

# **The Audio-lingual Method**

## Background

- The Audio-lingual method emerged as a result of the constant need for becoming orally proficient in foreign languages in the second World War. In 1942, the US established the Army Specialised Training Program (ASTP). Richards and Rogers claimed: « the **objective** of the army program was for students to attain conversational proficiency in a variety of foreign languages. » (1986 p. 44). By the beginning of 1943, fifty-five American universities were involved in this program. (Richards and Rogers 1986).

# Theoretical Foundations

- The ASTP came to be known as the Audio-lingual Method.
- The theoretical foundations of audiolingualism are linked to linguistic (structuralism) and psychological (behaviourism) findings.
- Audiolingualism focused on **pronunciation, drills, and conversation practice.**

# Characteristics of ALM

- Students listen to **dialogues** and try to memorise them.
- This method highlights the importance of **drills**. Examples of drills are: repetition, substitution, and transformation drills.
- Teacher centeredness: the teacher models while the learners listen and repeat.
- **Immediate (correction)** feedback to avoid fossilization

# Principles of Audiolingualism

- 1. Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation.
- Good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes. By memorizing dialogues and performing pattern drills the chances of producing mistakes are minimized. Language is verbal behavior, that is, the automatic production and comprehension of utterances, and can be learned **by** inducing the students do likewise.
- 2. Language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learned in **the target language are presented in spoken form before they are seen in written form. Aural-oral training is needed to provide the foundation for** the development of other language skills.

- **3. Analogy provides a better foundation for language learning than analysis. Analogy involves the processes of generalization and discrimination. Explanations of rules are therefore not given until students have practiced a pattern in a variety of contexts and are thought to have acquired a perception of the analogies involved. Drills can enable learners to form correct analogies. Hence the approach to the teaching of grammar is essentially inductive rather than deductive.**

- **4. The meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context and not in isolation. Teaching a language thus involves teaching aspects of the cultural system of the people who speak the language (Rivers 1964: 19-22). Cited in Richards and Rodgers 1986**

# Strengths

- Improving pronunciation and listening skills
- Becoming orally proficient
- Suitable for learners at beginning levels
- Builds confidence in producing simple sentences.

# Weaknesses

- Repetition leads to boredom on the learners' part.
- Less importance is given to real communication.
- It does not encourage learners' creativity.