IMPLEMENTING AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD TO TEACHING UKRAINIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE INITIAL STAGE

Larysa Bidenko
Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine
l.bidenko@drl.sumdu.edu.ua

Ganna Bespalova
Zaporizhzhya National University, Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine
h.bespalova@drl.sumdu.edu.ua

The article presents the audio-lingual model of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at the initial stage. The authors outline the main approaches to the understanding the concept "method", and discuss the previous experience of using the audio-lingual method. The founders of the audio-lingual method assumed the use of a target language as the only instrument during language learning process, though further researches proved that using the native language as an aid is more effective. To correct this drawback, the authors suggest using the audio-lingual method in connection with other teaching methods. The method in authors' interpretation has cultural orientation and helps foreign students to adapt to a new environment. The authors describe the model, where the audio-lingual method serves only for introducing new vocabulary and grammatical structures. It involves multiple listening and repeating speech patterns and promotes to audio-oral habit-formation. The students, at this stage, have to repeat and memorise new linguistic structures. To bring them together, the authors propose to use additional communicative and grammatical activities. Such a contents structure lays the foundation for the final stage of the learning process – the production of students' own text. The key examples of the exercises based on the method are introduced.

Keywords: teaching foreign languages; Ukrainian as a foreign language; audio-lingual method; initial stage; preparatory departments; linguodidactics.

Introduction

Nowadays, teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language in higher education establishments assumes, first of all, forming language, communicative and sociocultural competences. This can be realised due to the study of communicative needs, the acquisition of language and speech knowledge, with the emphasis on humanistic worldview during intercultural communication. One can achieve all these goals only through using such methods of studying that allow the development of communicative skills and their usage in modern educational and professional space.

Of particular interest to the Ukrainian methodologists are foreign students who came to study to Ukraine. Their future education is completely dependent on the quality of their language training, and this is the reason why much attention is paid to the initial stage of language studying. Therefore, this paper focuses on the problem of finding such a teaching method that encourages fast and effective language acquisition.

Different aspects of forming communicative skills of preparatory departments' listeners have been studied by a variety of researchers. Thus, Kudina (2014) investigated the issues of forming lexical competence. Bakum (2015), Dziubenko (2015), Palchykova (2015) studied cross-cultural approach realisation in learning Ukrainian by foreign students. Valchenko (2011), Zinkevych-Tomanek (2013), Chezhanov (2012) and Prylutska (2007) analysed linguo-methodical basics of making a study guide in Ukrainian as a foreign language.

However, up to now there still exists a controversy between requirements for forming communicative skills and the real level of these skills in the process of language learning at preparatory departments. In our opinion, this is the reason of constant search for new and better methods that allow a higher level of language proficiency.

Therefore, the article is aimed at justifying the use of audio-lingual method of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language to form communicative competence of foreign students at the initial stage of their language learning.

Method

During our research, we applied such theoretical methods as an analysis of scientific literature, study guides, and generalisation of best pedagogical experience. The reasonability of using the suggested model was proved by observations over the educational process.

After analysing the stages of the development of foreign languages teaching methods, including teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, we cannot but notice that the main issue of the scientific theoretical and practical pedagogical studies is a *teaching method*.

Scholars interpreted this concept differently. Ukrainian didactics regards teaching method as "a manner of organised and interconnected activities of teachers and students, aimed at achieving the goals of high school". According to modern Polish tradition, a "method" is "a way to achieve the goal; the direction in the study, which determines the strategy of teachers' work" (Bartmańska, 2006, p. 12).

In terms of modern language teaching methodology, under the "method" researchers understand the tactical training model, which realises the goal, objectives and contents of the learning process (Ignatova & Tolmacheva, 2011; Galskova & Gez, 2008).

In the works of Kolesnikova and Dolgina (2008) we find the narrow interpretation of this concept. Specifically, they identify the method "as a generalised studying model, based on specific approaches, typical for this methodological school" (p. 29).

Passov and Kuzovleva (2010) in their work "Osnovy kommunikativnoj metodiki obuchenija inojazychnomu obshheniju [Basics of communicative methods of foreign language communication]" define the study method "as a system of functionally interdependent methodological principles combined by strategic idea and designed to acquire any kind of speech activity" (p. 78).

Based on the above mentioned, we can sum up that the teaching method is used in two senses: first, it is a separate area that is a combination of learning content, principles and techniques, determining how to achieve learning objectives; second, it is a system of ordered educational activities (demonstration, explanation, exercises, etc.), carried out during the learning process.

In the methodology of teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, there are several dozens of methods that form the tactical model of education. They have different prevalences and depths of theoretical groundings. Among the most common are the grammar-translation, conscious-comparative, cognitive, audio-lingual, structural, audio-visual, transformational, conscious-practical, communicative methods.

As the observations of the educational process at universities show, teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language is based mainly on traditional grammar-translation method. Yet, this method has been criticised by foreign researchers for over twenty years by now. It complicates the communicative skills forming, but unfortunately, has been the most popular one in Ukraine for decades.

It was mentioned before that teachers and scientists are in constant search for effective teaching methods, but the "flawless" one still has not been found. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. As of today, researchers concluded that only a combination of several methods in any part of studying activities leads to the desired results. Therefore, if we talk about the use of a particular method at the moment, it means that it dominates at this stage of studying and contributes to the basic didactic tasks.

At the initial stage of language teaching, we consider reasonable to use audio-lingual method as the main method for this stage. It is widely described in language teaching methodology, though it is not widespread in higher education. One can explain this by the absence of well-prepared teaching base (manuals, textbooks, teaching literature, etc.), and the educators' critical attitude towards this method.

In spite of this, researchers acknowledge audio-lingual teaching method as the method based on audio-oral habit-formation (Fries & Lado, 1958; Rivers, 1968). It involves multiple listening and repeating speech patterns, which lead not only to working-out of certain linguistic automatisms, but also to the development of a good pronunciation.

Methodological framework of the audio-lingual method is based on the principals of verbal prediction, communicative purpose and language modelling of information. When it comes to rapid language learning with practical objectives, vocabulary and grammatical structures should be limited to a set of the most necessary and carefully selected ones. Appropriate vocabulary and grammar should be studied only in the context. The use of a mother tongue should be minimised. As a result, the teacher becomes the native speaker, who gives the most correct and authentic models to follow.

Supporters of audio-lingual method pay great attention to selecting phonetic content and structures (Weidemann, 2008; Samawiyah & Saifuddin, 2016). Due regard is given to the distinction between the contents for reproductive or receptive learning. The main principles of this selection are the frequency of using the structure in real life and its irreplaceability, which means the absence of synonymous constructions in the studied language.

Fries and Lado (1958), the founders of the audio-lingual method, wrote that the process of language acquisition is the process of mechanical habit formation. This formation is possible through imitation and frequent repetition. In such a way mistakes are minimised.

Students must unconsciously acquire the studied structures, phonetic peculiarities of the language and form the ability to construct sentences by analogy. Weidemann (2008) states "a teacher can help to reinforce the language by designing exercises that require learners to repeat different and specific forms of the language being learned" (p. 3).

Research in linguodidactics shows, that every language has its own system of concepts and a distinctive, unique linguistic structure. So, students must learn the structures inherently, without comparing them to the ones of their native language. Analysis of the structures leads only to thinking about it, and this is undesirable for the language practical acquisition. The comparison with the native language creates errors in speech.

Of course, it also has significant disadvantages. Firstly, it is teacher-oriented. Learners play a passive role during the lessons, which influences their results. According to Xia (2014), "a teacher acts as the conductor of an orchestra" (p. 562).

Secondly, it was proved that a mother tongue often helps students while explaining the new material. Hussein (2013) in his study dedicated to learning English by Arabic students, states "the results of both questionnaires show that the use of Arabic in an English classroom is justified. It is mainly useful to explain the meaning of new or difficult words, to explain syntactic rules, and to explain difficult questions" (p. 178). Needless to say, these results are true and for other languages. The evidence shows that often learners need additional explanations, and using mother tongues makes them feel more confident during the lesson.

In this regard, we should also note, that the mentioned above drawbacks concern audio-lingual method only in its original form. Sanjaya et al. (2014) state that "to combine more than one method is one of the best ways for teaching reading to the learners" (p. 13).

For now, the audio-lingual method is successfully integrated with many innovative technologies. In practice, it can be seamlessly combined with the matrix method of the inverse resonance by Zamyatkin (2006), who believes that language can be acquired through multiple listening and repeating foreign-language texts (p. 47). According to Fedotov (1999), "...during the learning process, new words form large, well-structured blocks. The structure occurs primarily due to the semantic relationships between new words, and due to the analogy between word structure and word pronunciation. The first source of connection is the repetition of the same word in a native language and in a target language. The relations within each language arise between synonymic or antonymic words due to standard transformations" (p. 33).

Results and Discussion

For several years, audio-lingual method, combined with the method of inverse resonance, has been successfully used at Sumy State University during the Coherent Speech Development Course. As a basis of the course, the teachers of the Department of Language Training for foreign citizens prepared a new study guide "I want to Study in Sumy!" (Bidenko, Zavgorodniy, Kiseleva, & Shevtsova, 2015). The aim of the study guide is to develop students' communicative competence through forming a combined experience of speaking and talking.

We note that the formation of communicative competence occurs in several steps, which we conventionally call phases. The first phase focuses on mastering foreigners' skills to remove information from the speech flow. The second phase focuses on using this information to build the first oral statements of reproductive, reproductive-productive and productive nature. This explains the specificity of the study guide content. All the activities of the study guide are based on the speech topic "The City where I'm Learning", which has a socio-cultural orientation. The topic is divided into four sub-topics: "Geography of the City", "City's History", "Sumy Citizens", "Walks around the City". Each of them includes phonetic, speech, lexical and grammatical practice. Certainly, the main section is the speech practice. It is based on the matrix audio-text and provides initial work under the teacher's guidance. The purpose of the speech practice is to build stable speech patterns, with matrix signs, which are the signs of high communicative importance and frequent use, in students' echoic memory.

To achieve this purpose, a system of exercises, based on the works of a Russian scientist in language didactics Passov (2013), was established at the department. The scientist offered to classify all exercises not into language and speech ones, but into precommunicative, and communicative (as complying with the situation of communication) (p. 58).

According to the scientist, one must first become fluent with the given vocabulary and grammar. To reach this, we use precommunicative exercises. They help to use language structures fluently, to form linguistic habit. The exercises are designed to solve communicative tasks and do not require the use of the study guide. The types of exercises that fit into this group are: imitational exercises, exercises on substitution, exercises on widening the speech pattern, and transformative exercises.

Imitational exercises belong to the first type. Their goal is a multiple repetition in the suggested form; students do not change anything, just repeat after the teacher. For example:

Exercise 1. Listen, repeat, and memorise how to pronounce ordinal numbers.

Exercise 2. Listen, repeat, and memorise the next phrases.

The second type comprises exercises on the substitution of some lexical units by others in the same grammatical form. For example:

Exercise 1. Tell about your city according to the teacher's example.

Teacher: Місто Суми знаходиться в Україні. Воно розташоване у північно-східній частині країни.

Student: Місто Суми знаходиться в Україні. Воно розташоване у північно-східній частині країни. А місто Каїр знаходиться в Єгипті. Воно розташоване у північній частині країни.

To our mind, the exercises on widening the speech pattern using the same grammatical forms are also very useful on this stage. For example:

Exercise 1. Extend the sentence.

Teacher: У північно-східній частині України розташоване місто Суми.

Student: У північно-східній частині України розташоване невелике, мальовниче місто Суми.

Moreover, the exercises of this type are not only highly fruitful at every stage of language learning, but also promote to linguistic professional education (Kobyakova & Shvachko, 2016, p. 11).

Transformative exercises are aimed at transforming the given expression, for example:

Exercise 1. Bring the sentences together.

Teacher: Місто має назву Суми. Воно знаходиться на берегах річок Сумка і Сума.

Student: Місто має назву Суми, тому що воно знаходиться на берегах річок Сумка і Сума.

Teacher: Люди вирішили побудувати місто там, де знайшли три сумки із золотом. Вони вірили, що це принесе щастя.

Student: Люди вирішили побудувати місто там, де знайшли три сумки із золотом, тому що вони вірили, що це принесе щастя.

Reproductive exercises are on the line between precommunicative and communicative exercises. Students have to produce statements, based on a grammatical material that is already familiar to them. Tasks may look like this:

Exercise 1. Дивіться на карту світу. Ставте питання, де знаходиться місто або країна:

Teacher: Скажіть, будь ласка, ви знаєте, де знаходиться Україна?

Student: Так, знаю. Україна розташована у центрі Європи.

Multiple repetitions of words, phrases and sentences after an audio example with gradual complication of various contextual environment leads to positive results. Students easily produce phrases, sentences, and, finally, texts. Exercises may be as such:

Exercise 1. Listen and repeat the phrase, pay attention to the noun's case after the words with the meaning of number.

Exercise 2. Listen to two texts. Not paying attention to unfamiliar words, try to understand the key points of the texts. Read the texts. Write down unfamiliar words. Translate and memorise them.

We note that only after lexical and grammatical skills based on the given speech pattern are formed, one can proceed to the communicative exercises.

At the initial stage of speech production one can rely on supporting resources in the form of text whether it is read or heard. For example:

Exercise 1. Listen to the text. Write down the key words of the text.

Exercise 2. Select the correct information.

Exercise 3. Answer the questions.

The most challenging task at the final stage for students is the production of their own text.

Exercise 1. Record your story on tape. Analyse mistakes.

Exercise 2. Write a similar message about the population of your city/your country. Learn it by heart and tell it to your group mates.

Despite the advantages of this system of exercises for the formation of communicative competence, there are still some disadvantages. Scientists believe that students do not get an accurate picture of the language facts. Simple drilling the text gives nothing to the understanding of language principles. Therefore, language learning, based solely on these exercises, leads to poor results. To prevent this negative phenomenon, we placed lexical and grammatical content to our study guide. It promotes the conscious application of knowledge. The exercises that bring together lexical and grammatical inputs look like this:

Exercise 1. Create forms of singular and plural genitive case of the given nouns.

Exercise 2. Create nominal word combinations. For this put the second word of word combination in the form of genitive case. Read your answers.

As a result of studying the Coherent Speech Development Course students should know the main language units, their role in a speech flow; be capable of perceiving and understanding oral and written speech, creating their own oral or written monologues and dialogues. They should distinguish types and styles of speech utterances and keep up the conversation on the suggested topic according to speaking etiquette; to express their opinions correctly and in an appropriate way; evaluate and improve their own speech activity.

Conclusions

The constant search for better ways of language learning and the technical progress inspire methodologists to invent new teaching methods and advance existing ones. In an attempt to correspond to the modern requirements, we applied the audio-lingual method to teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at the initial stage. Here, the audio-lingual method is used together with other teaching methods (in particular, with the method of inverse resonance), that helps to reduce its drawbacks. To exclude possible lack of understanding, we also suggest using lexical and grammatical content, which is another distinction from the method by Fries and Lado (1958).

The system of exercises is built on the principle of oral advance. The text and visual support at this stage are used as an aid. The sequence of auditory exercises goes like this: first, the students listen to the teacher and repeat; after this, they memorise new speech patterns; and, finally, they read. The content is given in such an order: word-phrases → sentences → closed questions → open questions → audio-text. The complexity and the size of activities gradually increase.

The research welcomes further discussion. The next stage of our study will be experimental confirmation of our methodological groundings in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at the initial stage in higher educational institutions of Ukraine.

References:

Bartmańska, A. (2006). *Metody kształcenia języków obcych*. Warszawa, Polska: Centralna Komisja Egzamenacyjna.

Bidenko, L., Zavgorodniy, V., Kiseleva, A., & Shevtsova, A. (2015). *Hochu uchitsya v Sumah* [I want to study in Sumy]. Sumy, Ukraine: Sumy State University.

Fedotov, V. (1999). Matrichnyiy metod v izuchenii inostrannyih yazyikov [Matrix method in the study of foreign languages]. *Kompyuternyie Instrumentyi v Obrazovanii,* (6), 30-36.

Hussein, B. A. (2013). Teaching and Learning English-as-a-Second / Foreign Language through Mother Tongue: A Field Study. *Asian Social Science, 9*(10), 175-180. https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n10p175

Kobyakova, I., & Shvachko, S. (2016). Teaching Translation: Objectives And Methods. *Advanced Education,* 5, 9-13. https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.61029

Kolesnikova, I., & Dolgina, O. (2008). *Anglo-russkiy terminologicheskiy spravochnik po metodike prepodavaniya inostrannyih yazyikov* [English-Russian terminological reference work of the method of teaching foreign languages]. Moscow, Russia: Drofa.

Lado, R., & Fries, C. C. (1958). *English pattern practices: establishing the patterns as habits*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Passov, E., & Kuzovleva, N. (2010). *Osnovy kommunikativnoy teorii i tehnologii inoyazyichnogo obrazovaniya* [Basics of communication theory and technology of foreign language education]. Moscow, Russia: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.

Passov, E. (2013). *Metodicheskaya sistema inoyazyichnogo obrazovaniya kak adekvatnoe sredstvo razvitiya umeniya individualnosti vesti dIalog kultur* [Methodical system of foreign language education as an adequate means of developing the individual skills to lead dialog of cultures]. Lipetsk, Russia: Lipetsk State Pedagogical University.

Sanjaya, D., Rahmah, S., Sinulingga, J., Lubis, A. A., & Yusuf, M. (2014). Methods of Teaching Reading to EFL Learners: A Case Study. *IJELS International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies, 2* (2), 9-14. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.2n.2p.9

Weidemann, A. (2008). The old and the new: Reconsidering eclecticism in language teaching. *Per Linguam, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.5785/17-1-131

Xia, Y. (2014). Language Theories and Language Teaching – from Traditional Grammar to Functionalism. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research JLTR, 5*(3), 559-565. https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.5.3.559-565

Zamyatkin, N. (2006). *Vas nevozmozhno nauchit inostrannomu yazyiku* [You cannot be taught a foreign language]. Moscow, Russia: Lev Tolstoy.