BLOCK 4.
The past meets the present: Language teaching methods in the 20th and 21st centuries

Sub-block 4.1.
Structurally based methods

Unit 4.1.1. The Audiolingual Method (ALM) (North-American version)

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goal of the ALM
3. Historical background of the ALM
4. Analysis of the components of the ALM
5. Critical assessment of the ALM

1. Objectives of this unit

1. Know the origin of the ALM and its influence on language teaching in the 20th and 21st centuries.

2. Know the theoretical and practical principles together with the techniques of the ALM.

3. Critically analyse the ALM according to the three components of method: underlying sets of principles and beliefs (why), content or objectives (what) and activities (how).

4. Critically compare the ALM with past methods.

5. Critically analyse the pedagogical implementation of the ALM , both in textbooks and in real classrooms, as well as its influence on language teaching.

2. Goal of the ALM

To enable students to communicate mainly orally in the foreign language

3. Historical background of the ALM

FOUR INTERVENING ELEMENTS

IN THE CONFIGURATION OF THE ALM

a) Structural Linguistics

L. Bloomfield (1942): *An Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages*

b) Applied Linguistics derived from Structural Linguistics

Contrastive Analysis → Charles Fries (1945): *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*

c) Aural-oral procedures

Oral-, Aural-Oral or *Structural Approach* developed by Fries and his colleagues in Michigan

d) Behaviourist psychology (Osgood, B.F. Skinner. Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour* (1957)).

3. Historical background of the ALM

✓ Some distinctive textbooks:

– Bolinger, D. L., Ciruti, J. E., & Montero, H. H. (1960). *Modern Spanish* (2nd ed.). Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.: New York.

– Stockwell, R. P., J. D. Bowen, I. Silva-Fuenzalida. (1961). *Spanish Basic Course.* Washington D.C.: Foreign Service Institute.

✓ Disenchantment on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean with the G-T and the DM

a) Strict formal knowledge of the grammar and "chaotic" conversational abilities;

b) Not many people able to travel abroad;

c) Not many teachers were orally proficient enough to implement the DM

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✓ Coleman Report (1929): "Reading Approach" to FLT for use in American schools and colleges. Until WWII, FLT in the USA was characterised by the following features:

❑ Reading as the main goal.

❑ Translation encouraged and grammar taught as long as it was useful to understand the texts.

❑ Vocabulary controlled at first and then expanded. Use of vocabulary frequency lists (Celce-Murcia, 2001)
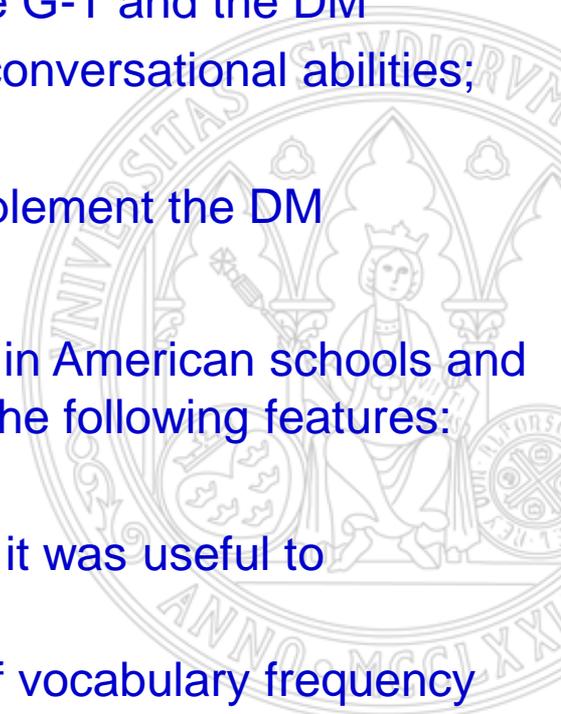
3. Historical background of the ALM

✓ **Two landmarks that dramatically fostered the development of FLT in the USA: World War II and the Cold War.**

Very similar historical factors prompted the creation of the Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL), University of Maryland, USA:

September 11, 2001, caused a dramatic shift in government priority and need. As the Department of Defense (DoD) grappled with new challenges, comprehensive language preparedness became a critical necessity. Founded in 2003 as a DoD university affiliated research center with a <u>nationally recognized research staff</u>, the University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) is the first and only national resource dedicated to addressing the language needs of the Intelligence Community (IC).

(<u>http://www.casl.umd.edu/about</u>)

3. Historical background of the ALM

1) World War II:

a) Oral command of FLs of allies' and enemies.

Government commissioned American universities to arrange programs to train military personnel.

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Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP),

colloquially known as the "Army Method" (1942)

- A huge success
- Took 9 months (April to December 1943), involved the work of about 15,000 people and 27 languages
- Drew on L. Bloomfield's *An Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages* (1942)
- Oral **repetition** of structures and pronunciation practice

Does this remind you of any past method?
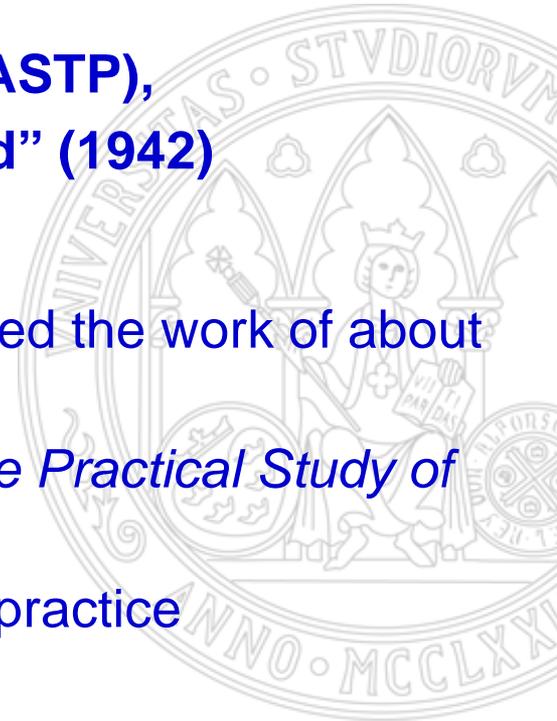
3. Historical background of the ALM

1) **WWII**

b) Key figure in the origins of the ALM: Charles Fries (1887-1967)

- Main works:
  - *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945) and
  - *The Structure of English, An Introduction to the Construction of English Sentences* (1952).
- 1939: Fries creates the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Michigan, USA.

A milestone in the development of Applied Linguistics in general and in the USA in particular.

3. Historical background of the ALM

✓ **WWWII**

b) Key figure in the origins of the ALM: Charles Fries (1887-1967)

▪ Founder of the **Oral Approach/Aural-Oral Approach/Structural Approach:**

(Not to be confused with Palmer's Oral Approach)

o structural theory of language (= Bloomfield)

o **sentence patterns** *(section 4 here and Palmer in Unit 4.1.2)*

Is a sentence pattern the same as a sentence?

Ex. (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 45): "Meg called; the Blue Jays won; The team practised").

o **pattern practice (drill practice/pattern drill/structural practice)**

o primacy of oral language (listening, speaking and pronunciation) followed by reading and writing

o language = speech

o "practice makes perfect"

o Contrastive Analysis:

"The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner". (Fries, 1945: 9).

3. Historical background of the ALM

2) Cold War:

- ✓ 1957: Russia launched the first satellite into space (Sputnik).
- ✓ 1958: USA "National Defence Education Act"

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FLT

- ✓ Theory of language: Bloomfield's structural view of language, Fries' descriptive and contrastive linguistics
- ✓ Theory of learning: Behaviourism (Osgood and above all B.F. Skinner)
- ✓ Pedagogy: The aural-oral procedures from the Michigan *Oral Approach*

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"AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD"
(term coined by Professor Nelson Brooks in 1964)

"From an art into a science" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 54)

Lado (1964): *Language Teaching: A Scientific Approach*

3. Historical background of the ALM

✓ William Moulton's **five slogans** (1961):

1. Language is speech, not writing
2. A language is a set of habits
3. Teach the language, not about the language
4. A language is what its native speakers say
5. Languages are different

3. Historical background of the ALM

✓ Assumptions of the ALM (Rivers, 1964: 19-22):

1) *Foreign language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation.*

2) *Language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form.*

3) *Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis.*

4) *The meanings which the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context and not in isolation.*

1, 2

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑ Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)

  Structural and descriptive linguistics. Culture consists of the everyday behaviour and lifestyle of the L2 speakers.
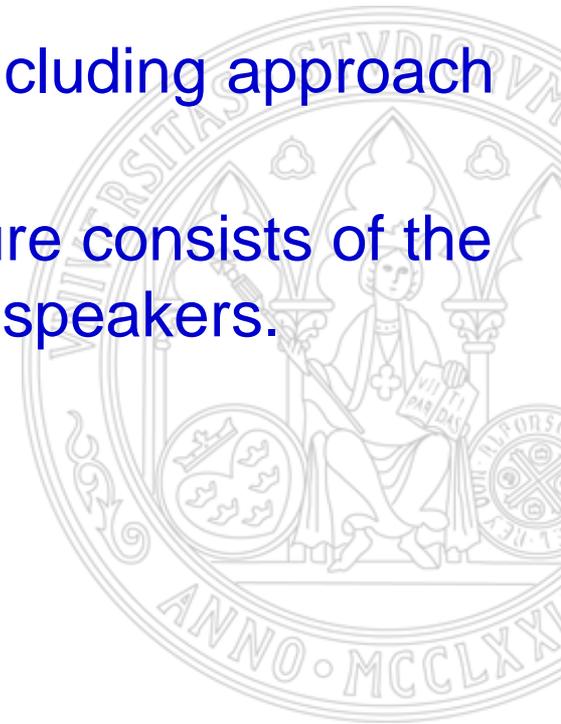
4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑ Theory of learning (learning principles)

- L1 learning = L2 learning (inductive learning). But L1 habits can interfere with L2 learning

- Analogy

- Behaviourism

get them [the structures] by heart, and then PRACTICE THEM OVER AND OVER AGAIN, DAY AFTER DAY, until they become entirely natural and familiar. LANGUAGE LEARNING IS OVERLEARNING; ANYTHING ELSE IS OF NO USE.

(Bloomfield, 1942: 12. Emphasis in the original)

We have no reason to assume… that verbal behaviour differs in any fundamental respect from non-verbal behaviour, or that any new principles must be invoked to account for it.

(Skinner, 1957: 10)

Stimulus → Response → Reinforcement

Repetition and reinforcement until the habit is correctly automatised

(automatic habits/responses/behaviours)

What is the attitude towards errors?

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)

- Inductive approach to grammar learning and teaching (practice and inference)
- Formal accuracy is emphasised
- Contrastive analysis underlying pedagogical materials.
- No use of L1 in the classroom
- Teacher is the authority in the classroom

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Model of language: everyday speech
- ❑ Emphasised language areas: sound system and grammatical patterns, introduced on the basis of the principle of progression from simplicity to complexity (grammar control)
- ❑ Emphasised skills: oral (listening and speaking). Order of presentation of skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing

"The course should concentrate at the beginning on the learner's hearing and speaking of Spanish, *whatever his objective"*.

(Modern Spanish, 1960. Emphasis in the original)

"The materials in this book have been developed to present Spanish as a spoken language, and the skills of understanding and speaking are accordingly emphasized".

(*Spanish Basic Course*, 1961)

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Activities: dialogues and drills

- Key terms:
  o mimicry (imitative repetition)
  o *mim-mem* (mimicry and memorization)
  o pattern practice / drill practice / pattern drill / structural practice

- Dialogues for contextualisation are repeated and memorised.

  The basic dialogs are the core of each unit. These dialogs are recreations of the real situation a student is most likely to encounter, and the vocabulary and sentences are those he is most likely to need. […] *The student should learn the basic dialogs by heart.*

  (Spanish Basic Course, 1961. Introduction, pp. 0.5 and 0.6).

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Activities: dialogues and drills

- Drills: basic pedagogical technique in the ALM and all the structurally based methods

- Pattern practice (drill practice) was not invented by either Fries or Palmer (see Unit 4.1.2). Example from Erasmus in his *Colloquia* (1524) (with handdrawn brackets):

mea Corneliola

mea vita

meum lux

SALVE   *meum delicium*

meum suavium

mel meum

mea voluptas unica

(In Kelly, 1969: 101)

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❏ Activities: dialogues and drills

*3. Grammar should be presented inductively, with summary statements given after the drill. (The Working Committee therefore produced explanations of grammar that are both accurate and unambiguous, written in a style understandable to the student. It also produced grammar drills that give enough practice in the basic patterns of Spanish to enable the student to learn to use and respond to these patterns **automatically**. All exercises and drill materials are based on a comparison of the structures of English and Spanish).*

(Modern Spanish, 1960. Introduction, p. xiii. Emphasis in the original)

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Activities: dialogues and drills

DRILLS:

A technique commonly used in older methods of language teaching particularly the audiolingual method and used for practising sounds or sentence patterns in a language, based on guided repetition or practice. A drill which practises some aspect of grammar or sentence formation is often known as pattern practice.

(Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 184)

| TYPE OF DRILL	TEACHER'S CUE	STUDENT
Substitution drill	We bought a book. *pencil*	We bought a pencil.
Repetition drill	We bought a book. We bought a pencil	We bought a book. We bought a pencil.
Transformation drill	I bought a book.	Did you buy a book? What did you buy?

(Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 185)

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Other types of drills (see Brookes, 1964: 156-161; Lado, 1964: 95-102)

1. Question and answer. *How many brothers and sisters do you have? Five.*
2. Inflection. *I bought the ticket. I bought the* tickets.
3. Replacement. *He bought this house cheap. He bought* it *cheap.*
4. Restatement. *Tell him to wait for you. Wait for me.*
5. Completion. *I'll go my way and you go… I'll go my way and you go yours.*
6. Transposition. *I'm hungry. (so). So* am *I.*
7. Expansion. *I know him. (hardly). I* hardly *know him.*
8. Contraction. *They believe that the earth is flat. They believe* it.
9. Integration (Brooks) / Synthesis (Lado). *I know that man. He is looking for you. I know the man who is looking for you.*
10. Rejoinder. *(Be polite). Thank you. You're welcome.*
11. Restoration. *Students/waiting/bus. The students are waiting for the bus.*
    Etc.
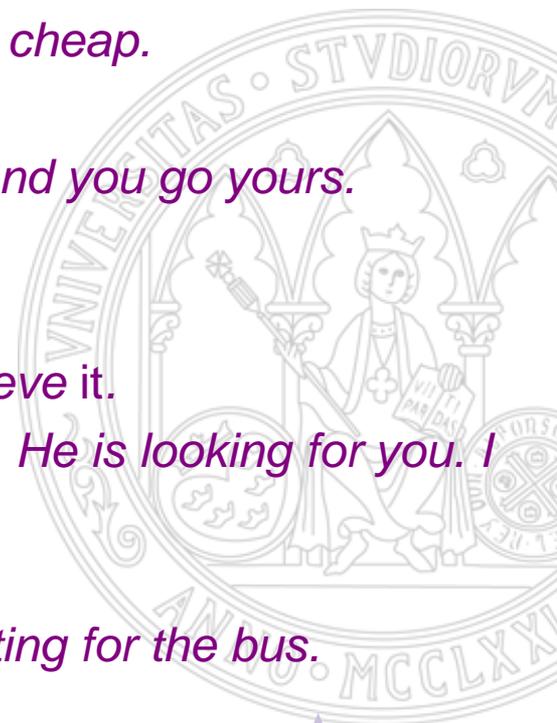
4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

EXAMPLE OF DIALOGUE + DRILL (Cook, 2008: 242-243):

A: Good morning.

B: Good morning.

A: **Could I have some milk, please?**

B: Certainly. How much?

"Could I have some (milk, water, cola)?"

Input: *Milk.*   (Cue)

Output: *Could I have some milk, please?* (Response)

Input: *Water*.

Output: *Could I have some water, please?*

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Paulston (1970) distinguishes three major types of drills in terms of their emphasis on form: mechanical drills, meaningful drills and communicative drills:

- Mechanical drill (Sánchez & Criado, 2010: 386):

Is there something for me?　　　　　*- Yes, there is.*

Is there something for her?　　　　　*- Yes, there is.*

Is there something for Sarah?　　　　*- Yes, there is.*

Is there something for Peter?　　　　*- Yes, there is.*

Is there something for them?　　　　*- Yes, there is.*

Is there something for my sister?　　*- Yes, there is.*

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Paulston (1970) distinguishes three major types of drills in terms of their emphasis on form: mechanical drills, meaningful drill and communicative drill:

- Meaningful drill (DeKeyser, 1998: 50):

  Teacher/Student A: Is this a pencil or a pen?

  Student B: It is a pen, etc.

- Communicative drill (Criado, 2010: 51):

  Teacher: What would you do if you saw your best friend cheating in an exam?

  Student A: I would do nothing.

  Student B: I would tell the teacher because it's not fair.

  Which type do you think that the previous examples of drills included in this Axis belong to? (Slides 21 and 22)
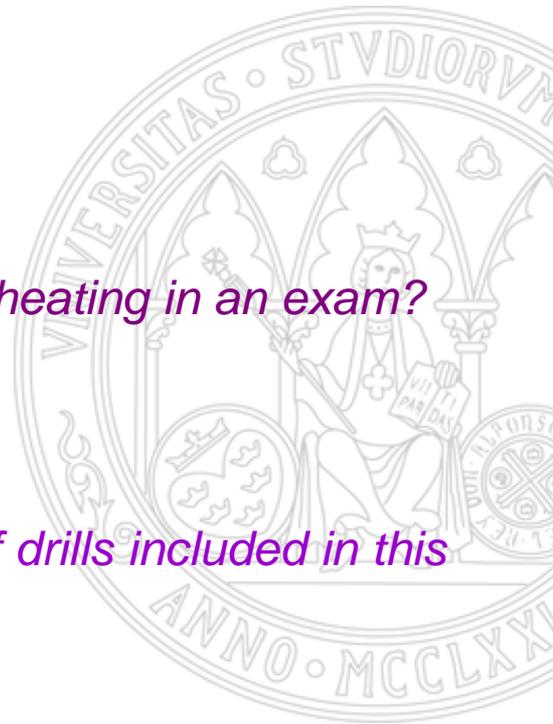
4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of teacher (including feedback issues)

- Traditional. The teacher is the authority in the classroom and the provider of linguistic and cultural contents.
- Teacher models language.
- Teacher controls the direction and pace of learning.
- Error correction is compulsory and immediate so as to prevent the formation of bad habits.

❑ Roles of students

- Passive (no room for creativity or control over the content and pedagogy) but reactive: constantly responding to the teacher's stimuli.

Do you remember which method(s) is/are similar in this respect to the ALM?

- Can be trained to produce correct responses.
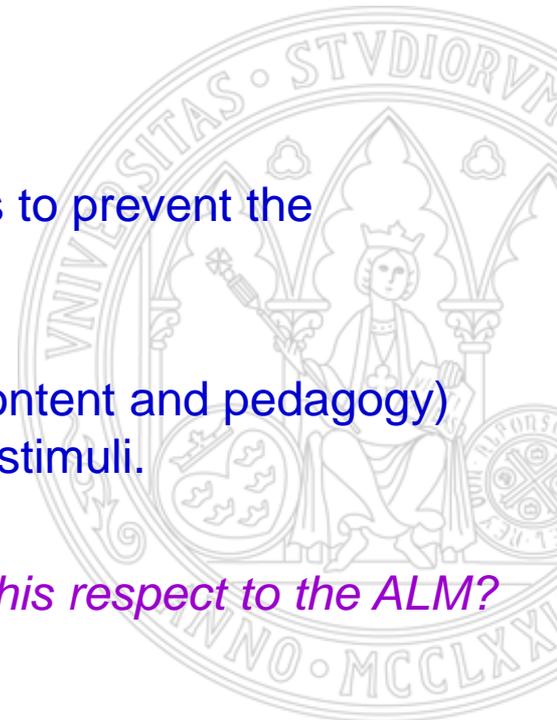
4. **Analysis of the components of the ALM**

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of instructional materials:

- Teacher-oriented.
- Audiovisual materials.
- Laboratories. Tape recorders.
- Written materials delayed from the beginning of classroom instruction.

a) *Why do you think that laboratories and tape recorders play a very important function in the ALM?*

b) *Why do you think that written materials are not introduced from the very beginning of instruction?*

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ **Procedure: A typical ALM class**

1. Listening to a dialogue based on a situation, with the vocabulary and structures to be learnt:

José, pregúntele al chófer que cuánto le debe.	**José: ¿Cuánto le debo?**
Chófer, contéstele que son seis pesos.	**Chófer: Son seis pesos.**
José, pregúntele si tiene cambio para diez.	**José: ¿Tiene cambio para diez?**
Chófer, contéstele que no, que no tiene.	**Chófer: No, señor, no tengo.**
Juan, dígale que Ud. tiene sólo cheques viajeros.	**Juan: Yo sólo tengo cheques viajeros.**
José, dígale al chófer que tome los diez, que cuatro de propina.	**José: Tome los diez, cuatro de propina.**
Chófer, contéstele que un millón de gracias.	**Chófer: Un millón de gracias.**

(*Spanish Basic Course*, 1961, unit 8, pp. 36-37)

4. Analysis of the components of the ALM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ **Procedure: A typical ALM class**

1. Listening to a dialogue based on a situation, with the vocabulary and structures to be learnt.
2. Identification of the structures to be learned.
3. Repetition of the structures by means of mim-mem and pattern practice (oral language). Individual and chorus repetition.
4. No grammatical explanations or kept to an absolute minimum. Summary statements with sample sentences at the end of the drill
5. Use of technical materials (tape recorder, language laboratory) for follow-up work: further dialogues and drills

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

Can you think of any advantages and disadvantages of the ALM?

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

❑ **Positive aspects** (Stern, 1983: 465-466)

1) First method explicitly encouraging linguistic and psychological principles for language teaching

2) Made language learning accessible to ordinary, not academically-gifted learners

3) Stressed syntactical progression and not only morphology and vocabulary

4) Developed simple, varied techniques to teach L2 structures

5) Developed oral practice well beyond reading aloud

6) Developed the separation of the four language skills from a pedagogical perspective

Do you remember the forerunner?

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

❑ **Negative aspects** (Hall, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, among others):
Attacked on the basis of all the components of method:

1. Theory of language

   Rejection of structural linguistics and adoption of "Communicative competence" (Hymes 1972): *when* and *how* to say what *to whom.*

   Pragmatics and acts of speech (Austin, 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*).

2. Theory of language learning

   a) Chomsky (1966). A language is a property of the human mind, with sentences 'generated' from the speakers' underlying competence (innate knowledge of abstract grammar rules).

   b) Speakers create their own sentences not as a result of habit formation but as a result of mental processes involving their innate knowledge of abstract grammar rules.

   c) Pattern drill can lead to the development of performance or behaviours, not of competence.

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

❑ **Negative aspects** (Hall, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, among others):

Attacked on the basis of all the components of method

1. Theory of language
2. Theory of language learning
3. Theory of teaching:

   a) Communicative methods argue that drills practise pseudo-communication -controlling linguistic structures- and do not involve real meaningful interaction (characterised, among others, by creation and spontaneity in language use

   b) *Students were often found to be unable to transfer skills acquired through Audiolingualism to real communication outside the classroom, and many found the experience boring and unsatisfying.*

   (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 65)

   c) Some success for beginner and elementary levels, but no apparent progression for intermediate-advanced learners.

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

❑ Influence of the ALM on FLT

Pattern practice "remains a useful tool in the repertoire of a qualified language teacher" (Lado, 1988: 19)

Never in the history of foreign language teaching in the United States had there been greater interest in actually mastering a spoken foreign language than at the peak of the A-L movement, and never had there been so many students who achieved useful levels of proficiency. The Chomsky attack on descriptive linguistics and behaviouristic psychology – which produced a broadening of the analysis of language and human learning – should not obscure the achievements of the A-L movement.

(Lado, 1988: 22)

Though ostensibly out of fashion, the influence of audio-lingualism is still pervasive. Few teachers nowadays employ a 'pure' audiolingual style; yet many of the ingredients are present in today's classrooms. The use of short dialogues, the emphasis on spoken language, the value attached to practice, the emphasis on the students speaking, the division into four skills, the importance of vocabulary control, the step-by-step progression, all go back to audio-lingualism.

(Cook, 2008: 246)

3

5. Critical assessment of the ALM

❑ Influence of the ALM on FLT

Reactions against all Structurally based Methods in general and the ALM in particular gave way to three main distinct "revolutionary" approaches and methods :

1) Humanistic methods, from the late 1960s until the early 1980s

Sub-block 4.2

2) Cognitive Approach (1970s-1980s), linked to Cognitive Psychology

Instead of passive agents who responded to stimuli, learners were seen as active, autonomous and responsible agents of their own learning:

- Hypothesis formulation and discovery learning
- Deductive and inductive modes of learning
- Errors are unavoidable signs of hypothesis testing
- Reading and writing are as important as listening and speaking
- Perfect pronunciation as a primary goal is de-emphasised.

3) CLT, strongly tied within Applied Linguistics. Early origins: 1970s. Language as a system for communication.

Unit 4.3.2