



## **A Comparative Review of Audio-Lingual Methodology and Communicative Language Teaching in Second Language Instruction**

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### **Introduction**

We are faced with a globalized workforce and academia that requires strength in foreign languages. Whether a student enters the workforce after high school or attends college, both sectors have become increasingly globalized. Numerous colleges require two or more foreign languages for admission. For example, Stanford University requires three years of foreign language classes and these classes should be in the same language. The U.S. Census Bureau in 1980 reported that 10.97% of the U.S. population spoke a language other than English at home. In 2007, after 17 years, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 19.73% spoke a language other than English. That is nearly 10% increase in bilingual population. This data indicates the significance of examining the second language instruction today. The ever-increasing number of English Language Learners (ELL) in this country and into our classrooms does not seem to slow down. Therefore, it is vital to gaze at the foreign language teaching techniques used in our classrooms and what implications this would have in the future.

In this article, a comparative review of two language instruction books will be presented, Karl J. Grebanier's *Audio-Lingual Techniques for Foreign Language Teaching* (1961) and James Lee and Bill VanPatten's *Making Communicative Teaching Happen* (2003). The reason for choosing these two books is show the noteworthy shift of second language teaching methods throughout the years. This article will present a historical background on Audio-Lingual Methodology (ALM) and how this teaching methodology has impacted language acquisition during the 1950s and War World II. A brief description of the content from each book will be offered to visualize the structure. And further discuss how the role of the teacher can affect the role of the student. This analysis will furthermore address the difference of grammar teaching in the classroom.



In Audio-Lingual Methodology (ALM), the instructor transmits knowledge to a passive and minimally engaged audience with an authoritative role. On the contrary, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) diverges by proposing a new relationship between instructors and students providing them opportunities for communication, using the language to interpret and express real life messages with an emphasis in comprehensible input. ALM and CLT converge in the same practice of excluding explicit grammar instruction in the classroom. Both methodologies accept as true; that grammar instruction is implicitly included in the classroom activities. This article will attempt to answer if explicit grammar should be taught in the classrooms. It will explore some research insights into the process of acquiring a second language based on the Communicative Language Teaching as the preferred teaching approach.

### **Should explicit grammar be taught at all in the classrooms?**

Taylor (1983) stated “The order of acquisition of grammar rules may be determined more by communicative need than by the teaching order.” (p. 81). Krashen (1982) reasoned students receiving explicit grammar instruction might develop a conscious *Monitor*; a kind of “*grammar police*” is for correction for proper usage of grammar and syntax only under certain conditions. These conditions are (1) when the learner needs to produce a correct sentence and (2) when there is time to do it (on a written test as opposed to in naturally occurring conversation). This thought has influenced CLT for implicit grammar instruction through comprehensible input. Lee and VanPatten (2003) found through their research that explicit grammar instruction in the classroom does not bypass “natural” stages of development. In another words, the students will continue to make the “natural” mistakes learners go through in the process of developing a linguistic system. The learners will continue to overgeneralize many grammatical rules, for example, generalize regular past tense endings with irregular verbs regardless of instruction.

Grammar is part of language teaching and none of the mentioned researchers are asking to completely abandon grammar teaching. But rather, research in second language acquisition is questioning the effectiveness of explicit grammar teaching in the classroom. Savignon (1991) suggestion was not to desert the teaching of grammar, but a “replacement of language laboratory structure drills with meaning-focused self expression was found to be more effective way to



develop communicative ability” (p. 263). Grammar instruction should be brief and concise. One function of the language and one form presented at a time to improve efficacy.

***Audio-Lingual Techniques for Foreign Language Teaching and Making Communicative Teaching Happen: Why Are They Standouts?***

***Audio-lingual Techniques for Foreign Language Teaching, Karl J. Grebanier***

Grebanier was an instructor of Spanish and French at Winthrop Junior high school in Brooklyn, New York. In 1958, when the Department of Health, Welfare and Education decided it was time to change the way we learn foreign language, this approach was called the Aural-Oral Experiment and then later called Audio-Lingual. Karl Grebanier started using this approach as far back as 1940, and has given presentations and courses on ALM on 1960-1961. These courses were called “*Conversational Approach to French for Beginners.*” Grebanier participated in many pilot programs giving in-service training to New York City teachers (Grebanier, 1961).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) Audio-Lingual teaching approach is a result of a number of linguists, psychologist and politics in the 1940s. The lessons consisted of intensive oral drilling of grammatical patterns and pronunciation. The United States had joined World War II and was in need of personnel who were fluent in foreign languages. The U.S. government developed the Army Specialized Training Program, an oral-based program based on intensive drilling and study. The success of this program convinced a number of schools and universities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In 1958, the National Defense Education Act provided funds for developing foreign languages. The U.S. government became concerned about America’s isolation from scientific advances in foreign countries. The development based on these funds concentrated on the Army program as well as principles of behaviorist psychology. The new approach was lead by Yale professor Nelson Brooks, whom claimed the language teaching approach of audio-lingual methods. This was a new approach because many schools employed the Grammar-Translation Methods in the 1950s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The Audio-lingual method was widely accepted in the United States as the primary teaching method for foreign language. However, in the 1970s, this methodology encountered some resistance and even decline, mainly due to the MIT linguist, Noam Chomsky whom



rejected the behaviorist theory of language learning. Furthermore, many language teachers and students experienced irritation for the heavy importance on rote memorization and drilling, and its failure to produce conversational ability in the foreign language (Richard & Rodgers, 2001).

The audio-lingual approach views language primarily as an oral phenomenon (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Since children learn their first language orally before learning its written form, the Audio-lingual method teaches listening and speaking before reading and writing. Grebanier (1961) says “There are no textbooks, no written work: just speaking”(p.7). Therefore, for the beginning learners in an audio-lingual classroom, the written language is avoided in the belief seeing the written word of the target language interferes with developing correct pronunciation habits. Hence, the areas of reading and writing are introduced later.

The underlying theory of learning for Audio-lingual Method is behaviorism. Behaviorism theory claims learning occurs as humans respond to the external stimuli and the student is rewarded or punished, which motivates the learning to increase or desired behavior (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The instructors in the Audio-lingual Methods classroom were to provide linguistic stimuli in the forms of dialogues and drills by correcting their errors (Grabaniar, 1961). In this manner, the students were discouraged from using language to create their own meaning due to the potential for making errors, which may potentially create “wrong” habits. Which, in many principles, is the contrast of the Communicative Language Teaching.

In *Audio-lingual Techniques for Foreign Language Teaching*, this book has an introduction, four chapters with drills in French and Spanish. Chapter I is about Organization and Procedures. In this chapter, Grebanier suggests the procedures for each unit into five sections. General Procedures: this section, Grebanier gives 9 specific teaching guidelines how to direct the drills in the classroom. This section describes how to use tape recorders. The teacher is asked to have tape recorders to play and assist the students with the oral drills. This device is strongly recommended to save and give the teacher the well-deserved vocal cord rest. A disc to play simple musical songs to aid the oral drills is required. Another recommendation is to have visual aids: these are visual charts with short sentences and pictures. Each chart will represent a sentence describing the action. This is to help associate the action and the meaning of the sentence.



Grebanier suggests for the teacher to be the actor or an actress. “Get up from your chair and say, “Je me leve” or “Yo me levanto” (p. 8). The specific procedures request the teacher to act out the actions and the students repeat in concert.

Chapter II gives a historical lesson of the Romance Languages. In this chapter, the reader learns why French, Spanish, Italian and Romanian are called the Romance Languages. And Chapter III is about pronunciation for French and Spanish. This chapter outlines the phonological components of both languages. Chapter IV is the longest chapter with all the drills and exercises. This chapter has drills in both languages, French and Spanish.

Chapter V is the last chapter with all the drills and language exercises from greetings, numbers, and colors to introduction to reading.

### ***Making Communicative Teaching Happen, James F. Lee and Bill VanPatten***

James F. Lee is an Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; he served as the Director of Basic Language Instruction in the Department of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese from 1986 to 1993. He has published articles, directed TA trainings, co-authored several McGraw-Hill textbooks. Bill VanPatten is a professor of Spanish at Michigan State University and is known for his work in second language acquisition and second language instruction, with special emphases on input processing; He has published six language textbooks, and 100 articles and book chapters. Two of his articles are listed in the top ten citations for articles in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* and he has received local and national awards

Communicative Language Teaching suggests more attention on comprehensible input or meaning-bearing input in the acquisition process (Ozfidan, Machtmes, & Demir, 2014). The researchers argue if the language is incomprehensible, successful language acquisition does not happen. In other words, the pupil must be able to figure out what the speaker or writer is saying for him to construct a linguistic system. Therefore, what is good input? Lee and VanPatten (2003) offer this metaphor in their textbook; input is to language acquisition what gas is to a car. “An engine needs gas to run; without gas, the car would not move an inch. Likewise, input in



language learning is what gets the “engine” of language learning going” (p.38). Without input, acquisition does not happen.

In Communicative Language Teaching, the learner or the student is at the center of communicative language teaching. The learner must learn how to communicate and negotiate with freedom the meaning in the target language.

In *Making Communicative Teaching Happen*, this book is divided into 5 parts.

Part I: Preliminary Consideration in Communicative Language Teaching. In this part, the authors examine the roles and tasks and establish the important role input plays in language learning providing ways to improve comprehensible and meaning-bearing input in the classroom.

Part II: Grammar Instruction. In this chapter, Lee and VanPatten (2003) propose grammar instruction centered in structured-input and output practice. They also suggest ways to test grammar consistent with the way it was taught in the classroom.

Part III: Spoken Language. The book demonstrates how classroom communication can be transferred through the use of information-exchange task. Also suggesting ways to test oral communication using the same method used in the classroom.

Part IV: Reading and Writing. In this book, the instructional framework for reading is to propose readers to read the second language as a second language and not to translate it to their first language. As far as for writing, the book encourages the learners to engage in processes characteristic of good writers.

### **The Roles of Instructors and Students**

Lee and VanPatten (2003) start their book critiquing traditional classroom roles, such as the Audio-lingual approach, and they also suggest alternative ones. The Greek mythology is referenced in regards to alternative teaching roles. Many classroom teachers assume unrealistic pressure and responsibility to be the center in the classroom, which leads to Atlas Complex. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the Greek god Atlas as *Titan condemned to support the heavens upon his shoulders*. “The Atlas Complex is not discipline specific; teacher-centered, knowledge-transmitting classroom are the norm for many subject areas” (Lee & VanPatten, p. 6).



When instructors carry an unrealistic pressure on their shoulders, as defined in the Atlas Complex, they become authoritative knowledge transmitters; the students become their passive audience, receptive vessels into which knowledge is poured. This is the primary role, respectively; instructors and students play in Audio-lingual classroom.

### **The roles in Audio-Lingual Methodology (ALM).**

In an Audio-Lingual Methodology classroom, the norm is for the teacher to be the center figure in the classroom. When the language teaching profession moved from grammar and translation methods to a more “oral” teaching approach as in the Audio-Lingual Methodology, the teacher became the authority and expert (one did not question authority). ALM’s teaching materials explicitly cast the instructor as drill leader, perhaps the ultimate manifestation of the Atlas Complex (Lee & VanPatten, p. 7). “In Audioloingualism, as in Situational Language Teaching, the teacher’s role is central and active; it is a teacher-dominated method (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p. 62). In an ALM classroom, the students were typically given a model sentence. The teacher then provided the cue students would substitute into the sentence. The role of the student was almost robotic to simply repeat without making much connection to the meaning. “The teacher models the target language, controls the direction and pace of learning, and monitors and corrects the learners’ performance” (Richards & Rogers, p. 63). The following is an example of an audio-lingual drill.

MODEL: I don’t want to eat anymore!

*teacher’s cue*

*student response*

- |             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. to sing  | I don’t want to sing anymore!  |
| 2. to read  | I don’t want to read anymore!  |
| 3. to relax | I don’t want to relax anymore! |

The Audio-Lingual Methodology did not give the students to use the language in a meaningful way to communicate and negotiate (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In the above example, the students are allowed to repeat only what was said to them or which they were cued. The oral expression of the student was very controlled.



This is due because ALM believed in the psychology of behaviorism, if good habits are formed, the students will not make errors. “Learners are viewed as organism that can be directed by skilled training techniques to produce correct responses” (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 62). However, if bad habits are allowed, the students will make errors in the second language and bad habits are difficult to stop. This prevented students from having the freedom to communicate and negotiate using the language.

Therefore, in an ALM classroom, many of the grammar drills are based oral repetition with the entire class. The teacher gives the cue and the entire class responds together. This type of grammar drills allows students to repeat orally without comprehension. Krashen (1989) proposed, “we must comprehend what we hear and say for acquisition to occur. Simple repetition doesn’t build the linguistic structure in the learner” (p. 445). Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons (2004) conducted a study with fourth semester college students of Spanish as foreign language. The students instructed with comprehensible input classroom outperformed the traditional methodology students in their grammar tests. The result was particularly evident in the beginning levels.

**The roles in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).** With the introduction to communicative language teaching, the role of the teacher changed. Lee and VanPatten (2003) found that “the instructor was no longer simply the drill leader but was also charged with providing students opportunities for communication, which is, using the language to interpret and express real-life messages” (p. 8). Lee and VanPatten argue that in a regular or outside the classroom conversation, we are not directed by an individual what we want to say (p. 33). The role of a teacher has changed to be more like an architect. In a CLT class, the instructors attempt to be architects and designers of a safe classroom for students to interact using real life themes through information seeking activities.





### Compare and Contrast

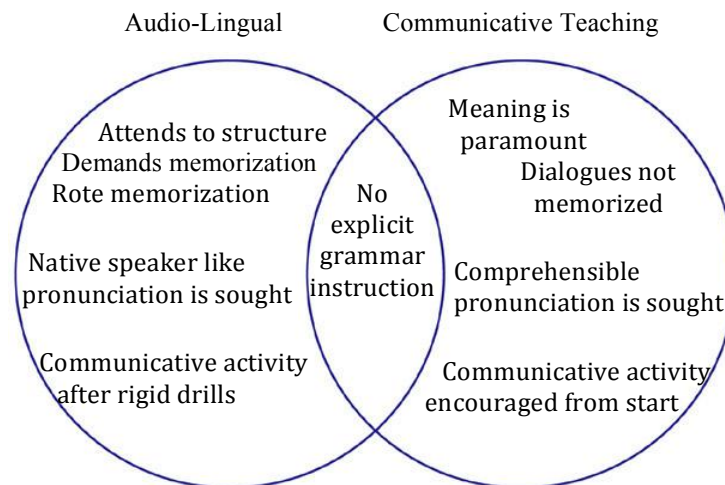


Figure 2 Compare and Contrast

Figure 2 illustrates the comparison and contrast of the two language teaching techniques. These two teaching techniques overlap in the absence of explicit grammar instruction.

#### Grammar Instruction in Audio-Lingual Methodology

The distinctive teaching of grammar in the ALM is through drills. There are various kinds of drills used to present grammar. One of the most common drills used in the ALM is repetition. In repetition the learners repeat the statement as soon as he has heard it (Richards & Rogers, 1986).

EXAMPLE:

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>student</i>
This is my sister.	This is my sister.

After the student has repeated a statement, he may repeat it again and add a few words.

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>student</i>
This is my sister Mary Beth.	This is my sister Mary Beth from California.

Replacement is another drill used, in this case to present the pronoun in the English language.



EXAMPLE:

*Teacher*

*student*

He bought *this house* cheap.

I bought *it* cheap.

As seen in the examples, in ALM, the lesson is presented and it is teacher-centered instruction. The teacher dominates the drill, the teacher models and directs the learner's activity. During the primary or beginning stage of the lessons in ALM, the textbook is not required. The majority of the drills are primarily listening, repeating and responding to cues. In the beginning stage, printed material is not considered desirable. The printed text was not required because it was assumed they distract the student. Taylor (1983) implies throughout his study "that real communicative need provides a more reasonable starting-off point for language instruction than a pre-determined teacher order." (p. 83).

### **Grammar Instruction in Communicative Teaching**

Lee and VanPatten (2003) define input processing "as making form-meaning connections from the linguistic data in the input for the purposes of constructing a linguistic system." (p. 38). Unlike the ALM, which is output-base, CLT is input-base. Not only just input, but comprehensible input. Based on this hypothesis, Lee and VanPatten (2003, p. 104-105), grammar is presented in the following way:

1. Present one thing at a time: to maximize efficiency in learning, one function and one form are the focus at any given time.
2. Keep meaning in focus: students should not only engage in the mechanical input like in the traditional instruction. Input must be comprehensible for acquisition. Read the following two activities from *Making Communicative Teaching Happen*. This exercise is to teach *-ing* complements with the English verb *enjoy*. Which of the two keeps meaning in focus? Which does not?

**Activity E. Looking for Verb Endings.** In the following paragraph circle all the uses of *-ing*. With what verb does it occur?

Barnard smith is an instructor who enjoys only certain aspects of his job. On the one hand, he enjoys teaching. He especially likes to teach Portuguese 101. He really enjoys preparing new



and innovative tasks for learners to do in class. On the other hand, he does not enjoy correcting essays. He finds it tedious.

**Activity F. Looking for Verb Endings.** Check off the statements you think are true based on what you know about your instructor.

- He/She enjoys teaching.
- He/She enjoys watching the news at night.
- He/She enjoys preparing exams.
- He/She enjoys correcting exams.
- He/She enjoys correcting exams.
- He/She does not enjoy reading student essays.

The Activity E does not keep meaning in focus, in other words, the student can do the task of circling the verbs endings ending *-ing* without understanding the meaning of the sentences. However, in Activity F, the student cannot perform the activity without making the form-meaning connection. In order for the learner to obtain the correct answer, the learner must understand each sentence. Imagine yourself being in a beginner's Spanish course. The class is attempting to guess what your instructor enjoys doing.

3. Use both oral and written input: in activities, the learner should be provided with oral presentation and see the presentation in writing as well.
4. Have the learner do something with the input: the students should not be passive recipients of the language presented. Lee and VanPatten (2003, p. 107) the learner must be actively engaged in attending to the input to encourage the processing of grammar.

Taylor (1983) states "When an explanation of a new linguist form is offered at a time when it can be perceived to fulfill a real or present communicative need, the learners are able to focus on active, communicatively –based, self-invested learning. The psychological impact of recognizing the immediate communicative utility of a new form is greater than that which exists when language forms are presented in an arbitrary order and then practiced through contrived activities designed to create the illusion of reality." (p. 82).



### **How the two books converge: Should Grammar be Taught at All?**

Under ALM and CLT, both methodologies have alternative ways of presenting explicit grammar in the classroom. This could be difficult to picture in the traditional classroom. In ALM, the drills are through repetition, habit-formation and rote memorization. According to the behaviorism theory, even without explicit grammar explanation, learners were expected to form the correct linguistic habit. There is hardly any grammar explanation but more habit forming repetition and oral practice. “Reinforcement is a vital element in the learning process, because it increases the likelihood the behavior will occur again and eventually become a habit.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 56). Speech was assumed the primary and writing the secondary way of acquiring a language. Therefore, it was assumed the instruction method should focus on the habit forming oral practice and place writing pending until later. Similarly, in CLT classroom as well, grammar explanation is very concise and brief. In other words, grammar instruction is implicit rather than explicit. For example, in a beginner’s Spanish class in CLT, the traditional memorization of the verb conjugation is no longer practiced. Any student, who has taken a romance language course in the past, would be familiar with verb conjugations:

Simple present tense

*Yo como*

*Tú comes*

*El come*

*Nosotros comemos*

*Ellos comen*

However, this type of explicit grammar presentation is no longer a natural option for these courses. But rather in a CTL course, the activities involve in structure input in making sure the learner makes the form-meaning connection rather than just mechanics. One verb is presented at a time using visual and associative objects to help the learner acquire the meaning and the form of the grammar. The learner cannot perform the activities in CLT without making the form-meaning connections.



### Conclusion

The debate about language instruction is one of the major conflicts in second language teaching today (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). This article examines different teaching methodologies and approaches in second language instruction. ALM is a teacher-centered method and the students are highly controlled under an authoritative and drill leader like teacher. It was believed a highly controlled classroom would minimize errors. Students in a CLT classroom, however, are free to start and create dialogues and in fact are encouraged to input their own personal real-life events. Mistakes made by students are not explicitly corrected but rather learners are encouraged to participate, it is understood students learn by making mistakes. Comprehension of meaning is paramount for CLT. This review observed the understandable linguistic evolution preferring CLT as the language instruction. Although there is a long-standing tradition that supports grammar teaching, research in second language acquisition has challenged the value of explicit grammar instruction. The educational and scientific research of CLT will assist the instructors to have a student centered, meaning bearing language classroom. The continued progression of CLT instruction will benefit the constant influx of ELL students into this country. The evaluation of these books might benefit graduate teaching assistants, prospect language teachers and education majors. The books provide many research points that cause personal reflection in language learning combining one's personal experience. The books also offer a vast list of activities throughout the book. And for practicing teachers, this can be a great resource.



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