EXPLORING THE USE OF AUDIO LINGUAL METHOD TO ACTIVATE SPEAKING SKILL TO BEGINNERS' LEARNERS

Amadou SALAMI

Assistant Lecturer of Applied Linguistics. Faculty of Social and Human Science (FASHS), University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Benin Republic.
akannisalami6@gmail.com

Kevin Agossa DAHEOU

PhD Candidate in English Didactics. Pluridisciplinary Doctoral School, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic
kevindaheou87@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims at exploring the use of audio lingual method to activate speaking skills in beginners' classes. So, its objective is to know how EFL teachers can foster learners' speaking performance through audio lingual method. To fulfill this aim, questionnaires have been addressed to teachers and to students. The results indicate some factors that affect learners' communicative competence. The study points out how teachers can use audio lingual method so as to make learners improve their speaking performance.

Keywords: *methods, teaching, beginners, performance*

Résumé

Cette étude a pour but d'explorer l'utilisation de la méthode audio linguale pour l'activation du parler aux débutants. Elle a donc pour objectif de savoir comment les enseignants peuvent aider les apprenants à améliorer leur performance communicative en Anglais. Pour atteindre cet objectif, des questionnaires ont été adressés aux enseignants, ainsi qu'aux apprenants. Les résultats révèlent qu'il y a des facteurs qui affectent les apprenants à bien s'exprimer en Anglais. L'étude présente donc comment les enseignants peuvent faire usage de la méthode audio linguale afin d'aider les apprenants à améliorer leurs manière de s'exprimer.

Mots clés: *méthodes, enseignement, débutants, performance*

Introduction

Teaching is the process of carrying out the activities in getting students to learn. Teaching becomes a process of assisting performance, rather than controlling and testing. While, teaching is the process of making students to produce or practice the target language and express it,

actually, the material from the teacher to the students must be appropriate with the syllabus of the certain school, in order that the students are able to absorb it and they will be able to communicate by using the target language. Unfortunately, most of the students still get the difficulties in using English for oral communication. This is caused by many factors including the limited students' vocabulary and knowledge of grammar, even the method used by the teacher in teaching English. Thus, Salami and Daheou (2019:340) assert: "*Sometimes, students do not know what to say. They may know enough words and grammar but still it is impossible for them to speak because they do not know how to manipulate the language or what to say. Some students find it too difficult to stay in front of their comrades and speak*".

In order to conduct this study successfully, some research questions have been asked and they would serve as the signposts to the research problem. These questions are formulated as follows:

1) What are the factors causing learners' reluctance to speak English?

2) What are the purposes of Audio Lingual Method (ALM)?

3) How can teachers make learners improve their speaking performance through the use of ALM?

1. Theoretical Framework

The Audio Lingual Method (ALM) is the mode of language instruction based on behaviorist approach. According to Thornbury (2000:21), this method considers "*language simply as form of behavior to be learned through the formation of correct speech habits*". In other words, the goal of this method is to form native language habits in learners. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001:57) stress that "*foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation, and good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes*". Dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat, are often used to form habits. Hence, as Larsen-Freeman (2000) says: "*the more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning*".

Brown (1994:57) argues that for audio lingual method, there are some key features; new material is presented in dialogue form, repetitive drills, memorization of set of phrases, etc. The aim of this method is to create communicative competence by giving wide-ranging repetition and drilling to the students in language study. He adds that 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. Thus, the audio lingual method refers to the method that it is compressed on the chain drill by memorizing and repeat, and the wrongness of speaking is avoided. In audio-lingual method, activities are presented not only in drilling short patterns, but also in varieties of dialogues, which students have to listen to, repeat and memorize. Dialogues provide for students the structure and idea of how to use some types of patterns in some sort of situations. Usually dialogues illustrate socio-cultural situations of a target language, such as greetings, opinion exchanges, likes or dislikes, standard safe topics (weather, hobbies…etc.) that help students to memorize which utterance is suitable for each situation. By repeating and memorizing whole dialogue or some specific parts of it, learners should emphasize on proper pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm usage. Brown (2001:23) states that the audio lingual method was firmly grounded in linguistic and psychological theory. He adds that it is advocated conditioning and habit-formation models of learning that were perfectly married with the mimicry drills and pattern practices of audio lingual methodology.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Target Population and Sampling

Through this study, both teachers and learners of CEG2 Pobè have been considered for data collection Teachers have been taken into account for this study since they are the ones who are concerned with the use of audio lingual method. Questionnaires and interviews have been directed to six (6) of them regardless of the classes and the kind of learners they have in charge. In order to know learners' opinions about speaking skills, questionnaire has been addressed to one-hundred and twenty (120) learners.

3. Presentation and Discussion of the Results

3.1Presentation of the Results

3.1.1 Teachers' Point of View of Teaching Speaking Skill

Figure 1: *Teachers' Point of View of Teaching Speaking Skill*
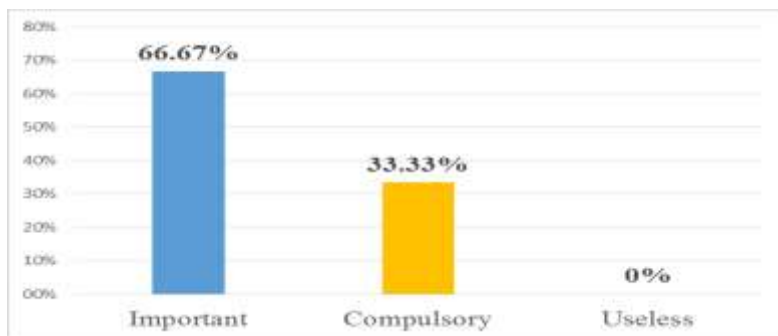
Through the results of figure1, it is noticed that sixty-six point six seven percent (66.67%) of teachers are aware of the importance of teaching speaking skills to learners. Thirty-three point three three percent (33.33%) of them find the teaching of speaking skills compulsory. None of them finds it useless. This shows that the majority of EFL teachers know that speaking plays an important role in EFL teaching and learning process.

3.1.2 Methods Use for Teaching Speaking in Beginners' Classes

Table 1: *Methods Use for Teaching Speaking in Beginners' Classes*

Methods	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Grammar translation method	0	00
Audio lingual method	4	66.67
Direct method	2	33.33
Total	6	100

The results of table 1 show that sixty-six point six seven percent (66.67 %) of teachers use audio lingual method and thirty-three point three three percent (33.33 %) of them use direct method. None of them use

grammar translation method which aims at translating from English into learners' native language.

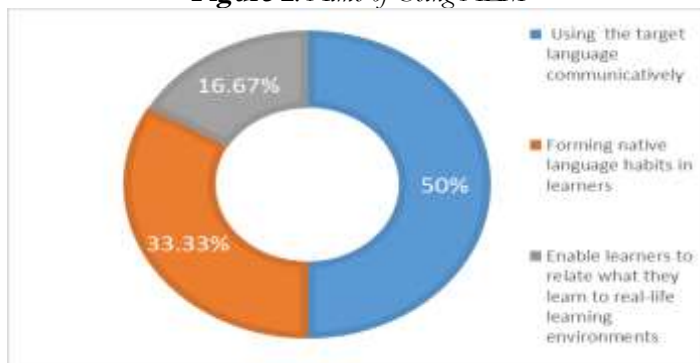### 3.1.3 Aims of Using ALM

Figure 2: Aims of Using ALM

Figure 2 deals with the aims of audio lingual method. Fifty percent (50%) of teachers said that this method aims at using the target language communicatively; indeed, thirty-three point three three percent (33.33%) of them said that it forms native language habits in learners. Moreover, sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of them said that this method enables learners to relate what they learn to real-life learning environments. The results of this figure show that audio-lingual method aims at improving students' speaking achievement.

3.1.4 ALM Activities Teachers Often Use

Table 2: *ALM Activities Teachers Often Use*

Activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dialogue completion	1	16.67
Substitution drill	1	16.67
Transformation drill	1	16.67
Asking and answering questions	3	50
Total	6	100

Table 2 is about the different activities EFL teachers use to teach speaking skills through audio lingual method. Then, the results show

that sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of teachers respectively use dialogue completion, substitution drill and transformation drill activities to enhance learners' speaking skill. Moreover, fifty percent (50%) of them stressed that they use asking and answering questions activities to foster EFL learners' speaking performance.

3.1.5 Focus of Teachers' Feedback

Figure 3: *Focus of Teachers' Feedback*

Figure 3 shows that all the respondents emphasise on accuracy while providing feedback. This emphasis on accuracy can result on increasing the feeling of fear of making mistakes. On the other hand, none of them focuses on fluency.

3.1.6 Challenges with Teaching Speaking through ALM

Table 3: *Challenges with Teaching Speaking through ALM*

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Different capabilities of the students	1	16.67
Overcrowded classes	3	50
Classroom are not well equipped	2	33.33
Total	6	100

The results from table 3 show that sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of teachers have problems related to different capabilities of the students; this means that each student has different capability in receiving the material that is given by the teacher. Moreover, fifty

percent (50%) of them said that they face the challenge about overcrowded classes and thirty-three point three three percent (33.33%) of them reported that the challenge is related to classrooms that are not well equipped.

3.1.7 Students' Attitudes towards the Difficulty of Speaking

Figure 4: *Students' Attitudes Towards the Difficulty of Speaking*
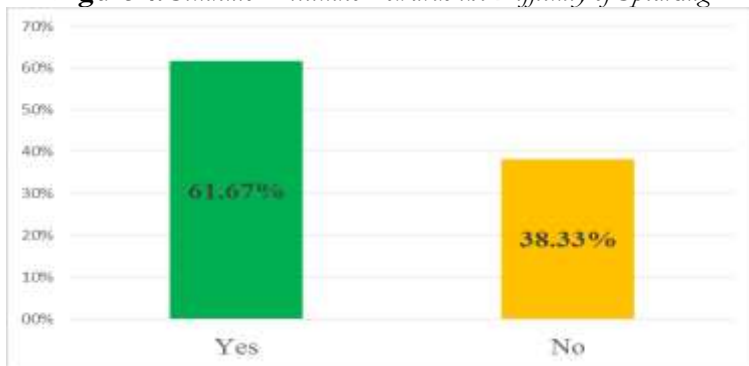
The results from figure 4 reveal that more than the half (61.67%) of the learners say that speaking skill is difficult to be mastered. However, the rest, thirty-eight point three three percent (38.33%) thought the opposite. The reasons behind those who find the mastery of speaking skill difficult are: mispronunciation, spontaneity, disorder of the ideas, nothing to say, and face to face speaking which can bring about shyness to some learners.

3.1.8 Factors Affecting Learners' Speaking Performance

Table 4: *Factors Affecting Learners' Speaking Performance*

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Shyness	20	16.67
Anxiety	13	10.83
Fear of making mistakes	67	55.83
Lack of self confidence	12	10
Lack of motivation	8	06.67
Total	120	100

The percentages in table 4 show that fifty-five point eight three percent (55.83%) of the learners suffer from the fear of making mistakes as the most affective factor among the others. Then shyness ranks second with sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of learners, following by anxiety which has been chosen by ten point eight three percent (10.83%) of the learners. Then, the one before the last is lack of self-confidence ranking in the fourth place chosen by ten percent (10%) of them whereas lack of motivation ranks last with six point six seven percent (6.67%).

3.1.9 Students' Opinion about Practicing Speaking Skill to be Mastered

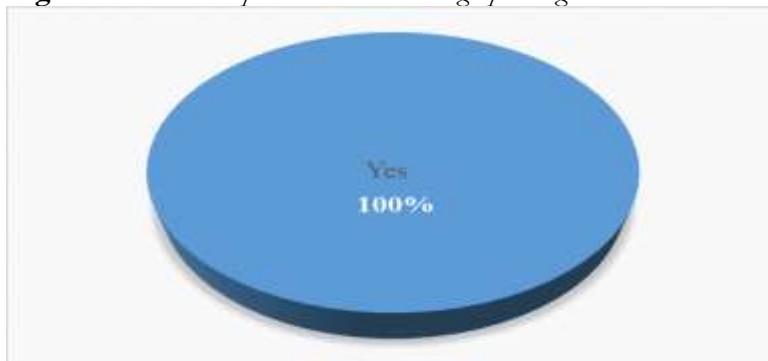**Figure 5**: *Students' Opinion about Practicing Speaking Skill to be Mastered*

Figure 5 shows that the entire sample one-hundred percent (100%) of learners agreed that in order to master speaking skill, they have to practice it.

3.1.10 Describing the Atmosphere of Oral Expression Classroom

Table 5: *Describing the Atmosphere of Oral Expression Classroom*

Atmosphere	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Boring	14	11.67
Friendly	85	70.83
Stimulating	21	17.50
Total	120	100

The results in table 5 show that the largest percentage seventy point eight three percent (70.83%) of learners goes to the friendliness of the atmosphere. This means that eighty-five (85) of the students feel safe in

attending the oral expression classes. Other students, seventeen point five zero percent (17.50%) described it as stimulating, which means that it is more than being friendly. For them, it works as a motivational factor to participate and interact. However, for the rest of the students representing eleven point six seven percent (11.67%), the atmosphere of the oral expression classroom is boring which, clearly, can decrease their motivation.

3.2 Discussion
3.2.1 Factors Causing Learners' Reluctance to Speak
There are several factors that contribute to students' reluctance to speak up and participate in classroom activities; these factors include linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural issues. For example, the issue of being afraid to speak in class for fear of making mistakes is of concern for learners. Some results show that most of the students, fifty-five point eight three percent (55.83%) suffer from the fear of making mistakes as the most affective factor among the others. This finding is consistent with Willis (1981:20) who says: "*students will not want to practice if they are afraid of making mistakes*". In the same trend, Norrish (1983:1) affirms: "*learners' reluctance to speak is attributed to the fear of making mistake*". In addition, shyness ranks second with sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of learners, following by anxiety which has been chosen by ten point eight three percent (10.83%) of the learners. Shyness, according to McCroskey (1992), is a behaviour that could be the result of any one or a combination of the following factors: social introversion, unfamiliarity with academic discourse, lacking confidence in subject matter, and/or communication apprehension.

Another factor that contributes to the reluctance of students to participate in the class discussion is the lack of confidence in using English as a vehicle for spoken communication. This factor is chosen by ten percent (10%) of the learners whereas lack of motivation ranks last with six point six seven percent (6.67%). It is very important for teachers to gain their learners' interest and motivation in order to gain their commitment. Moreover, whenever teachers arouse their learners' interest and motivation, learners feel confident and enthusiastic to learn and this surely leads to their success. In addition, when learners are motivated to learn, the class is active and lively; therefore teachers feel at ease and perform the lessons successfully.

19

3.2.2 Aims of Audio Lingual Method

It has been noticed that the students listen to the model of dialogue provided by the teacher; the students repeat the words, sentences and dialogues as accurately as possible. As the performer, the students practice the dialogue of conversation with their partner in front of the class. As the problem solver in the teaching-learning process, the students ask and answer their teacher's questions or the questions in the student's books. This means that the audio lingual method aims at helping the learners to use the target language communicatively. This is in consistence with a finding from the teachers' questionnaire, through the data collected, fifty percent (50%) of them stressed that AML goal is to permit learners to develop their communicative competence. This finding is consistent with Thornbury (2000:21) who says that the audio-lingual method considered language simply as form of behaviour to be learned through the formation of correct speech habits. In other words, the goal of this method is to form native language habits in learners. Dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat are used to form habits in learners that will allow them to develop quick and automatic responses. Drills are useful in foreign language teaching in that they give students the opportunity to perform what they have learnt. Moreover, sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of them said that this method enables learners to relate what they learn to real-life learning environments.

3.2.3 Teachers' Ways of Enhancing Learners' Speaking Performance

It is worth mentioning that without learners in a classroom, a teacher cannot perform his/her lesson. This shows how important learners are in teaching and learning process. Learners are directly affected by their teachers' performance; this means that learners' mastery of speaking skill can also depend on teacher's performance. Therefore, in order to enhance learners' speaking performance, through the use of ALM, the teacher can read a dialogue by modeling it. Table number two is about the different activities EFL teachers use to teach speaking skills through audio lingual method. Then, the results show that sixteen point six seven percent (16.67%) of teachers respectively use dialogue completion, substitution drill and transformation drill activities to

enhance learners' speaking skill. Through drills such as single-slot substitution, multiple slot substation, and transformation, students are given the opportunity to produce speech in the target language. Furthermore, these patterns will let them see how language functions. Students learn how to respond correctly when they practice the drills. Moreover, Teachers as a model, will encourage and inspire the students to strive for learning the target language. Teachers make learners repeat dialogues or sentences. Through repetition, students can use the target language automatically, and fluently as well. In this method, it is desirable that students form a habit formation to use the target language with ease. Therefore, the more they repeat, the easier they will speak the target language.

4. Suggestions and Perspectives

4.1 Suggestions to Government
There should be regular organisation of in-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences where teachers will benefit from exchange of ideas on current developments in English language thereby up-dating and improving their knowledge and method(s) of teaching English as well as selecting appropriate instructional materials to aid teaching/learning processes.

4.2 Suggestions to Teachers
Teachers should provide students with more speaking activities in the classroom, so as to make students practice their skill. Teachers should be creative to manage the materials for the teaching of speaking such as: drilling activities, moving your body activities, role play, or discussion so as to further motivate the students.

4.3 Suggestions to Learners
As far as the students are concerned, they should break fear and shame, which dominate and prevent them from practising speaking. The only way to speak accurately a language is to speak it. In so doing, they will be conversant with the language and will be able to speak it fluently. Moreover, learners should get more involved and interested in English activities, both in class context and outside the classroom as well, that is anywhere they can practice English. They should also seize any opportunity to speak English out of classroom. They must pay

attention when teachers explain the materials and have to be actively involved in the learning activities in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study aims at examining the effectiveness of audio lingual method as far as teaching speaking skill is concerned. The results from data collected have shown that most of students have a lot of difficulties that prevent them from speaking and improving their proficiency level. Data also reveal that shyness, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence and lack of motivation are the factors that affect learners' speaking performance. Learners need to build a self-confidence and self-esteem in their abilities.

References List

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. San Francisco state university: Englewood cliffs.
Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
McCroskey, J. C. (1992). Reliability and Validity of the Willingness to Communicate Scale. *Communication on Quarterly*, 40(1), 16-25.
Norrish, J. (1983). *Language Learners and their Errors*. London: **Macmillan Press.**
Richards, J. & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Salami, A. and Daheou, A. K. (2019). Developing Communicative Competence in Beninese EFL Upper Sixth Level Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*. 1(15), 137-172.
Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to Teach Speaking*. Pearson: Longman.
Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Harlow: Longman.