

**EFFECTIVENESS OF AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD OF TEACHING
MANDARIN AS SECOND LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY AT KOTA
KINABALU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language at Kota Kinabalu international school. This study involved 18 primary years 4 students in Kota Kinabalu international school separated into two groups, namely the experimental group and the controlled group. Audio-lingual method was used in the experimental group while the traditional method was applied in the control group. This study lasted 3 months. Pre-test and post-test data were collected as a comparison. After data collection, the SPSS program was used to analyze the mean scores in the experimental group and the control group. The mean gains of each group were also analyzed by SPSS program. The result showed improvement in the listening and speaking skills of both the experimental group and the control group. After comparing the mean gains, the result showed that students' listening and speaking skills in the experimental group improved more significantly than the control group. This proves the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language in Kota Kinabalu international school is more effective than the traditional method.

Keywords: Audio-lingual method, Mandarin as second language teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mandarin language is treated as a second language but a compulsory subject in Kota Kinabalu international school. Most students find learning Mandarin challenging and face certain problems in learning despite attending extra Mandarin tuition classes to support their study of the language. The first problem is the mute Mandarin phenomenon suffered by

students who learn Mandarin as a second language. It is the inability of some students to speak Mandarin even they have learned this language for a long time. The second problem faced by students is the difficulty in acquiring proper pronunciation. Mandarin is a tonal language. Confusing mandarin tones is the most common problem encountered by students. The difficulty to cultivate target language habit is the third problem. Poor listening skills, incapable of speaking fluently and the lack of confidence are also problems facing the students. The researcher thinks that all of these problems may be related to insufficient opportunity to practice target language. Since the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin emphasizes on listening and speaking skills, the researcher believes that audio-lingual method will be a good way to solve these problems and helps to improve students' listening and speaking skills in Mandarin. This research aims to find out the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language.

1.1 Background of the audio-lingual method

Audio-lingual method was an oral-based approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). The origin of this approach was in the United State in 1940 with the purpose of cultivating soldiers' good language ability in the short term. It is also called the Army Method. It was based on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology. The audio-lingual method emphasizes speaking and listening skills through repeated sentence pattern practice.

Audio-lingual method was proposed by linguists and became popular in the 1960s. The popularity, however, lasted only two years due to the criticism of its behaviorist theory. In spite of its decline in popularity, it has been used widely in second language teaching, especially for spoken language learning.

There are some advantages of the audio-lingual method in improving students listening and speaking skills. First, the audio-lingual method has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology. Nunan (2000) thinks the audio-lingual method has probably a greater impact on second and foreign language teaching than any other method. The second advantage of the audio-lingual method is its high target and goal-oriented approach which focuses on oral/aural skills to improve students' speaking achievement. Language learning is a habit formation. The third advantage of the audio-lingual method is the ability to form native language habits in learners (Dendrinis, 1992). The use of tape recorders and audiovisual equipment is another advantage of the audio-lingual method as it provides for further drill work and to receive controlled error-free practice of basic structures (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). The adoption of contrastive analysis of the native language versus target language and the immediate corrections of students' errors are also advantages of the audio-lingual method. All of these advantages help students form good target language habits and improve listening and speaking skills.

1.2 Objective of this study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language in improving the listening and speaking skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, in order to find out the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language in improving the listening and speaking skills, Pre-test and post-test were conducted to collect data of experimental group and control group.

2.1 Sample

The random sampling method was used in this research. The researcher randomly selected 9 students each group to form the experimental group and controlled group by flipping a coin. All these participants are from primary year 4 students of Kota Kinabalu international school.

2.2 Duration

This study lasted 3 months from 8th of January to 8th of April 2018, twelve weeks in total. Mandarin class was conducted once a week, one hour per session and 12 hours in total.

2.3 Pre-test

On 8th of January, the pre-test was conducted in both the experimental class and the controller class.

2.4 Treatment

Audio-lingual method was used in the experimental group and the traditional method was used in the controlled group. Same teaching materials and the same number of teaching hours were used in both groups.

2.5 Post-test

After 3 months of treatment, post-test was conducted in both the experimental group and the controlled group on 9th of April.

3. FINDING

After the pre-test and post-test, the scores of pre-test and post-test for the controlled and the experimental groups were collected and analyzed as follows:

3.1 Result of pre-test and post-test of the controlled group

Students' scores of pre-test and post-test of the controlled group are shown as Table 1.

Table 1 Students score of pre-test and post-test of the controlled group

Students' No	Scores of Pre-test	Scores of Post-test	Mean Gain
1	2	32	30
2	10	46	36
3	8	16	8

4	6	25	19
5	0	30	30
6	8	30	24
7	10	31	21
8	4	20	16
9	8	21	13

Table 2 below shows the mean scores for the controlled group. The mean score of pre-test in the controlled group was 6.22, while the mean score of post-test was 27.89. The standard deviation was 3.528 in pre-test and 8.824 in post-test.

Table 2 Mean score of control group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Controlled Group (pretest)	9	6.22	3.528
Controlled Group (posttest)	9	27.89	8.824
Valid N (listwise)	9		

Table 3 shows the Wilcoxon signed rank test for mean score difference of the controlled group. The result of Wilcoxon signed rank test shows that $p=.008$ indicating that the p value was smaller than the level of significance of $p<0.05$. This indicates that there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test of the controlled group.

Table 3 Wilcoxon signed rank test for mean score difference of the controlled group

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Control post - Controlpre	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	9 ^b	5.00	45.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	9		

a. Control post < Controlpre

b. Control post > Controlpre

c. Control post = Controlpre

Test Statistics^a

	Control posttest - Control pretest
Z	-2.668 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.008

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

3.2 Result of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group

Students’ scores of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group are shown as table 4.

Table 4 scores of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group

Students’ No	Scores of Pre-test	Scores of Post-test	Mean Gain
1	0	24	24
2	6	32	26
3	10	45	35
4	6	36	30
5	8	47	39
6	8	19	11
7	0	43	43
8	8	47	39
9	2	38	36

Table 5 below shows the mean score and the standard deviation of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group. Based on this table the mean value of pre-test of the experimental group was 5.33 and the mean value of post-test was 36.78. The standard deviation of pre-test was 3.742 while the standard deviation of post-test was 10.121.

Table 5 means scores and standard deviation of the experimental group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental Group (pre-test)	9	0	10	5.33	3.742
Experimental Group (post-test)	9	19	47	36.78	10.121
Valid N (list wise)	9				

Table 5 means scores and standard deviation of the experimental group table 6 shows the Wilcoxon signed rank test for mean score difference of the experimental group. The result of the Wilcoxon signed rank test shows that $p=.008$, meaning the p-value was smaller than the level of significance of $p<0.05$. This indicates that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest of the experimental group.

Table 6. Wilcoxon signed rank test for mean score difference of the Experimental group

Ranks

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Exppost - Exppre Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
Positive Ranks	9 ^b	5.00	45.00
Ties	0 ^c		
Total	9		

a. Exppost<Exppre

b. Exppost>Exppre

c. Exppost= Exppre

□

Test Statistics^a

	Exppost - Exppre
Z	-2.668 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.008

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

3.3 Comparison of mean gains of the controlled group and the experimental group

In order to compare mean gains of the controlled group and the experimental group, independent t-test was used. The independent t-test is also called the two samples t-test. It is an inferential statistical test that is used to identify whether there is a significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups. The significance level (also called alpha) is set at 0.05. In this research, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to identify whether the mean gain is of significant difference between the controlled group and the experimental group

Table 7 below shows the significance value alpha is 0.042 below the set value of 0.05 indicating there was a significant difference of mean gain between the controlled group and the experimental group.

Table 7 Mann-Whitney U test of mean gain

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Controlled Group	9	6.94	62.50
Experimental Group	9	12.06	108.50
Total	18		

Test 7 U-test

	Gain
Mann-Whitney U	17.500
Wilcoxon W	62.500
Z	-2.037
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.042
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.040 ^b

a. Grouping Variable: Group

b. Not corrected for ties.

□

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based on the result, there were significant differences between pre-test and post-test in both the experimental group and the controlled group. This means after three months of treatment, there was a significant improvement in students' listening and speaking skills. However, after the data were analyzed using an independent t-test, the result showed that the significance value is 0.04 pointing there was a significant difference in mean gain between the controlled group and the experimental group. The mean gain of the experimental group is higher than the controlled group signifying that there is a greater progress in the experimental group. This proved that the audio-lingual method of teaching is more effective than the traditional method in improving students' listening and speaking skills. The result was supported by MutiaraFani (2009), Kong Lingjie (2013) and NurdeviBte Abdul (2016), all researchers also revealed the same result in their study.

Based on the research, there are some advantages of the audio-lingual method which help students improve listening and speaking skills:

Repeated pattern practice helps students to form mandarin language habits: In this research, pattern practice and dialogue form the basis of audiolingual classroom practice. Pattern practice was used to teach the lines of dialogue, some key structures were selected and used as basic pattern drill, the student was asked to practice pattern drill accurately and quickly. The patterns of dialogue were taught through the variety of drills in order to help them become habitual as repeated pattern practice help student to speak mandarin communicatively.

This approach is supported by the theory of Larsen-Freeman (2002) that we have to use drills if we want the students to be able to speak target language communicatively. Larsen-Freeman (2002) also mentioned that students need to form new habits in the target language and overcome the old habits of the native language by learning to use it automatically without stopping to think. Skinner (1957) also says that language learning is a process of habit formation. The more often something is repeated, the stronger the formation of habits and the better the learning. In another word, repetition of the pattern is the key to automatically form habits in language learning.

Repeated pattern practice makes students speak mandarin confidently: In this research, 89% of the students think repeated pattern practice make them speak mandarin confidently. This is because repeated pattern practice gives students more opportunities to speak Mandarin, the more practices they get, the more familiar students become with mandarin. When they are familiar with mandarin, they can speak this language more confidently. This is supported by Elly (2000) that drilling can help to build learner's confidence and give learners the chance to practise pronouncing the drilled items. Once students have enough practice, they can speak mandarin confidently.

Repeated pattern practice is not boring: In this research, 56% of students did not think repeated pattern practice is boring. This result is not in line with the research finding conducted by Jiang Yujing's (2015) on the application of audio-lingual method of teaching mandarin as second language which revealed that mechanical sentence pattern drill in audio-lingual method results in a lack of interest and bored feeling for some students while other students were not even engaged in class activities. In this research, it may be due to teacher's incentives and different way of practising sentence pattern that make students interested. Even though mechanical practice can be boring, the use of classroom management tools to reward students according to their performance, and adopting more games in sentence pattern practice liven up the pattern drill. This is supported by Richard (1986) that learners learn in different ways and have a different strengthening effect. Nunan (1986) also found out that students favoured repetition work in language learning class.

The use of dialogue as teaching materials: The result of this research shows that 100% of the students think that dialogue is interesting and they like it. In this research, grammar was no longer the starting point in audio-lingual method class, instead, each lesson was introduced through dialogue. This is supported by Brown (1994) who stated that one of the principles of the audio-lingual method is to present new material in dialogue form. Geetha Nagaraj (1998) also mentioned that language was introduced through dialogues which contained common structures and useful vocabulary used in everyday communication. Bushra Noori (2001) also stated that dialogue, which contains the structure and vocabulary of the lesson, is typically the beginning in audio-lingual method class. Dialogue provides a natural context for the language

forms because it is from real communication. Dialogue also shows the students how language is used in real language interaction. Compared with grammar, the dialogue is more interesting.

The use of teaching aids and materials: In this research, pictures, cards, power points and videos were the teaching aids and materials used. Students were interested in those teaching aids and materials which help them to understand and memorize new words or sentences much easier. In this research, the teacher used video to present dialogues for listening and speaking practice which students are able to practise a key sentence line by line. The teacher also used cards or pictures to present and explain new vocabulary.

This result is supported by the research conducted by Kantabut(2013)on the students' satisfaction towards the use of oral communicative activities through the Audio-Lingual method of teaching to enhance their communicative English speaking ability and cultural knowledge. Kantabut found that respondents were very satisfied with using learning materials. A wide variety of posters, props, and realia helped them to recognize the dialogue. NaheedHaq(2014) also found that 90% of the students think dialogue is useful to introduce new material.

Teacher's immediate correction: The result of the interview and questionnaire revealed that students like teacher's correction, even though they are still practicing. It is believed that making mistakes is natural in any process of learning a new language and that people learn from their errors. For this reason, the teacher's immediate correction is important for student's good language habits forming as errors can lead to the formation of bad habits. Good habits are formed by giving correct response rather than by making mistakes. This result supported the theory of Krashen and Seliger (1975) that conscious language learning is thought to be helped a great deal by error correction. Fanselow and Long (1977) also think that error correction helps the learner come to correct mental representation of linguistic generalization.

In conclusion, the audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as the second language is more effective than the traditional method in improving students 'listening and speaking skills.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding of this research, the Audio-lingual method is effective in improving students listening and speaking skills. However, the audio-lingual method still has a weakness, Noam Chomsky (1966; 153) stated that the theory of ALM that language learning results from habit formation are weak, since much of human language is not imitated behaviour, but is created anew from underlying knowledge of abstract rules. For further effectiveness, the audio-lingual method should be combined with other techniques from another teaching method. It is recommended to mix the audio-lingual method with other methods to teach a foreign language to enhance effectiveness.

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