned for oral communication?
4. Do these proposals make foreign language study more relevant to the high school curriculum?

General Procedure

A review of literature defined the most serious limitations of the audio-lingual method as set forth by researchers and educators. After establishing these limitations, the researcher examined and studied the most recent research and literature available concerning foreign language learning and teaching and the audio-lingual method to discover what ideas had evolved since the audio-lingual method had become widely used in foreign language classrooms. The findings of research and the views presented in

education journals and foreign language periodicals were evaluated on the basis of their ability to eliminate one or more of the limitations of the audio-lingual method. The most applicable ideas have been stated as proposals to modify the audio-lingual method.

Delimitations of the Study

Researchers and educators vary as to what factors are limitations to the audio-lingual method. Only those limitations that have been most often repeated or those that impose the greatest handicap to foreign language learning have been considered in this study.

The use of the audio-lingual method as it applies to use in high schools has been the only consideration of this study.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study:

The audio-lingual (audiolingual) method refers to the method of teaching foreign languages that states that language skills are learned in the following sequence: listening, speaking, reading, writing . It also states that lan-

guage is learned for oral communication.

Language lab refers to a classroom or part of a classroom where students may individually practice listening and speaking skills using headphones, microphone, tapes and recorder. The teacher may or may not have the necessary equipment to listen to and to respond to each student individually.

Pattern practice refers to a series of basic sentences which provide for variations in nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech. According to the audio-lingual method these sentences and substitutions illustrate the grammatical construction of a foreign language without the need of English explanation.

Dialogue sentences refer to sentences at the beginning of each chapter of the foreign language text which introduce new vocabulary and illustrate typical conversational situations in the foreign language.

Language for oral communication refers to learning a foreign language to the extent that a high school student would be able to express himself in a conversation and would be able to understand the language when it was spoken in a conversational manner.

Summary

A study to investigate proposals for the modification of the audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages was needed for two reasons: 1. to strengthen a method of teaching languages that is most in harmony with the purpose of language and 2. to insure the relevancy of foreign language study in the high school curriculum.

Research that has been conducted and articles and books that have been published concerning the audio-lingual method and foreign language study and teaching have been consulted in an effort to determine the most effective proposals that can be made to enhance the method.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature provided a brief explanation of the purpose of foreign language study. The widely used audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages was examined with regard to this purpose.

With the purpose of foreign language study in mind, the advantages and disadvantages of the audio-lingual method were set forth. These advantages and disadvantages were those understood and accepted by educators and researchers in the field of foreign languages.

The review of literature was pertinent to the study, because it showed that although the basic philosophy of the audio-lingual method is congruent with the purpose of foreign language study, the method has limitations that prevent complete fulfillment of that purpose.

The Purpose of Foreign Language Study

"A language is a vehicle of communication." (21:143) Although this might seem to be a very obvious statement to make, it is necessary that it be stated clearly, because the topic under consideration is language learning for oral

communication as advocated by the audio-lingual approach.

> Language is essentially sound; it consists of human oral communication. Graphic symbols are inadequate for representing the many nuances of the spoken tongue. In fact, language is not primarily the written form but the spoken, everyday language of the ordinary person. (14:48)

In the 1800's a grammar-translation approach to foreign language learning was popular in the United States. "Conversational skills in the foreign language, which the curriculum and methods of the schools had failed to give, was offered by a growing group of language merchants, the best known of whom was Maximilian Berlitz, who had started a language school in Providence in 1878." (39:148)

In 1892 a description of the direct method was issued by twelve prominent American language teachers who were asked to advise the National Education Association on language teaching. Briefly, the direct method advocated learning language in a natural way with speaking as the first skill acquired. All classroom work was oral. However, a reading knowledge of a foreign language continued to be the goal of language learning in the United States until World War II.

At the outset of World War II the armed forces could not supply men to speak foreign languages. "So out of wartime needs arose a... method which was to have a revital-

izing effect upon language pedagogy in the United States - the so-called 'Army method.'" (14:40) "The objective was fourfold: speaking, understanding, reading, and writing." (14:42)

After World War II educators were not immediately convinced by the armed forces' success with language learning.

> Language for communication became the dominant emphasis after 1953 in the new American method of teaching modern foreign languages. Taking its cue from the success of the Army method, this new technique stressed a natural order in teaching the language skills: a progression from listening to foreign language speech patterns, to active speaking, reading, and writing. (14:47)

In the 1950's the term aural-oral used by the armed forces came to be known as audio-lingual. By adopting the audio-lingual method, educators were not turning suddenly to new ideas and concepts. This method of language learning had already been advocated by proponents of the direct method and by language merchants such as Berlitz long before the Army's application. The strength of the "Army method" seems to have been the fact that it was able to influence a change in foreign language teaching that had not been possible before. The impact of the success of the armed forces' language learning programs was responsible for developing "a

strong feeling among many individuals connected with education, that the primary goal of FL study in the school ought to be the development of oral skills." (31:250-51)

The launch of Sputnik in 1957, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, greater world involvement of the United States, the tremendous influence of television via satellite from all points of the earth, and unlimited opportunities to travel have provided further impetus for the teaching of foreign languages with an emphasis on oral communication. "The major objective, today,... is to be able to converse with native speakers and understand the spoken form of the foreign language." (2:18-19)

The Audio-Lingual Method

The audio-lingual method is based upon a natural progression; the same sequence followed by everyone who learns to speak as a young child. There is, at first, a period of listening followed by verbal imitation of what is heard. Gradually, the words, phrases, and sentences that are heard form logical patterns. When this happens, the person learning the language no longer needs to imitate. He begins to compose his own thoughts and to communicate them to others. According to Robert Lado, "speaking and listening are total

language experiences." (34:44) After skill is demonstrated in listening and speaking, reading and writing are introduced.

To insure the opportunity for speaking the language, students are involved in listening-speaking (aural-oral) exercises from the first day of class. Sometimes no books are used by the students. Therefore, the students must listen to their teacher or to a speaker on a tape or record and imitate what they hear. The repeated sentences form dialogues and the dialogues are memorized, hopefully to perfection. Memory is aided by the practice received in imitating and repeating. Dialogues are expanded and become the basis for classroom conversation. This conversation, however, is still quite structured and guided by the teacher.

Construction of the language (grammar) is learned by drilling pattern practices. Pattern practices are oral drills of basic sentences into which the student must plug the proper subject, verb, or adjective.

Texts and workbooks are slowly introduced, reading begins and written assignments, especially those that reinforce pattern practice drills, are given. Oral work is still the basis for classwork, and visual aids (pictures, slides, films) are used to stimulate class discussions. The

teacher is no longer the only guide. At this stage, students may begin to compose short paragraphs and to read more extensively.

Advantages of the Audio-Lingual Method

One advantage of the audio-lingual method, the reason for its existence, is that it is designed to teach language for oral communication. The goal is achieved by working intensely in the foreign language. "The aim is not merely to expose students to the language... but, by intensive and continuous drill, to lead them to a high degree of mastery, or near-native proficiency in the language." (2:11)

A second advantage is that both the teacher and the student are active participants in the learning process, each using the language to his capacity. "The truest axiom in all education is that people learn by <u>doing</u>." (21:142)

Thirdly, the dialogues, pattern practices, and conversations resemble, as closely as possible, actual vocabulary and speaking situations of the language and its country. "... [T]he student must be <u>actively</u> involved at every moment in his learning of the language and... the materials used must resemble as closely as possible a real life communica-

tion situation..." (6:28)

Limitations of the Audio-Lingual Method

The first limitation of the audio-lingual method is the lack of qualified teachers in the audio-lingual classroom. "The approach [audio-lingual approach] is found to be effective only if the teacher has at his command a knowledge of the characteristics of both native and target languages, ...a command of effective teaching techniques, and understanding of second language learning and the nature of the learner himself." (6:29) Although many teachers are prepared in these areas, many others are deficient. Walter Kaulfers predicted that in the future foreign language teachers would be certified on the basis of their speaking, reading, and writing knowledge of the particular language they plan to teach. (33:392) Stephen Freeman went further to say that it was necessary for the foreign language teacher to spend time in the country whose language he teaches. (21:145)

Another limitation of the audio-lingual method is that the basic listening-imitating process can produce automatic, robot-type responses that may lack meaning for a student. Freeman said, "Our audio-lingual approach is... a

repetetive exercise, often passive repetition in chorus, often lacking in real content,..." (21:142)

The audio-lingual method is also seen as rigid and lockstep in nature. Little attention, if any, is given to individual differences. Everyone is expected to grasp material simultaneously and to progress at the same rate. The use of mass repetition mentioned previously reflects a lack of concern for individual need. And language labs and tape recorders are often used to reach all students at the same time. "... [T]he foreign language curriculum has traditionally been and continues to be, for the most part, lockstep in nature: the same approach, the same amount of time, and a determined level of proficiency expected of one and all," (59:85)

Leon Jakobovits expressed another concern for the robot nature of the method when he noted that the emphasis for learning is on hearing, practically to the exclusion of the other senses. He felt that other associations would aid learning for many students. (31:37)

A final disadvantage or limitation of the audio-lingual method is the restriction that is placed on English explanations for grammatical structures or English explanations of any kind. Students are supposed to deduce the

answers from the pattern practice exercises. When no explanations for grammar are given it seems to discount "...the individual's desire to understand what he is doing." (53:120) And although the foreign language is stressed, it often appears to be forced to the point of frustration and confusion.

Summary

The object of foreign language study is communication, primarily oral communication. And the basic philosophy of the audio-lingual method is in harmony with that objective.

Educators and researchers agreed on some advantages of the audio-lingual method. These were an emphasis on speaking the foreign language, active particpation of students to that end, and simulation of language patterns and cultural situations.

The disadvantages or limitations of the method according to the literature reviewed were poorly qualified teachers, robot-type answers in drill exercises, a rigid, lockstep organization, and the necessity for students to deduce grammatical constructions of the foreign language without benefit of English explanation.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate proposals for the modification of the audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages in high school.

This chapter explains the procedure used to investigate and to examine the most recent research and literature in an effort to offer proposals that would eliminate the current deficiencies of the audio-lingual method.

Investigation

The investigation was concerned with an inquiry into the possible modification of the following limitations observed in the audio-lingual method:

1. Poorly qualified teachers
2. Automatic, robot-type oral student responses
3. Rigidity; lack of concern for students' individual differences
4. Emphasis on hearing to the exclusion of other stimuli (e.g. visual)
5. No English spoken in the classroom even for clarification or explanation of the foreign language.

Method of Research

Information was collected by conducting an extensive review of literature including education journals, foreign language periodicals and current books.

From the limitations of the audio-lingual method cited in Chapter II, the researcher established five areas around which to organize the findings of the review of literature. It was hoped that the review would yield information about the following:

1. Preparation of foreign language teachers
2. Passive responding and robot repetition in the foreign language classroom
3. Rigid and lockstep nature of foreign language learning that does not allow for individual differences in the foreign language classroom
4. Involvement of the senses in foreign language learning
5. Use of English explanations in the foreign language classroom.

In order to determine the validity of choosing these five areas as areas that needed to be researched, the frequency with which these subjects were discussed in the books and journal articles reviewed was recorded on a table that

may be found on page 22.

The findings from research and literature are stated in Chapter IV. Each of the five areas is discussed and proposals are offered to modify the current limitations of the audio-lingual method in Chapter V. Chapter V also offers the researcher's recommendations for future consideration and research.

Summary

The chapter stated the problem of the research including the five areas of basic concern to the audio-lingual method of foreign language learning. The method of research was explained.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The five areas considered in the review of research and literature were:

1. Preparation of foreign language teachers
2. Passive responding and robot repetition in the foreign language classroom
3. Rigid and lockstep nature of foreign language learning that does not allow for individual differences in the foreign language classroom
4. Involvement of the senses in foreign language learning
5. Use of English explanations in the foreign language classroom.

Each area is reviewed in this chapter.

The findings presented in Chapter IV are preceded by Table I which cites the literature that was reviewed and shows the frequency with which each of the five limiting areas of the audio-lingual method was discussed.

TABLE 1. TOPICS CITED IN REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

AUTHOR	BIBLIOGRAPHY NUMBER	TEACHER TRAINING	PASSIVE REPETITION	LOCKSTEP NATURE	SENSE ASSOCIATIONS	ENGLISH USE	OTHER
Allen	1	x	x	x			
Allen	2	x		x			Lab
Altman	3					x	
Altman	4			x			
Berwald	5				x		Tech.
Birkmaier	6	x		x			Tech.
Birkmaier	7		x			x	
Brooks	8	x			x	x	Lab

Lab - Language Laboratory

Tech. - Technology

x - Indicates which of the limitations of the audio-lingual method was discussed in the book or article

TABLE I (Continued)

AUTHOR	BIBLIOGRAPHY NUMBER	TEACHER TRAINING	PASSIVE REPETITION	LOCKSTEP NATURE	SENSE ASSOCIATIONS	ENGLISH USE	OTHER
Brooks	9	x					
Brooks	10	x					
Caros	12				x	x	Tech.
Childers	14	x		x	x		Lab
del Olmo	15	x					
Deutch	16			x			
Edgerton	17	x					
Edgerton	18	x					
Fearing	19			x			
Ford	20				x		
Freeman	21	x		x			
Gardner	22		x				
Ghan, Rickel	23		x				
Hammerly	24		x			x	
Hanzeli	25			x			

TABLE I (Continued)

AUTHOR	BIBLIOGRAPHY NUMBER	TEACHER TRAINING	PASSIVE REPETITION	LOCKSTEP NATURE	SENSE ASSOCIATIONS	ENGLISH USE	OTHER
Hanzeli	26			x			
Hayes, Lambert, Tucker	27	x					Lab
Hernick, Kennedy	28			x			
Hocking	29						Tech.
Jakobovits	30			x			
Jakobovits	31	x		x	x		
Kalivoda, Morain, Elkins	32		x		x		
Kaulfers	33	x					
Lado	34				x		Lab
Lado	35		x				
Lewis	36		x			x	
McArdle	38	x					
Mackey	39	x	x		x	x	Tech.
Mildenberger	40	x					

TABLE I (Continued)

AUTHOR	BIBLIOGRAPHY NUMBER	TEACHER TRAINING	PASSIVE REPETITION	LOCKSTEP NATURE	SENSE ASSOCIATIONS	ENGLISH USE	OTHER
Moskowitz	41	x					
Mueller	42			x	x	x	
Perkins	45	x					
Politzer	47	x					
Politzer	48	x	x				
Politzer	49	x		x			
Rallo	50			x			
Reinert	52			x			
Rivers	53	x	x	x	x	x	Lab
Rosenbaum	54			x			Tech.
Schramm	56						Tech.
Schwartz	57		x				
Shepherd	58	x		x			
Smith	59			x			

TABLE I (Continued)

AUTHOR	BIBLIOGRAPHY NUMBER	TEACHER TRAINING	PASSIVE REPETITION	LOCKSTEP NATURE	SENSE ASSOCIATIONS	ENGLISH USE	OTHER
Smith	60						Lab
Sweet	61		x				
Tiefenbrun	62	x	x		x		
TOTALS		25	14	21	12	9	14

Teacher Preparation

Since the topic of teacher preparation was the topic most often cited in the review of research and literature (see page 22), it suggests that a qualified classroom teacher is the number one concern in the foreign language classroom.

It was necessary to determine what being a qualified foreign language teacher means. Qualifications are of two kinds: 1. professional and 2. personal.

Professionally, the foreign language teacher "... should have native or native-like competence in speaking, reading, and writing the language..." (27:27) he teaches. Also, the qualified teacher is the teacher who has "...knowledge about what language is... about what it means to know how to use a language and to be bilingual... and about the factors that affect the learning process." (31:104) And there were many who believed that the training of the qualified foreign language teacher should extend beyond the knowledge of his language and theories of language pedagogy. Mills F. Edgerton, Jr. said, "Without a basic knowledge of sociology, anthropology, and social psychology the foreign-language teacher of today is an antediluvian anachronism." (18:198) Nelson Brooks reflected the same opinion. He

said, "Basic training for teaching the new approach requires that the prospective teacher probe into a number of related fields for a clearer understanding of the nature of language and how it functions and how to teach it." (10:358)

Not every foreign language major who plans to teach has the opportunity or the funds to live in a foreign country to perfect his language skills. Nor does this same person necessarily realize the scope of the implications of his chosen profession so that his program of studies might be broad and inclusive. Therefore, the responsibility falls to colleges and universities to re-evaluate their programs for foreign language majors who plan to teach. Kenneth Mildenberger stated, "The relationship of language programs in institutions of higher education to those in school systems is characterized by anything from total indifference to constructive cooperation." (40:35) Yet these institutions have a duty toward future foreign language teachers. Encouragement came from Richard J. McArdle who told of a program for training foreign language teachers at the University of Nebraska. In an article in Foreign Language Annals, (38:293-298) he explained that after completing student teaching, each foreign language student involved in the program was evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Identifying the educational objectives of the school in which he student taught and the educational objectives of his own subject area
2. Writing four behavioral objectives for his subject
3. Operating or explaining an overhead projector, an opaque projector, a 16mm projector, slide and film-strip projectors, tape recorder, duplicating machine, copying machine, and language laboratory
4. Taking an example of language teaching, analyzing it through instructional behaviors, groups of behaviors, and discussing a rationale for those behaviors
5. Demonstrating a given behavior in a micro-teaching situation
6. Implementing all types of audio-lingual drills
7. Discussing psychological and emotional problems of second language learning, especially regarding the audio-lingual method, and how to overcome them
8. Writing a lesson plan that would lead to a stated objective
9. Showing a degree of mastery of his language which,

in the opinion of two people in the field, would meet or surpass the minimal standards of the Modern Language Association

10. Exhibiting appropriate instructional strategies.

This researcher does not feel that all of these criteria must be met or that only these criteria must be met. However, this program is an example of the care that could be taken in training qualified foreign language teachers.

One further step toward insuring professionally qualified foreign language teachers was the suggestion of some that foreign language teachers be tested. In the state of Pennsylvania foreign language teachers must take the Modern Language Association Foreign Language Proficiency Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students in order to obtain teacher certification. "It assures... fluency in all four of the skill areas... It has also acted as a spur to teacher training institutions to be sure that their students will be competent in all four skills." (45:195)

Robert Politzer proposed actual testing of a foreign language teacher's performance in class. (47:251)

"... [T]he very fact that the most important goal of the language teacher is the creation of a new 'verbal behavior' on the part of the student justifies the hope that the effi-

ciency of his teaching may also be analyzed and evaluated in terms of observable, behavorial categories." (47:252) Because as Nelson Brooks reminded the profession, "An enormous potential for the improvement of language teaching lies in the margin of difference between the competence possessed by the average teacher and the use to which he puts that competence in his classes." (8:80)

The teacher's personal qualifications must also be considered. The use a foreign language teacher makes of his professional qualifications could well be determined by his personal qualifications. Foreign language teachers "...should be patient, agreeable, conscientious, firm but encouraging, show tact when correcting students... be resourceful and flexible and be able to maintain interest." (27:27) It is specifically important that the foreign language teacher be patient and sensitive at the outset of a student's foreign language experience. "The teacher must make an effort to maintain a classroom atmosphere charged with friendliness and acceptance. An intensive audio-lingual approach can scare a student to death if not done with proper finesse." (59:87) Students often feel timid about venturing into a world of strange sounds and new things to say. "Clearly the most effective motivating force is

strong, positive reinforcement tempered by a judiciously critical and demanding teacher whose purpose is, above all, to encourage." (62:858)

It is helpful if the teacher regards his students and himself as individuals with certain strengths and weaknesses. A teacher should be humble enough to admit when he does not know an answer. (18:197-205)

Resourcefulness and flexibility are two more important traits of the foreign language teacher. The teacher ought to be flexible enough to have a large repertoire of devices and methods he will use to facilitate language learning. Good language teaching is an art performed by a person who really cares. "If foreign language teachers really believe that... as many students as possible should study a foreign language, they must learn to adapt the product to the interests and motivations of the greatest possible number of customers." (49:212)

Passive Repetition

One situation that is troubling to both student and teacher in the foreign language classroom is the large amount of repetitive drill work advocated by the audio-lingual method. Repeated exercises become boring and soon

everyone loses interest. Wilga Rivers noted, "If our students are to persist in their efforts to use the language in communication, broader training than repetitious drill will be needed." (53:35)

At the outset of foreign language study, understanding the rationale of the method by which they were being taught would be helpful to students. (53:150) It would perhaps be helpful for the student to know that learning a language means learning a new behavior, acquiring a new skill. This implies a certain amount of practice. "Although the ultimate goal in foreign language study is using the language as freely as one uses his own, in the beginning basic patterns must be learned and drills used which bring about correct intonation, pronunciation, and structural patterns." (23:240) After this introduction, it would then be up to the teacher to choose the proper amount, length, and type of drill to avoid bordeom and fatigue. (53:150)

"The whole business of learning languages consists in establishing associations, which can often be effected only by long-continued effort." (61:110) "Repetition is essential both for forming associations and retaining them in the memory." (61:109) Since some repetition is necessary in the language learning process, the implication seems to be

that the type of repetitive drills used and the associations made should be varied as much as possible. Drills must be expanded and brought out of the textbook into real life.

It is good once again to be reminded that the purpose of studying a language by the audio-lingual method is to communicate orally. To be able to speak in everyday situations is the goal. After new dialogue sentences and new pattern practices are introduced, the repetition of new words can continue and new associations can be made by closing the text and stepping into the student's world. Using all the vocabulary and all the garmmatical structures he knows, a student can begin to talk to his classmates about last night's basketball game or the vacation his family is planning. Conversations can take place in small groups or with just one other person. The result is that the student becomes actively involved with the foreign language and begins to understand that these new, strange sounds can express his own ideas. "The primary advantage of this type of exercise is its resemblance to the conditions of real speech." (57:88) Yet the necessary repetition of vocabulary and grammatical structures are taking place. "Such readiness to innovate... will lead to much more frequent expression of the student's thoughts in the foreign language

and consequently much more reinforced practice in that part of language behavior which will be of most use to him in the foreign-language environment." (53:18)

Another variation for classroom use is the audio-motor exercise. (32:392-400) Instead of a listening-repeating exercise, this is a listening-action exercise. A voice on the tape recorder gives a command. At first the teacher acts out the correct response to the command, and then he asks students to join him. The entire class may participate, or if a great deal of activity is suggested by the command, a few students can be designated to act out each command. After practice, the commands could be scrambled, teams devised, and a game played. "It provides a salutary relief from the pattern drill and directed dialogue." (32:396) It shows that language is not passive and dull, but active and fun.

The foreign language teacher need not be terribly creative to alleviate the passive repetition syndrome. A variety of experiences, frequent opportunity to speak, and activity are most important. Such activities as oral reading, singing, oral composition, and using pictures to stimulate dialogue can be helpful. By using a variety of approaches to oral work, each student has an opportunity to

find an area that is most meaningful and helpful for him.

Lockstep Nature of the Audio-Lingual Method

Educators are realizing that today's students do not fit one mold in the educational process. This recognition is usually defined as a turning away from the concept of teaching and turning toward a concept of learning. This concept can be applied to foreign language learning and, more specifically, to the audio-lingual method.

> It is important to note that although language acquisition capacity per se must be viewed as an innate capability shared by all members of the species, the rate at which language is acquired, especially a second language, and the effectiveness with which language is used as a communicative process are performance factors that are affected by individual differences within the species... It is here that the concept of teaching may assume its full importance. (30:108)

It can be seen that one of the implications of the shift in emphasis from teaching to learning is an interest in the individual and individual differences. This means meeting the foreign language learner at his own level of language proficiency and allowing him to progress at a rate most comfortable for him no matter what the remainder of the class is doing. One way this is accomplished is by provid-

ing many levels at which to work within a given year of language study. Each student has the opportunity to remain at a given level as long as necessary. He knows what his work is and how much work he must do before he can receive credit and advance. Sometimes large group work or small group work is indicated, and sometimes the student works alone.

> If students are allowed to work at their own pace and receive credit for whatever they accomplish with sufficient accuracy, no one, except possibly the student who is physically or psychologically handicapped in some way, is incapable of learning <u>something</u> of personal value in the foreign language classroom. (4:422)

If students could truly work as individuals, much of the pressure and embarassment often common to the foreign language classroom could be eliminated. More students would be encouraged to pursue foreign language study to a greater level of proficiency than has been the case up until now. "Students <u>will</u> take a foreign language if they find it worthwhile for its own sake - for what it does for them - rather than an obstacle to be hurdled." (28:204)

A program that will meet students' individual needs may be put into effect in any foreign language classroom. No special programming or special equipment is needed. Of course, the more flexible the school and the wider the

variety of materials available, the easier the foreign language teacher's job.

Another approach to breaking the lockstep of the audio-lingual method goes one step further than individualized instruction.

> The trend toward individualized instruction... is heartening but insufficient. Instead, we and our students would be much better served by so orienting our educational approach that independent study programs form the integrative core of a well-conceived sequence of individualized instruction... (26:321)

In an independent study program, the student would truly be unique with learning situations that were his and his alone.

Sense Associations

One further dimension of the rigid nature of the audio-lingual method is the stress placed upon acquiring speaking skill solely through the listening process during the early stages of language learning.

> The use of visual materials in all stages of learning reinforces the learning process by adding the sense of sight to that of sound. Many persons, especially adolescents and adults, learn faster through the eye than through the ear. Visual aids serve to convey concepts immediately to the learner of a foreign language, shortening or bypassing the associations with similar concepts in the mother tongue. (14:90)

William Mackey concurred, "The stronger the association between visual stimulus and vocal response, the shorter the time needed for learning." (39:242)

Sometimes the problem for the learner is not one of association but of perception. It is much too easy for the beginning foreign language student to misunderstand what he hears. (12:535)

> The written script is of incalculable help to students with poor auditory discrimination;... Such students can often use their knowledge of structure and vocabulary, acquired from the written script, to piece together the information they do get from what they hear and so arrive at an understanding similar to that which one gets in the native language... (53:112-113)

> There should be lots of oral practice, but... the student should be allowed to see the work which he is to learn by heart and be drilled in associating foreign-language sound with foreign-language script immediately after the first oral presentation of the work, before continuing with further oral drill unsupported by the graphic symbol. (53:113)

Reference to visual aid in learning oral language skills may refer to more than seeing the written word. Jerome Ford has used visual aids in two ways. (20:842-845) He showed a slide of France and talked about what was shown, carefully pronouncing new vocabulary words. Meanwhile he had an overhead projector focused on a blackboard or wall so that he could write the new vocabulary words to be seen

by everyone. He repeated the new words and then the class said them, too. The various associations and immediate repetition aided learning and retention. (20:843)

Gestures and body motion are other visual aids. Using a videotape recorder illustrates this quite well. (5:923-927) Students can take part in acting out dialogues, cinducting interviews, and presenting skits and plays for videotaping. John Berwald said, "The dimensions of sight and motion are added to that of sound." (5:923) After videotaping, students can watch their performances and evaluate the work they have done.

If, as usggested in the previous section, the emphasis is on the individual and his needs, foreign language educators must be aware that not everyone learns easily or best by hearing. In fact "...making the student depend on aural signals alone in the early stages of learning a foreign language puts a much greater strain on the student than is generally realized." (53:159)

Use of English

Opinions concerning the use of English in the foreign language classroom vary considerably. Most notably opposed to English usage was Nelson Brooks. "...[I]t is the

foreign-language teacher's greatest challenge that meaning proceed at its maximum without destroying the coordinate system of language which it is his primary obligation to inculcate." (8:80) He continued to say, "Unless English is... reduced to an inactive state, the student is denied the experience of relying on the new language exclusively, as its native speakers do." (8:244)

Hector Hammerly explored another point of view when he said, "...the unknown (a second language pattern) cannot be explained via something less known (the second language), so that beginning language students need the use of the native langauge in explanations, directions, etc." (24:504)

A more middle-of-the-road viewpoint was expressed by William Mackey. "If translation leads to mistakes, avoid it, if it helps to avoid mistakes, use it." He then added, "But the causes of mistakes are not always evident." (39:241)

Wilga Rivers' attitude seems to be realistic.

> A short explanation of what is being practiced will then result in the student's focusing on those elements in the pattern which he most needs to learn, instead of casting around in his mind for some mnemonic device of rhythm or grouping which will help him remember the sound pattern. (53:124)

A student might not be so easily bored with drills if he understood the structure of the drill and its purpose

for his language development. It is very difficult to find interest or purpose in that which you do not understand. "... [W]e can legitimately allow for both practice and understanding." (36:10)

Ideally, only the foreign langauge is used during class time. However, it is hard to justify being stubborn about the use of English at the expense of the student. "Most advocates of the audio-lingual method agree that sometimes an explanation or a gloss in the native language is necessary to avoid waste of time in later correction of misconceptions formed by inexperienced student deductions." (53:145) Beginning audio-lingual texts even supply idiomatic English translations of dialogue sentences. And few would disagree with giving test directions in English.

Even Nelson Brooks conceded that if English explanations are needed they should be given in a certain period set aside for that purpose, usually at the end of class. "This assures the learner of what is available to him nowhere except in his language class: a sustained period of time in which the target language is the sole means of communication with those about him." (8:129)

Additional Findings

While conducting the review of research and literature, the researcher noted the emphasis placed on technology and technological equipment as aids to the audio-lingual method of foreign language learning.

Language laboratories are well-known among foreign language teachers today. Opinions of their value vary. "The language laboratory emerges as a very important characteristic of the new look in language training... [L]aboratory work should be compulsory; it should be supervised, and coordinated with classroom activities." (27:28) On the other hand, "...there is no magic about the use of language laboratories, but the evidence is enough to encourage teachers to use them and to learn to use them as well as possible." (56:43)

"The laboratory is not in itself an indispensable part of any method..." (53:154) However, as far as the audio-lingual method is concerned, it does give students an opportunity to hear native speakers on the tapes and records, to build their confidence by speaking and recording, to be immediately reinforced for right answers and to be immediately corrected for wrong answers, and to have another resource besides the teacher and the textbook. Conversely,

the equipment is expensive to buy and to maintain, utilizes only the student's sense of hearing, and often perpetuates the lockstep program of the audio-lingual method because students usually go to the lab en masse to listen to the same material.

There are other technological wonders now used in foreign language classrooms. Television and programmed learning materials are currently available to some foreign language teachers. The use of videotape recorders was mentioned earlier in the study. Some predicted that the computer would eventually become a tool of great service to the foreign language classroom.

> A computer-based learning environment has great potential for foreign language instruction since such a system can provide more individually supervised practice than could possibly be attained in a conventional instructional setting..." (54:463)

Elton Hocking predicted, "...[T]he electronic classroom (offspring of the language laboratory) should become <u>the</u> classroom of the future, while the laboratory itself ultimately evolves into computer carrels..." (29:91)

Perhaps the hardest technological prospect to envision is the satellite. "...[A]ny very large use of broadcasting satellites might provide a considerable incentive

toward adoption of world or regional languages." (56:45)

Summary

Chapter IV recorded the information found in the review of research and literature concerning the limitations of the audio-lingual method.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The review of research and literature did furnish enough new ideas and theories regarding foreign language learning to enable the researcher to suggest proposals to modify the stated limitations of the audio-lingual method. The findings showed that there are ways to prepare better qualified language teachers, to vary classroom routine so that boredom and fatigue do not become dominant factors, to provide for individual differences in foreign language classrooms, to involve associations for beginning language learners other than hearing, and to eliminate tension and confusion by using English for explanatory purposes when necessary.

Conclusions

In Chapter I the following four questions were stated as the questions to be answered by this study.

1. What proposals can be offered to modify the limitations of the audio-lingual method?
2. How will these proposals enhance the audio-lingual method?

3. Do these proposals further the philosophy that language should be learned for oral communication?
4. Do these proposals make foreign language study more relevant to the high school curriculum?

The first proposal to modify a limitation of the audio-lingual method is that colleges and universities that educate and train foreign langauge teachers continue to develop meaningful programs to prepare future teachers to meet the demands of teaching foreign languages for oral communication. Means of measuring the professional and personal qualifications of the student ought to be included in the program so that only the most qualified and capable teachers accept the responsibility of teaching foreign languages. The audio-lingual method would be enhanced because only those who were capable of teaching a foreign language for oral communication would be encouraged to do so. Foreign language study would maintain a relevant position in the high school curriculum since students would be able to speak and to use a foreign language for enjoyment or to obtain some type of employment.

Secondly, the researcher proposes that foreign language teachers employ a variety of techniques during the

early stages of foreign language learning to help students more easily acquire the necessary vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical structures. A variety of learning activities would enhance the method by preventing the beginning aspects of foreign language learning from being tedious and tiring. Language would truly be learned for communication if students practiced new vocabulary, for instance, by talking to one another about topics of interest to them. Since they would discover that a foreign language could be used by them to talk about real events, foreign language study would once again maintain a relevant place in the curriculum.

Thirdly, it is proposed that foreign langauge teachers recognize their students as individuals with individual abilities for foreign language learning. It is further proposed that teachers be made aware that the audio-lingual method can be adapted for use in an individualized instruction program. This is necessary if foreign language instruction is to keep pace with current learning theory. If students knew that the audio-lingual method would allow them to learn a foreign language at their own rate with some consideration for their needs and interests, they would not sense a certain apprehension of language study and would be encouraged to study a foreign language to learn how to speak

it. It follows logically that a method of foreign language study that considered a student's individual interests and needs would assure foreign language study a continuing place in the high school curriculum.

Fourth, it is proposed that foreign language teachers look further to the individual needs of the foreign language learner and provide associations for learning other than hearing at the outset of foreign language study. Acknowledging the fact that other stimuli aid learning for many people enhances the audio-lingual method by broadening its scope. Once again the student's needs would be met and he would be less apprehensive about language learning for oral communication. The student would be able to justify the presence of foreign language study in the curriculum.

The fifth proposal recommends that English be used in the foreign language classroom only when it is needed for clarification; e.g. when the teacher is giving instructions for a test or briefly explaining a confusing grammatical construction. The audio-lingual method would be enhanced because emphasis in the classroom would be placed on speaking the foreign language. The first realization that a student had that the strange sounds and constructions could actually be used to mean something would be in the class-

room. And he could depend on that phenomenon taking place every day. The fact that the student would be able to participate in this activity himself would assure foreign language study a continuing place in the high school curriculum.

Since the importance of technology to foreign language learning has previously been noted, the researcher would offer a sixth proposal. Thoughtful, intelligent use of electronic equipment now available should be a consideration of the foreign language teacher. Electronic devices are here to stay and will become increasingly useful in teaching foreign languages for oral communication.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that in the future foreign language teachers make every effort to keep abreast of new developments in foreign language learning so that the theory of language for oral communication may be advanced and that foreign language study may continue to be a relevant part of the high school curriculum.

It is further recommended that foreign language educators carefully consider the role of electronic equipment as it is presented for future use and prepare for the role

that technology will play in foreign language learning.

Summary

Proposals for modifying the limitations of the audio-lingual method were presented in Chapter V. Two recommendations for future consideration were also given.

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