

A Comparison Between Total Physical Responses and Audio Lingual Method of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Mohammad Adil Rasheed, Jehan Abdulkareem Ali
Mohammed Abdul Rahman Rifaat, Abdullah Ihsan Ni'ma
Assistant Lectures, Imam Ja'afar Al-Sadiq University, Iraq

¹ Received: 03/07/2026; Accepted: 27/08/2026; Published: 11/09/2026

Abstract

Language teaching methodologies play a crucial role in facilitating effective language acquisition and proficiency development. This abstract presents a comparative analysis of two prominent language teaching approaches: Total Physical Response (TPR) and Audio Lingual Method (ALM). Total Physical Response emphasises the use of physical movements and actions to enhance language learning. Learners respond to verbal commands and instructions through bodily movements, creating a kinesthetic and experiential learning environment. TPR capitalises on the natural relationship between language and physicality, promoting a contextually rich and immersive language learning experience. This method has been particularly effective in teaching young learners and those with limited language proficiency, as it reduces cognitive load and fosters a positive affective learning environment. On the other hand, the Audio-Lingual Method places significant emphasis on aural and oral skills. Learners engage in repetitive drills and dialogues, focusing on accurate pronunciation, intonation, and grammar patterns. ALM utilizes audio recordings and dialogues as primary instructional materials, aiming to develop automaticity and fluency in target language use. This method draws inspiration from structural linguistics and behaviourist theories, emphasising the importance of habit formation through extensive practice and reinforcement. This research will consist of four sections and rounds of concluding remarks as well as references.

Section One

1.0 Introductory Note

Both TPR and the Audio-Lingual Method have had significant influences on language teaching methodologies, although their popularity has diminished over time. Modern language teaching approaches often incorporate elements from various methods to create a more balanced and communicatively-oriented learning experience.

1.1 The Problem and Its Significant

The main problem is that many students do not know what the best way of learning is that suits them. Some of the common problems include the following: firstly, many teachers and students do not know the features of total physical response and Audio Lingual Method. Secondly, some teachers have no idea about the best and the modern ways in the teaching and learning process because they do not know the difference between them. Thirdly, the usage of the traditional techniques in teaching because previously many countries especially Iraq does not try to use these important methods. Therefore, they do not have much information about them. The purpose of this study is to define each environment of each total physical response and audio lingual method and show their positive and negative

¹ How to cite the article: Rasheed M.A., Ali J.A., Rifaat M.A.R., Ni'ma A.I (September 2026); A Comparison Between Total Physical Responses and Audio Lingual Method of Teaching English as a Foreign Language; *International Journal of Development in Social Sciences and Humanities*; Vol 22, 85-98

sides as well as their definitions, backgrounds , the experience of the Iraqi teacher in both methods , their advantages and disadvantages and the principles with their techniques to make the students able to distinguish between both methods .Moreover, the differences between the two mentioned environments depend on the area and the place of the study. Therefore, this study will be built on a specific place and a specific stage of learning will be chosen as a sample in this study.(Aina ,2018,11).

1.2 Aims

This research paper aims for achieving the following points:

- 1) To help the teacher in using new techniques in the learning and teaching process.
- 2) To explain the role of teacher and learner in both methods.
- 3) To encourage the pupils to be more interactive and motivated during the lesson.

1.3 Limits

The research paper was conducted for Iraqi schools for intermediate school for females in the second semester in the morning studies. The current research paper is a modern one, written in 2025_2026.

1.4 Value

This research paper has a great value for both students and teachers in English. The suggested methods will be of value for language learners who are able to comprehend the foreign language when it is spoken at normal speed and concerned with ordinary matters and to prepare students to be confident communicators in different real-life contexts, through repetitive oral practices student-student cooperation.

Plan

This research will consist of four sections and rounds of concluding remarks as well as references, In other words, the research will include the following points:

1. Making introduction for the current study.
2. Making a theoretical background that includes all the details about the research.
3. Forming a questionnaire for the study and showing its results.
4. Drawing a conclusion for the study.

1.5 Definition of Basic Terms

The most important terms in this study are:

1.5.1 Total Physical Response

To explain the term learning, Rhalmi (2009) lists some definitions:

- Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity.
- Total Physical Response is a method that relies on the assumption that when learning a second or additional language, that language is internalized through a process of code-breaking similar to the first language.

1.5.2 Audio Lingual Method

Audio-lingual theory is derived from linguistics and psychology. It is a combination of structural linguistics theory, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedures, and behaviorist psychology. In this theory language is seen as having its own unique system. The system comprises several different levels: phonological, morphological, and syntactic. (Haycraft,2002:3).

Section Two: Theoretical Background and Related Previous studies

2.0 Introductory Note

This section will cover all the information and give a clear description about Total Physical Response and Audio Lingual Method.

2.1 The Historical Background of Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response, or TPR, was created by American psychologist Dr. James Asher and is based on the experience of how humans learn their first language. You see, when children learn their mother tongue, their parents and carers are very physically involved in imparting language. They demonstrate and instruct, and the child responds in kind. No one demands or requires very small children to speak at all: only to listen and understand, which is to say, to comprehend. TPR was one of the methods emerged in early 1970s as reaction to the former grammar based methods; GTM and ALM, which are judged to be meaningless and uncommunicative in terms of language materials and activities.(David,2009).

2.2 The Advantages of Total Physical Response

- 1) It is fun
- 2) It is easy to implement.
- 3) It reduces pressure and stress for students.
- 4) It is good for kinesthetics who need to be active in the class. 5)It can be used in large and small classes.

2.3 The Disadvantage of Total Physical Response

- 1) It is only for young teenagers and children.
- 2) It is only for limited courses; drilling and repetitive.
- 3) It only focuses on listening comprehension and speaking.

2.4 The principles of Total Physical Response

The principles of Total Physical Response are: (Schmitt and Rodgers ,2019,ebid)

- 1) Meaning in the target language can often be conveyed through actions. Memory is activated through learner response. Beginning language instruction should address the right hemisphere of the brain, the part which controls nonverbal behavior. The target language should be presented in chunks, not just word by word.
- 2) The students' understanding of the target language should be developed before speaking.
- 3) Students can initially learn one part of the language rapidly by moving their bodies.
- 4) The imperative is a powerful linguistic device through which the teacher can direct student behavior.
- 5) Students can learn through observing actions as well as by performing the actions themselves.
- 6) It is very important that students feel successful. Feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.
- 7) Students should not be made to memorize fixed routines. 8)Correction should be carried out in an unobtrusive manner. 9)Language learning is more effective when it is fun.

10) Spoken language should be emphasized over written language.

2.5 The Techniques of Total Physical Response

1) Using Commands to Direct Behavior. 2) Role Reversal.
3) Action Sequence.

2.6 The Role of the Teacher and the Students with the Evaluation in Total Physical Response

According to Larsen and Freeman (1998) :

The Role of the teacher is the director of all student behavior. The students are imitators of her nonverbal model. At some point (usually after 10–20 hours of instruction), the role of some students will be ‘ready to speak.’ At that point, there will be a role reversal with individual students directing the teacher and the other students.

The Evaluation of Total Physical Response, the teachers will know immediately whether or not students understand by observing their students’ actions. Formal evaluations can be conducted simply by commanding individual students to perform a series of actions. As students become more advanced, their performance of skits they have created can become the basis for evaluation.

2.7 The Historical Background of Audio-Lingual Method

Historically speaking, the Audio-Lingual method was widely used in the 1950s and 1960s. It developed when American linguists, such as Bloomfield and Fries at the turn of the 20th century aimed at collecting all indigenous languages spoken in the United States. Then the method became popular when behaviorist psychologists like Skinner believed that behaviors including language were learnt through repetition and reinforcement. (Paulston, 1998). Charles Fries (1945) of the University of Michigan led the way in applying principles from structural linguistics in developing the method, and for this

reason, it has sometimes been referred to as the ‘Michigan Method.’ Later in its development, principles from behavioral psychology (Skinner 1957) were incorporated. It was thought that the way to acquire the sentence patterns of the target language was through conditioning—helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement, so that the learners could overcome the habits of their native language and form the new habits required to be target language speakers. The Audio-lingual Method (ALM) or audiolingualism grew out of foreign language teaching approaches developed during World War II at the University of Michigan in order to rapidly develop effective oral-aural skills in foreign languages for military personnel.

2.8 The Principles and Techniques of ALM

2.8.1 The principles of Audio-Lingual Method are:

1. Language forms do not occur by themselves; they occur most naturally within a context.
2. Language learning is a process of habit formation. The more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater learning.
3. The purpose of language learning is to learn how to use the language to communicate.
4. Positive reinforcement helps the students to develop correct habits.
5. Students should learn to respond to both verbal and nonverbal stimuli.
6. Students should ‘overlearn,’ i.e. learn to answer automatically without stopping to think.
7. The major objective of language teaching should be for students to acquire the structural patterns; students will learn vocabulary afterward.
8. Speech is more basic to language than the written form. The ‘natural order’ (the order children follow when learning their native language) of skill acquisition is: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
9. Language cannot be separated from culture. Culture is not only literature and the arts, but also the everyday behavior of the people who use the target language. One of the teacher’s responsibilities is to present information about that culture.
10. The major challenge of language teaching is getting students to overcome the habits of their native language. A

comparison between the native and target language will tell the teacher in which areas her students will probably experience. (Schmitt and Rodgers ,2019).

2.8.2 The Techniques of Audio-Lingual Method are:

1. Dialogue Memorization.
2. Backward Build-up (Expansion) Drill.
3. Repetition Drill.
4. Chain Drill.
5. Single-slot Substitution Drill.
6. Multiple-slot Substitution Drill.
7. Transformation Drill.
8. Question-and-answer Drill.
9. Use of Minimal Pairs.
10. Complete the Dialogue.
11. Grammar Game. (Schmitt and Rodgers ,2019).

2.9 The Role of Teacher and Learner of Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

2.9.1 The Role of Teacher of Audio-Lingual Method

The teacher is like an orchestra leader, directing and controlling the language behavior of her students. She is also responsible for providing her students with a good model for imitation. Teacher directs, controls the language used in the classroom. Moreover, he is both the model of the language and the person who will prevent learners from forming bad habits because of errors. The roles of the learners are very limited in Audio-lingual classes. Teacher has an active role as he is the sole authority to control and direct the whole learning program. He monitors and corrects the students' performance. The teacher endeavors to keep the students attentive by varying drills and tasks and choosing relevant situations to practice structures. (Muhi,2023).

2.9.2 The Role of Learner of Audio-Lingual Method

Students are imitators of the teacher's model or the tapes she supplies of model speakers. They follow the teacher's directions and respond as accurately and as rapidly as possible. In other words, the students play a passive role as they don't have any control over the content or the method of learning. The students are mere imitators of the teacher's model. Their sole objective is to follow the teacher's direction and respond as precisely and as promptly as possible. Students play a passive role as they don't have any control over the content or the method of learning. The students are mere imitators of the teacher's model. Their sole objective is to follow the teacher's direction and respond as precisely and as promptly as possible. (Mendez ,2013).

2.10 Related Previous Studies

2.10.1 There are previous studies discussing both methods Total Physical Response and Desuggestopedia . One of these studies conducted by Nunan (2010: 58) stated in Total Physical Response that the children are silent, but act in response to hundreds of directives uttered in their first language such as "Come here", "Put on your coat", "Throw me the ball", "Walk faster" etc. When the child has decoded and internalized enough of the mother tongue,

speaking appears spontaneously (if there are no developmental impediments). The child's speech will not be perfect, but gradually their utterances will approximate more and more that of an adult native speaker. Furthermore, Total Physical Response focuses in particular on two characteristics of first language acquisition (1) "The child gets a vast amount of comprehensible input before beginning to speak. Young children comprehend language which is far in excess of their ability to produce." (2) "There is a lot of physical manipulation and action language accompanying early input. 'Throw the ball to Rudi', 'Put your arm through here', etc. This action language, encouraging physical manipulation, is coached in the imperative."

2.10.2

Another study conducted by Canale (2013) shows that the content of the practice in audiolingual method is mainly sentence-type, which mainly uses the basic knowledge of grammar, words and other key points. The teacher arranges the course content according to the grammatical difficulty. These are the lesson plans prepared by the teacher in advance. Students are passively accepted in the classroom.

2.10.3

The last study conducted by Al_Noori (2023) shows that both methods are professional methods and it will be so useful if the teacher will adopt them in their teaching and learning process in the classroom because the students will be so active and improved.

Section Three

3.0 Introductory Note

This section includes Experimental Design, questionnaire and 8 Items for the questionnaire design and the experience of the Iraqi teacher.

3.1 Experimental Design

The researchers check previous studies before writing the questionnaire items. According to the information the questionnaire items were designed. The questionnaire designed online by using google forms and published online for the students in social media apps especially, Telegram. The questionnaire items are a collection of questions designed to investigate the students' preferences and opinions about a comparison between total physical response and audio lingual method.

3.2 Questionnaire

The researcher has designed a questionnaire which consists of 8 items including the gender (Females).8 items:
Choose your gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

Grade:

☐ First grade

☐ Second grade

☐ Third grade

☐ Fourth grade

☐ Fifth grade

➤ Sixth grade City
Baghdad

3.3 The experiences of Iraqi teacher about the Audio-Lingual Method and Total Physical Response

The Iraqi teacher will make an experimental test upon his or her pupils which consist of 30 pupils, half of them have been noticed before how the Audio Lingual method had applied in the classroom in its accurate way , and how it motivated the academic performance, these pupils are a controlled group. While the others (experimental group) who have never been noticed before how this method can be applied. The teacher will distribute to them a model that contains some activities derived from the audio-lingual drills to test whether the pupils can apply all the activities even if some of them had never taught before.

As it is shown below:

Choose your preferred answer carefully:

1- The Audio-Lingual Method and Total Physical Response generated interest in the learning Process.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Neutral

2- Both methods create opportunities for team pupils to share their information.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Neutral

3- Both methods are effective ways of teaching.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Neutral

4- Both methods enhanced my referral habits.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Neutral

5- Both methods help the pupils to improve their communication skills.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Neutral

6- Both methods develop the pupil's target language.

O Yes

O No

O Neutral

7- Pupils become more interactive, while the teacher uses the audio-Lingual Method in his/her teaching and learning process.

O Yes

O No

O Neutral

8- Pupils become more interactive, while the teacher uses the communicative language teaching approach in his/her teaching and learning process.

O Yes

O No

O Neutral

The activity of this method will include some activities which have distributed from the teacher: The students comes to the line they stumble during repetition, I will at this point stops of the repetition and use a backward build-up .The purpose of this drill is to break down the troublesome sentence into smaller parts After the students have repeated the dialogue several times, I give them a chance to adopt the role of Ali while I say Noor lines Then to reverse .Then the teacher divides the class in half so that each half on their own gets to try to say either Ali or Noor lines.

When this model had been distributed to the pupils, the controlled group (15 pupils) had done the whole activities successfully because the teacher made a test on pupils who they have a learning background about the topic, while the uncontrolled group failed in doing the activities because they had never examined before. **As it shows below:**

The Total Number	Types of Groups	The Results
15 pupils	Controlled group	The achieve all the activities
15 pupils	Uncontrolled group	They don't achieve the activities

First, the Iraqi teacher enters the room, and we take a seat in the back of the room. It is the first class of the year, so after the teacher takes attendance, she introduces the method they will use to study English. Hands go up, and the teacher calls on four students to come to the front of the room and sit with her on chairs that are lined up facing the

other students. She tells the other students to listen and watch. English the teacher says, 'Stand up.' As she says it, she stands up and she signals for the four volunteers to rise with her.

Then, they all stand up. 'Sit down,' she says, and they all sit. Once again, the teacher gives the commands; this time, however, she remains seated. The four volunteers respond to her commands. 'Stand up. Sit down. Walk. Stop. Jump. Turn around. Turn around. Walk. Turn around. Sit down.' The students respond perfectly. (Larsen, 1986).

Finally, the teacher approaches the other students who have been sitting observing her and their four classmates. 'Stand up,' she says and the class responds. 'Sit down. Stand up. Jump. Stop. Sit down. Stand up. Turn around. Turn around. Jump. Sit down.' Even though they have not done the actions before, the students are able to perform according to the teacher's commands. The class is over. No one except the teacher has spoken a word. However, a few weeks later when we walk by the room we hear a different voice. (Larsen, 1998, *ebid*).

The Total Number	Types of Groups	The Results
15 pupils	Controlled group	The achieve all the activities
15 pupils	Uncontrolled group	They don't achieve the activities

Section Four : Results Analysis

4.0 Introductory Notes

In this section, the researcher will analyse the results of the questionnaire.

4.1 The Statistical Results for the Questionnaire

The participants were quite active with the researcher, and the majority of the kids were very interactive and completed the questionnaire correctly. The total number of participants according to their gender was 150. The analysis of the data collected from the student will be presented as the table below:

The Questions	Yes	No	Neutral
The first question	57.1%	10%	11.8%
The Second question	47.8%	30.8%	21.4%
The third question	42.9%	41.3%	15.9%

The fourth question	13.2%	18.2%	68.6%
The fifth question	9.5%	14.3%	76.2%

From the results above, it's noticeably that the pupils have proved that both methods are valuable and efficient in the students' way of learning. Today parents are becoming more and more conscious that students need to work in a relaxed environment. In this respect, it will be very helpful for parents who can afford materials for his students because these methods develop the students' intelligence.

Conclusion

This research had arrived to some results, recommendations, and concluding remarks, can be listed as follow:

Both the Total Physical Response (TPR) and the Audio-Lingual Method are language teaching approaches that have been used in the past, but they have some key differences in terms of principles and techniques. The TPR approach, developed by James Asher, emphasizes the importance of physical movement and action in language learning. It is based on the idea that learners acquire language more effectively by associating words and phrases with physical actions and responses. In TPR, the teacher gives commands and the students respond physically. This method aims to create a link between language and movement, enhancing comprehension and retention.

On the other hand, the Audio-Lingual Method, popularised during the mid-20th century, focuses on the repetition and drilling of language patterns. It places a strong emphasis on listening and speaking skills and relies heavily on audio materials, such as dialogues and recordings. The goal is to develop automaticity and accuracy in the target language through extensive practice and memorization.

In conclusion, both the TPR and the Audio-Lingual Method have their merits and can be effective in certain contexts. TPR is particularly beneficial for young learners and individuals who prefer kinesthetic learning styles, as it engages the body in the language learning process. The Audio-Lingual Method, on the other hand, can be useful for developing listening and speaking skills, as well as creating language habits and patterns through repetitive practice.

References

- _Canal ,DJ. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: what does language anxiety research suggest? The Modern Language Journal, 75 426–439.
- _Haycraft and John(2022). Language education policy in Japan—The problem of espoused objectives versus practice. The Modern Language Journal, 87 (2), 290 — 292.
- _<https://tanvirdhaka.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-audio-lingual-method.html#:~:text=Learner%20Roles%3A%20In%20the%20Audio,and%20as%20promptly%20as%20possible>.
- _Hymes, D. H. 1982. Toward Linguistic Competence. Philadelphia, Pa.: Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. (Mimeo).
- _Jack ,J.B. 2019. Writing English Language Tests. New York: Longman, Inc.
- _Klapper(2003). Richards, Theodore S. Rodgers. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching[M]. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2012:71.
- _Nick ,(2011)“The Implementation of Speaking Fluency in Communicative Language Teaching: An Observation of Adopting the 4/3/2 Activity in High Schools in China,” International Journal of English Language Education, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 193–214, 2013.
- _Paulston , R.R. (1988). Integrating Technology and Teaching. Weblog Hoppasus.com.
- _Savignon, S. J. 1983. Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice. Reading, Mass. : Addison-

Wesley.

__Widdowson, H. G. 1983. Learning Purpose and Language Use. London: Oxford University Press.

__Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

__Schmitt, N., & Rodgers, M. P. H. (2019). An Introduction to Applied Linguistics (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Appendix

1- The Audio-Lingual Method and Total Physical Response generated interest in the learning Process.	Yes	No	Neutral
2-Both methods create opportunities for team pupils to share their information.	Yes	No	Neutral
3-Both methods are effective ways of teaching.	Yes	No	Neutral
4-Both methods enhanced my referral habits.	Yes	No	Neutral
5-Both methods help the pupils to improve their communication skills.	Yes	No	Neutral
6-Both methods develop the pupil's target language.	Yes	No	Neutral

7- Pupils become more interactive, while the teacher uses the audio Lingual Method in his/her	Yes	No	Neutral
---	-----	----	---------

teaching and learning process.			
8-Pupils become more interactive, while the teacher uses the communicative language teaching approach in his/her teaching and learning process.	Yes	No	Neutral

2.

