

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE AUDIO-LINGUAL  
METHOD AND THE TRADITIONAL METHOD IN  
SECONDARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

FLOYD CURTIS SATTERLEE

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Approved by:

*Charles M. Secals*  
Major Professor

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The thesis and antithesis of foreign language instruction are the traditional method of language teaching and the audio-lingual technique. Recently the audio-lingual approached the center of the stage and consequently an inevitable reaction has set in.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the claims that one method is better than the other has been based upon opinion and very little experimentation.

### THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to compare the audio-lingual and traditional methods of foreign language instruction to ascertain the assets and liabilities of both methods. More specifically the primary consideration of this study was to test the following hypothesis: There is no difference in learning a foreign language under the audio-lingual method and the traditional method.

Need for the study. In 1943 when the Army Specialized Training Program needed a modern language course which would teach its personnel to converse in a foreign language in as short a time as possible, foreign language teaching methods came under sharp surveillance and criticism.

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<sup>1</sup>D.C. Hawley, "In Search of a Synthesis," Modern Language Journal, 59:19, January, 1965.

In answer to the problem the audio-lingual method was developed and has since been widely accepted.<sup>2</sup> With the acceptance of this approach the emphasis on foreign language learning has been that of speaking and comprehending the spoken language.<sup>3</sup>

A definite sequence of language skills has been established by the audio-lingual approach: listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing -- and in that order of acquisition.<sup>4</sup> Little has been done recently to question this particular order, but rather it has been accepted unquestionably as the audio-lingual method itself has been accepted. Jesse O. Sawyer stated: "It is possible that, for the student with considerable skill in reading his native language, a more successful sequence might be hearing and reading (seeing) followed by speaking, with writing delayed for a substantial period of time."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps a strict sequence should not be adhered to, but rather use the elements of such a sequence in an eclectic manner throughout

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<sup>2</sup>B.M. Bazan, "The Danger of Assumption without Proof," Modern Language Journal, 48:337, October, 1964.

<sup>3</sup>John B. Carroll, "Research on Teaching Foreign Languages," Handbook of Research on Teaching, N.L. Gage, editor (The American Educational Research Association, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1964), 1062.

<sup>4</sup>J.M. Spillane, "The Turn of the Tide in Modern Foreign Language Teaching," Higher Education, 18:7, June, 1962.

<sup>5</sup>J.O. Sawyer, "Foreign Language Instruction," Review of Educational Research, 34:204-205, April, 1964.

the study of the language. The fact of the matter is that not enough research has been done on the audio-lingual approach to warrant disposal of the traditional methodology<sup>6</sup> and the ready acceptance of the audio-lingual technique. Is it not time that a study be made to compare these methods to find and make known the assets and liabilities of both techniques?

Assumptions and limitations. This report has certain limitations: (1) One teacher was used to present both methods and to teach the target language to both the control group and the experimental group. The use of one teacher eliminates the variability of teaching differences between two or more teachers. Therefore using only one teacher makes it possible to better control and eliminate extraneous variables, complicating the conclusions of this experiment. (2) The samples used in the control groups were small, composed of eight members each. Thus the conclusions derived from such a sample must be limited by the size of the sample. (3) The experiment was conducted for a period of twenty weeks. The short period of time allowed for this experiment would inhibit the prediction of effects which might be found if the study had been continued for a four or five year period.

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<sup>6</sup>B.M. Bazan, "The Danger of Assumption without Proof," Modern Language Journal, 48:346, October, 1964.



It is assumed that the results of the achievement tests, written and administered by the writer, may be relied upon to compare the progress of the control groups.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Audio-lingual. The object of the audio-lingual or sometimes referred to as the "direct" or "natural" method is to teach the student to understand and speak the language. The distinguishing feature of this method is that the student's native language is avoided and the student memorizes dialogue phrases which he hears from the teacher or tapes of native speakers.<sup>7</sup> The main premise of the new methodology is the creation of a second language learning situation as analogous as possible to that which fostered<sup>8</sup> the learning of the mother tongue.

Traditional. This method refers to the multiple-approach training system in which the student learns the language by studying grammar, writing and reading from the beginning with little audio-lingual work.

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<sup>7</sup> John B. Carroll, "Research on Teaching Foreign Languages, Handbook of Research on Teaching, N.L. Gage, editor (The American Educational Research Association, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1964), 1062.

<sup>8</sup> B.M. Bazan, "The Danger of Assumption without Proof," Modern Language Journal, 48:337, October, 1964.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

From the time that man concerned himself with the learning of a second language, men have been on hand eager to volunteer the "best" method for learning the desired language. As early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were at least ten French grammar books in existence.<sup>1</sup> The school master thought that the proper way to learn Latin was by studying a grammar and a dictionary. The same method was applied to learning modern language,<sup>2</sup> "for it required a minimum of talent and exertion."

### I. THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

History of the traditional method. The grammar method used in teaching foreign languages was known as early as the fourth century. At that time Aelius Donatus wrote a treatise, Ars grammatica, which outlined the basic rules of Latin grammar and became a popular school book during the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> In the latter part of the eighteenth century Johann Valentin Meidinger published the Praktische Franzosische Grammatik. According to this book the thing to do in acquiring a foreign language was to learn and practice rules.<sup>4</sup> The Coleman report of 1929 gave the traditional

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<sup>1</sup>G.B. Watts, "The Teaching of French in the United States: A History," French Review, 37:103, October, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.103

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

approach the secure footing which it enjoyed for years to come. It was in this report that the main objective for studying a foreign language was set forth -- students were to read the texts as rapidly as they could read them comprehendingly in order to arrive at the goal of reading directly with ease and enjoyment. Thus the oral aspect of foreign language learning had been neglected. The result was that teachers and textbooks taught foreign languages with the grammar and translation technique.

History of the audio-lingual method. The audio-lingual technique is not necessarily new though it has gained prominence only in the last few years. In the early seventeenth century Johann Amos Comenius proposed that foreign languages be taught like the mother tongue, by topical conversations and with the use of pictures and objects. Michel de Montaigne and John Locke also criticized the grammar method in favor of an oral technique. The Robertsonian system in the 1850's introduced the memory story or what is referred to today as the dialogue.<sup>5</sup> It was the Army which finally rejected the traditional approach, demanding that its men be able to speak and communicate with foreigners orally rather than through writing. Thus in 1953 the Intensive Language Program of the American Council

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

of Learned Societies developed twenty-two courses known as the Spoken Language Series.<sup>6</sup> The sole purpose for this course was to teach students to speak accurately fluent French in as short a time as possible. Thus a new goal was emphasized in the study of modern languages -- that of oral communication between individuals. Moreover; the success of the audio-lingual method was endorsed by the Federal Government when an NDEA contract was given to the Modern Language Materials Center to develop five programs based on the audio-lingual approach.

## II. CRITICISM OF AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD

Reconsideration of audio-lingual method. Today most of the materials being used in foreign language classrooms are audio-lingually oriented. Dr. Edmond Meras in a speech presented to the Kansas Modern Language Association, concerning the two methodologies discussed in this paper said, "The pendulum is beginning to swing back."<sup>7</sup> He meant that teachers are beginning to oppose the audio-lingual technique and revert to the traditional approach. D.C. Hawley stated, "It is now clear that the inevitable reaction is setting in, and that the audio-lingual method is coming

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>7</sup>Opinion expressed by Dr. Edmond Meras at a Kansas Modern Language Association meeting, Lawrence, Kansas, March 26, 1966.

under fire both from the traditionalists and from some of its former supporters."<sup>8</sup> Criticized particularly in the audio-lingual approach are the slowness and monotony of oral drills, the overemphasis on mimicry and memorization, the neglect of other skills because of the concentration on oral work, the strain on the teacher, and the fact that the laboratory is not indispensable to good language training. Other criticisms given by Theodore Heubener, Max Zeldner and Beverly Bazan suggest that the audio-lingual approach assumes too much in the learning ability of the student. Beverly Bazan, said, "Very little controlled research has been done on the assumptions of this methodology with specific reference to the secondary language learning situation."<sup>9</sup>

### III. AN EXPERIMENT

University of Colorado experiment. In 1960-61 an experiment was conducted at the University of Colorado under the direction of George A.C. Scherer and Michael Wertheimer to test and compare the audio-lingual approach with the traditional approach. The subjects used in the experiment were the 150 students enrolled in a beginning German course.

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<sup>8</sup>D.C. Hawley, "In Search of a Synthesis," Modern Language Journal, 49:19, January, 1965.

<sup>9</sup>B.M. Bazan, "The Danger of Assumption without Proof," Modern Language Journal, 58:337, October, 1964.

It was not announced until after registration which classes would be taught with the audio-lingual or the traditional approach. At the end of the first semester both groups were given the same series of tests. They were tested again at the end of the second semester.

Results of the experiment. At the end of the first semester the experimental group which was the audio-lingual group was much superior in speaking, while the control group was greatly superior in reading and writing. At the end of the second semester the test results showed that students taught by the audio-lingual method were far superior in listening and speaking and that they were almost on the same level with the students taught by the traditional method in reading and writing tests. A composite score for the four skill tests revealed that the audio-lingual group was just barely statistically better than the traditional group. However the traditional group was much better in the German to English and the English to German translation tests. If the results of these two tests were included in the composite tests score, then the over-all superiority of the audio-lingual group was not statistically significant.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>George A.C. Scherer and Michael Wertheimer, "The German Teaching Experiment at the University of Colorado," German Quarterly, 35:298-308, May, 1962.

## EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to compare the audio-lingual approach and the traditional approach to the teaching of foreign languages and to ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of the two methods. The evidence from the review of the literature suggested the desirability of a controlled experiment to determine the effect of the audio-lingual and traditional approaches upon a secondary language learning situation. For this purpose students were tested in various language skills after having studied a foreign language, using either the traditional or the audio-lingual techniques.

### I. ARRANGING THE EXPERIMENT

Students used in the experiment. Freshman and sophomore students who had had no previous knowledge of any foreign language were used in the experiment. They were told in the beginning that they had been selected to take part in an experiment designed to examine the methods of teaching foreign languages. They were informed that two different methods of teaching French, which in this case was the target language, would be tested in the experiment. It was explained that both methods have been and are presently being used in other high schools throughout the United States. They were assured that their language study would



not be retarded by the experiment, but rather that the study was designed to find the areas of foreign language learning in which each method excelled over the other.

School used in the experiment. For the purpose of carrying out the proposed plan, the cooperation of the Beloit City Schools, located at Beloit, Kansas was secured. There were 29 students divided into three classes in the beginning French course at the Beloit High School. The school was equipped with a language laboratory which accommodated sixteen students at one time and <sup>is</sup> included two tape recorders with which the students could work. The material presented to the students was taken from the textbook, Ecouter et Parler, compiled by Dominique G. Cote, Sylvia Narins Levy and Patricia O'Connor and published by the Holt, Rinehart and Winston Publishing Company. Since this textbook was designed for the audio-lingual technique of teaching it was necessary for the teacher to rewrite each lesson for the traditional method.

Equating the control groups. Since there were three classes of beginning French already set up in the Beloit High School, it was decided to select one of the classes with which to employ the traditional technique and to use the audio-lingual approach with the other classes. After the preliminary testing to equate the two groups, eight



students from each of the test groups were matched, forming eight pairs which were considered to be most nearly alike in mental and verbal ability and previous scholastic achievement.

The following instruments were used to group these students: (1) the Brown-Carlson Listening Test; (2) the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test, Form AM; (3) the language usage score from the Differential Aptitude Test; and (4) the students' cumulative scholastic records.

By referring to the data in Table I the similarity of the two groups can be verified. The mean intelligence score for the experimental group of the audio-lingual class was 111.8 as compared to the mean intelligence score of 116.8 for the control group. Using the t-test to test for a statistically significant difference in these scores, it is found that a .20 probability factor exists in these scores which means that the probability is 20% that there is not a significant difference in the intelligence scores of the two groups. A significant difference is considered to exist only when there is a probability factor of .05 or less. The mean cumulative grade average for the experimental group was 2.9 as compared to 2.96 for the control group. A probability factor of .60 was found for these scores. The mean score for the Brown-Carlson Listening test was 87.92 for the experimental group and 87.5 for the control group with a

probability factor of .90. The mean score for the language usage test in the Differential Aptitude test was 75.25 for the experimental group and 76.12 for the control group with a t-test probability score of .90. It was to be concluded that there was no significant difference in mental or verbal ability in either group.

It should be emphasized that none of the students had previously studied any foreign language nor had they any contact with a foreign language previous to the experiment. Therefore it was to be assumed that both groups of students were similar in their ability to learn a foreign language.

Procedure used in the experiment. The students were divided into two groups: (1) an experimental group which studied the target language presented by the audio-lingual technique and (2) a control group which used the traditional approach to study the language. Each class would have the same amount of instruction, 55 minutes daily for five days each week. Both groups received exactly the same material each day. Only the method of presentation was changed from one group to the other.

Both groups were tested at the end of each six week period and again at the end of the twenty week period in order to examine and compare the progress of the classes in the following areas of foreign language learning: (1) grammar; (2) vocabulary development; (3) listening comprehension; and

TABLE I

GENERAL DATA FOR CONTROL GROUP  
AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Student	Brown-Carlson listening score	Otis I.Q. score	Cumulative grade average	DAT language usage score
C1	71	115	2.66	80
C2	94	110	1.83	97
C3	71	106	2.86	30
C4	96	136	3.41	97
C5	94	112	2.33	45
C6	96	118	4.00	95
C7	91	128	3.83	90
C8	93	110	2.83	65
Control Group				
sum	700	935	23.75	609
mean	87.5	116.8	2.96	76.12
E1	65	98	2.33	60
E2	71	95	2.00	80
E3	78	111	2.88	45
E4	99	130	3.87	97
E5	96	112	2.66	75
E6	98	128	3.34	90
E7	99	116	3.50	70
E8	95	105	2.62	85
EXPERIMENTAL GROUP				
sum	701	895	23.20	602
mean	87.62	111.8	2.9	75.25
Overall Group				
sum	1401	1830	46.95	1211
mean	87.56	114.37	2.93	75.68
t-value	.175	1.4	.561	.11
probability	.90	.20	.60	.90

(4) oral communication.

Analysis of Data. Tests and measuring devices were used in this study which lent themselves to statistical analysis. Using the t-test for testing significant differences in small samples, the test results for both groups were compared. The t-test is used to test whether the mean difference in scores is significantly different from zero. Thus the t-value will give us an answer in terms of acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis at the desired level of confidence. The literature indicated that a .01 level of significance is ordinarily considered a high level of control and that a .10 is so low a level of control that it is seldom used in educational research. As a compromise between these two levels a .05 level of<sup>1</sup> significance was used.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Peccolo, The Effect of Thermal Environment on Learning: A Pilot Study, Iowa Center for Research in School Administration, (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa) p.13.

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The test of the hypothesis -- that there is no difference between the audio-lingual and the traditional techniques in learning a foreign language -- lies as far as this investigation is concerned in the comparison of the two groups of students who differed only in the approach in which the target language was taught to them. The other known factors were equated as much as possible.

The tests to measure the amount of learning in this experiment were objective. A correct response to a question was regarded as learning the desired information. In the case of oral expression and listening comprehension however, the examination relied to a certain extent on the subjective evaluation of the writer who in this case taught both test groups.

### I. ACHIEVEMENT TESTS AT SIX WEEK INTERVALS

First six week period. The progress of each student was checked at the end of each six week period in order to compare the progress made by the student in each of the four phases of language development examined in this experiment. Table II shows the results for the first six week period. After the first six weeks the control group, using the traditional approach, was found significantly superior in

TABLE II  
ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS FOR  
THE FIRST SIX WEEK PERIOD

Student	Oral Expression	Grammar	Vocabulary	Listening Comprehension
C1	100	45	100	64
C2	64	0	0	82
C3	100	59	100	77
C4	100	86	73	100
C5	85	5	0	27
C6	100	91	100	95
C7	95	87	73	73
C8	94	68	45	91
Control Group				
sum	738	441	491	609
mean	92.25	55.12	61.38	76.12
E1	82	45	45	64
E2	72	45	54	86
E3	69	45	45	45
E4	95	100	100	100
E5	64	100	45	9
E6	78	54	73	91
E7	73	73	45	73
E8	93	45	18	91
Experimental Group				
sum	626	507	425	559
mean	78.25	63.37	53.12	69.87
Overall Group				
Difference in mean	14.00	8.25	8.26	6.25
t-value	2.98	.532	.525	1.481
probability	.02*	.60	.60	.20
*significant difference				

oral expression. It is interesting to note that at this early period the experimental group excelled the control group by 8.25 points in the use of grammar, however this was not statistically significant. The control group excelled in listening comprehension and vocabulary though not significantly.

Second six week period. At the end of the twelve week period there was no longer a significant difference between the groups in the area of oral expression. The mean score for the experimental group dropped 5.5 points compared to 13.13 points dropped by the control group. In the area of grammar the experimental group declined by 3.25 points whereas the control group progressed by 8.38 points. In the area of vocabulary the two groups differed by 12.75 points with the control group maintaining the superior position. The score which varied the greatest after the second six week period was listening comprehension. During this time the control group declined by 13.62 points whereas the experimental improved by 7.25 points. Though this was not a statistically significant difference, it was a large change for such a short period of time.

Third six week period. During the next six week period the students seemed to have reached a plateau in which there was little change from the second six week



TABLE III  
ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS FOR  
THE SECOND SIX WEEK PERIOD

Student	Oral Expression	Grammar	Vocabulary	Listening Comprehension
C1	88	54	30	39
C2	54	0	42	12
C3	88	69	58	64
C4	79	100	94	97
C5	85	0	3	48
C6	97	100	100	85
C7	82	85	82	82
C8	60	100	48	73
Control Group				
sum	633	508	457	500
mean	79.12	63.5	57.12	62.5
E1	91	59	64	86
E2	82	52	59	50
E3	52	29	60	73
E4	91	95	50	86
E5	75	73	12	88
E6	68	91	55	79
E7	70	64	54	79
E8	73	18	21	76
Experimental Group				
sum	602	481	375	617
mean	72.75	60.13	44.37	77.12
Overall Group				
Difference in mean	6.37	3.38	12.75	14.62
t-test value	.488	.018	.922	1.745
probability	.70	.90	.30	.10



TABLE IV  
ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS FOR  
THE THIRD SIX WEEK PERIOD

Student	Oral Expression	Grammar	Vocabulary	Listening Comprehension
C1	59	49	45	45
C2	36	11	0	0
C3	62	54	100	68
C4	98	94	100	100
C5	78	11	45	27
C6	87	100	91	100
C7	85	94	100	100
C8	78	96	82	54
Control Group				
sum	583	509	563	494
mean	72.87	63.62	70.37	61.75
E1	70	64	45	68
E2	73	55	45	82
E3	69	55	45	79
E4	98	93	45	82
E5	62	39	45	76
E6	73	87	45	97
E7	82	73	45	87
E8	65	21	18	45
Experimental Group				
sum	592	487	333	616
mean	74.00	60.85	41.62	77.00
Overall Group				
Difference in mean	1.13	2.77	28.75	15.25
t-value	.181	.166	1.909	1.22
probability	.90	.90	.10	.30

period. However there was a slight progression in the area of vocabulary on the part of the control group and at the same time a slight decline in the experimental group.

In Figures 1 through 4 the progress for both groups in each of the four tested areas is plotted and compared with each other for the eighteen week period. Both groups finished this period by doing similar work in the areas of oral expression and grammar. However there were rather wide differences in the areas of vocabulary and listening comprehension. It should be emphasized that there was no statistical differentiation in any of the group scores with the exception of the first six week oral expression score in which the control group scored significantly superior.

## II. FINAL EXAMINATION SERIES

At the end of the twenty week experimental period a series of achievement tests was administered to both groups in order to determine the individual and group growth in the test areas of language acquisition. These tests were compiled by the writer from the material presented to the students during the experimental period and the results from both groups were compared and contrasted with other.

Test results. The vocabulary test consisted of one test of 90 French words to which the student was to give an English equivalent; and another test of 90 English words to

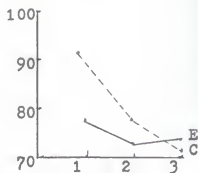


FIGURE 1

COMPARISON OF CONVERSATION  
SCORES FOR THREE  
TEST PERIODS

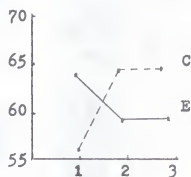


FIGURE 2

COMPARISON OF GRAMMAR  
SCORES FOR THREE  
TEST PERIODS

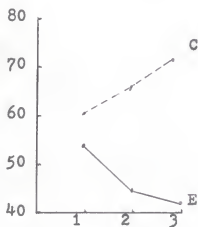


FIGURE 3

COMPARISON OF VOCABULARY  
SCORES FOR THREE  
TEST PERIODS

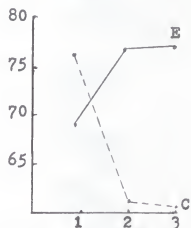


FIGURE 4

COMPARISON OF LISTENING  
COMPREHENSION SCORES FOR  
THREE TEST PERIODS

which the student gave a French equivalent. On the English to French vocabulary test an account of spelling errors made in the French words was kept.

The experimental group averaged 7.15 words more on the French to English vocabulary test than the control group. However the control group averaged 21.6 words on the English to French test more than the experimental group as well as misspelling 3.0 words less than the experimental group. This was to be expected since the control group had learned most of their vocabulary by rote. It might be inferred that the experimental group had achieved a better recognition vocabulary than the control group.

A multiple choice test was given to test the students' comprehension of grammar. As the t-score indicates, the control group scored significantly superior. This was probably due to the fact that the control group studied grammatical rules and exercises whereas the experimental group studied grammar only by use of the memorized dialogue, deducing a grammatical relationship.

An oral ability test was administered which consisted of a section on pronunciation ability and another section on oral expression. The pronunciation test consisted of a list of ten words which the student read aloud as well as a paragraph which the students read aloud at sight. Each student was graded on the fluency with which he read as well

TABLE V  
VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR TEST  
RESULTS AT THE END OF THE  
EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD

Student	French- English	English- French	Misspelling	Grammar
C1	53	59	10	11
C2	35	45	10	11
C3	73	61	14	13
C4	87	89	3	24
C5	34	27	7	12
C6	88	80	4	23
C7	84	81	2	21
C8	82	84	13	23
Control Group				
sum	536	526	63	138
mean	67.00	85.75	7.875	17.15
E1	72	62	7	9
E2	69	61	18	11
E3	73	63	13	18
E4	84	80	7	19
E5	65	57	7	13
E6	86	79	10	18
E7	72	62	12	17
E8	73	52	13	15
Experimental Group				
sum	594	514	87	120
mean	74.15	64.15	10.875	15.00
Overall Group				
Difference				
in mean	7.15	21.60	3.00	2.15
t-value	1.115	.22	1.8	2.222
probability	.30	.80	.10	.05

as the correctness and precision of the sounds he made. The oral expression test consisted of a picture about which the student was to talk. The student was graded on a cut sheet which allowed for fluency, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. The student's total score for the oral fluency test was derived from this cut sheet.

This test showed that there was a significant difference in paragraph reading in favor of the control group. This may have been due to the fact that the control group had begun their study of French with the written symbol whereas the audio-lingual group had worked for more than twelve weeks with no written symbol at all. Therefore the difference in the results of this test may have been due more to the reading factor than a pronunciation one. The surprising result of this test was the significant difference in the oral expression test in favor of the control group. At the eighteen week point there was no significant difference between the two groups in this area. However two weeks later in this series of tests the traditional group tested significantly superior.

The listening comprehension test was given in the form of a dictation test. The students were not penalized for spelling errors but rather for the omission of a word or the substitution of words for the ones given. The scores from the listening comprehension test show that there was no difference in the listening comprehension of either group.

TABLE VI  
 PRONUNCIATION AND ORAL FLUENCY TEST  
 RESULTS AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION  
 TEST RESULTS AT THE END OF  
 THE EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD

Student	Word List	Paragraph	Oral Expression	Listening Comprehension
C1	4	31	88	34
C2	8	28	85	24
C3	8	25	60	30
C4	10	40	100	6
C5	6	25	44	34
C6	10	33	67	8
C7	2	18	60	15
C8	8	25	50	12
Control Group				
sum	56	225	554	163
mean	7.00	28.125	69.25	20.375
E1	3	23	25	28
E2	6	28	40	25
E3	7	26	50	28
E4	8	26	50	11
E5	2	16	60	23
E6	10	33	67	13
E7	2	18	60	23
E8	8	25	50	22
Experimental Group				
sum	46	195	402	173
mean	5.75	24.375	50.25	21.65
Overall Group				
Difference in mean	1.25	3.75	19.00	1.275
t-value	1.5	2.906*	2.310*	.060
probability	.20	.02	.05	.90
*significant difference				

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine and compare the audio-lingual approach in teaching foreign languages with the traditional approach in an attempt to ascertain the assets and liabilities of both methods.

### I. PROCEDURE

Two groups of students who were equated as nearly as possible in mental and verbal ability were taught French. One group was taught, using the audio-lingual approach while the other group used the traditional approach. Every six weeks both groups were given a series of achievement tests to check and compare the progress of the two groups. Finally at the end of the twenty week experimental session another series of tests was given and the results compared.

### II. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

Periodic six week tests. In the periodic achievement tests it was found that the audio-lingual groups were slow in learning to speak the target language as compared to the traditional group. However by the end of the third six week period both groups seemed to have attained a similar ability in oral expression.

The audio-lingual group excelled, though not statistically significantly, in listening comprehension.



Likewise the traditional group excelled in vocabulary acquisition at the end of the eighteen week period. Both groups were very similar in grammar development.

Twenty week series of tests. The traditional group showed a significant difference in paragraph reading and oral expression in this series of tests. The group was also significantly superior in the area of grammar. Though the vocabulary tests showed no statistical differences, the group mean scores indicated that the audio-lingual group achieved a better passive vocabulary than the traditional group. However the control group appeared to have a better active vocabulary. There was virtually no difference in listening comprehension among the two groups.

### III. IMPLICATIONS

Rejection of the null hypothesis reveals that there is a difference in the learning of a foreign language when taught by the audio-lingual or the traditional technique in the first twenty weeks of study of the target language. The knowledge of this difference implies that a secondary language may not be learned the "natural" way in which one learns the mother tongue. Thus it might be inferred from this study that a synthesis of the two methods should be employed in beginning a student in his study of a foreign language.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE AUDIO-LINGUAL  
METHOD AND THE TRADITIONAL METHOD IN  
SECONDARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

FLOYD CURTIS SATTERLEE

A.B., Central Methodist College, 1964

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyse and compare the effect of the audio-lingual and the traditional methods on the learning of French in a secondary school situation. The four areas of language acquisition studied in this report were: (1) vocabulary; (2) oral expression; (3) listening comprehension; and (4) grammar.

An experiment was set up in the Beloit High School at Beloit, Kansas, using freshman and sophomore students who were enrolled in a beginning French course. One class of students was taught French by the traditional method while the other two classes learned French with the audio-lingual technique.

The experiment was conducted for a twenty week period. Achievement tests, constructed by the writer, to measure the individual and group progress in the four areas of language learning, were administered every six weeks. A final test series was given at the end of the experimental period.

In order to compare the results of the experiment, students were selected from the three classes in order to form a group of audio-lingual students and a group of traditional students which were equal as nearly as possible in mental and verbal ability. They were equated on the basis of the scores they made on the Brown-Carlson Listening Test, the

Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Abilities Test, the language usage test from the Differential Aptitude Test, and the students' cumulative grade averages. Eight pairs of students were chosen for this experiment.

It was found that the traditional group scored significantly better on the oral expression test at the end of the first six week period; however there was no statistical difference in the following test periods in this or any other area. At the end of the experimental period the traditional group scored significantly better in the areas of grammar and oral expression. There was no significant difference between the groups in vocabulary or listening comprehension.

From the findings of this study it was to be concluded that the original hypothesis -- that there is no difference between the audio-lingual technique and the traditional technique in the learning of a foreign language -- was to be rejected. It was found that a difference does exist between the two methods in the first twenty weeks of study of the target language.