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#### THE VALUE OF PATTERN PRACTICE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Summary. The aim of the article is to discuss the value of Pattern Practice technique in foreign language teaching as well as to present some contemporary criticisms as far as this technique is concerned as one of the activities within the Audio-Lingual theory.

Since the communication between nations has greatly increased because of the sudden growth of the importance of commerce, technical and educational exchange and such means of communication as radio, T.V., film, there is a large demand for the ability to communicate in foreign languages. New emphasis is being put on the ability to communicate in a foreign language. These high demands have caused the development of new foreign language learning theories such as: the Audio-Lingual and Cognitive-Code Learning theory.

This article is concerned with some aspects and evaluation of Pattern Practice technique within the Audio-Lingual theory and therefore this theory and its main activities will be taken under consideration.

The origins of the Audio-Lingual theory are to be found in the works of American structural linguists, who were convinced that each language was a unique system and had to be learned independently not in comparison with another. This was reaction to the domination of grammar-translation method which had dominated the field for a considerable amount of time. The American structural linguists worked in the same climate of opinion as the behaviouristic psychologists did. They carried out strictly objective investigation of human behaviour and in linguistics this took the form of descriptive approach towards the study of the language. This, in turn, led to the research of what people actually say in their mother tongue and the structuralists claimed that only this ought to be taught. "The structural linguists regarded language as a living, evolving thing, not as a static corpus of forms and expressions". (Rivers, 1968: 35). Therefore they constituted a structure of the language and insisted on imitation and memorization of basic conversational sentences as spoken by native speakers. Linguists who advocated the audio-lingual approach in foreign language learning considered language as a set of habits established by reinforcement in a given language situation, and learning as a process of conditioning behaviour. Furthermore, they based their research on the

language itself and studied the recurring patterns in a given language. They devoted their attention mostly to the phonology, phonemes and morphemes of the foreign language. As the result of this, the audio-lingual method aims particularly at developing listening and speaking skills first and later reading and writing. Since the theory of learning was influenced by behaviouristic psychology, hence language learning was defined in the same mechanistic terms. In behaviouristic psychology learning is a mechanical process based on establishing connections between stimuli, which had to be selected and as a result of this, the desired responses were caused by them. Once the immediate and appropriate reinforcement was provided, the desired response occurred.

As mentioned above, audiolingualists assumed that language was composed of conditioned responses and this has been reflected in their foreign language learning theory as the use of Pattern Practice technique. Let it be stressed again that language, for them, operates largely on the basis of the habit and therefore the best way to acquire the knowledge of a foreign language is to practise intensively the patterns of it. Lado defines Pattern Practice as "a rapid oral drill on problem patterns with attention on something other than the problem itself". (Lado, 1964: 105). The mean which helps to build language competence so that one uses certain grammatical structures on subconscious level, is Pattern Practice technique. There should not be any referring to the native language system but the skills in a new language ought to be developed in the context in which they appear in that language and thus, there should be a technique which fulfills these demands.

What is a Pattern Practice technique then? It is practising the grammatical patterns of the foreign language in order to engage the habit mechanism which in turn establishes the new habits. In other words, if a new grammatical item is to be presented to the students, a great deal of practice must be done. First the teacher must present the student a new structure and then make him put words almost automatically into a pattern without changing it.

When these patterns of foreign language can be constructed by the students then there is progress in foreign language learning. The first stage in acquiring this level is based on the production with conscious choice, i.e. the student must be aware of choosing the right item in a given grammatical situation. Only after much practice of the same patterns, constant repetitions and drills will these patterns become automatized unconscious habits and that is the most important factor while learning a foreign language. There are different types of Pattern Practices:

1. Simple oral substitution - a new word or phrase is substituted in the same place in each response. The substitution is given by the teacher orally and the student or the group inserts it into the right place of the next response.



## 2. Simple substitutions:

- a) pictures - the cues can be provided by series of pictures which should be identified first for the class and next they should be used in basic sentences,
- b) realia - the teacher points at things which are in the classroom.

3. Substitution in variable slot - it includes changes of the problem which is practised without student concentrating on it.

4. Multiple substitution - the teacher supplies more than one cue and these cues can be pictured, oral or pointed things.

5. Transformation - a cue sentence is changed into another.

6. Conversation - short controlled dialogues which make the student use the problem pattern.

7. Addition - increasing the length of the sentences without student being aware of the problem. New items are added to previous sentences.

The types of Pattern Practices which have been presented above can be used according to the level of the pupils' ability to manipulate within a foreign language. Furthermore, these types of Pattern Practices make it possible to impart a variety of forms of exercises on pupils in order to practise different grammatical structures. This in turn shows evidence that the main purpose of using Pattern Practice technique is to build up speaking skills in a target language. And thus Pattern Practice is a procedure which helps the pupils to develop these skills in a foreign language. When the pupils absorb the patterns as habits, they must practise them carefully on the grounds of purposeful communication. At that stage they are able to make free selection which is equal to a foreign language competence.

There are different teaching devices which are helpful to make Pattern Practice technique effective. They can be used by the teacher while working with a class or individually. Records, tapes, films and pictures are among the most commonly used. The teacher can practise different kinds of sentence patterns, intonation, dialogues or other activities using these teaching devices. The audiolinguists advocate also the use of language laboratories as one of the most advanced teaching devices which enable to carry out different activities within one lesson or unit.

But during the past few years the effectiveness of using Pattern Practice and mechanical drills has been strongly criticized by some leading methodologists. First of all they rejected the theoretical background of the structural linguists in using Pattern Practice and mechanical drills by presenting Chomsky's transformational grammar. According to transformationalists the number of sentence patterns is unlimited in any language and thus it is impossible to frame any amount of grammatical patterns. And furthermore, linguists, psycholinguists criticize Skinnerian theory of learning based on the experiments carried out on animals. As the result of the rejection of the Audio-Lingual theory the scientists denied the

effectiveness of Pattern Practice and mechanical drills. (Marton, W. 1972: 145). Marton, W. in his "Nowe horyzonty nauczania języków obcych" 1972: PZWS on page 146 indicates that: ... "powtarzanie i przekształcanie wzorców zdaniowych bynajmniej nie gwarantuje obiecanego transferu wyuczonych struktur w sytuacjach posługiwania się językiem w celach komunikatywnych".

Also Chastain, K. (1971: 46) states that the weakness of Pattern Practice lies in "overabundance of drills, lack of variety of activity and lack of real language practice in all four skills". Pattern Practice and mechanical drills can only be treated as preliminary to exercises which call for conscious responses and which develop skills. No information is ever transmitted in drills. (Krzeszowski, T., 1970: 30).

Since Pattern Practice and mechanical drills are limited techniques in the process of foreign language learning, therefore they should not be used as the only ways to present the grammatical material to the pupils. Pattern Practice can be easily adopted, re-arranged and introduced into the contemporary activities of foreign language learning methods. It can be combined with situational drills, contrastive exercises and situational exercises.

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#### PRZYDATNOŚĆ TECHNIKI PATTERN PRACTICE W NAUCE JĘZYKA OBCEGO

#### S t r e s z o z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie przydatności techniki Pattern Practice w nauczaniu języka obcego jak również przedstawienie niektórych najnowszych krytyk tej techniki. Technika ta jest jedną z czynności w procesie uczenia języka obcego zgodnie z założeniami teorii audio-lingwalnej.



ПРИГОДНОСТЬ ТЕХНИКИ Pattern Practice  
В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

Р е з ю м е

Целью статьи является представление пригодности техники Pattern Practice в обучении иностранному языку а также представление некоторых новейших критик этой техники, являющейся одним из приемов в процессе обучения иностранному языку согласно положениям теории аудио-лингвальной.