



**Comparative Effects of Audio-Lingual and Direct Teaching  
Methods on Secondary School Students' Oral English  
Achievement in Benin Republic**

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**Abstract**

The Republic of Benin is a French-speaking country where English is taught as a foreign language in secondary schools and universities. But after spending seven years spanning secondary and tertiary education most students are unable to speak the target language fluently. The students' performance in English language in both written and oral examinations is generally poor. The study therefore adopted the quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, non-randomised and non-equivalent control group to investigate the relative effects of Audio-lingual and Direct teaching methods on secondary school students' oral English achievement in Benin Republic. Four schools were categorised into three experimental groups and one control group. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test all the five hypotheses formulated. The findings of the study indicated a significant difference in the students' general achievement when exposed to each of the three teaching methods. However, the combination of direct and audio-lingual teaching methods was the most effective followed by the audio-lingual teaching method. The implication is that English language teachers should employ activity-oriented methods to improve the learners' oral English proficiency, especially those involving drilling and repetition as EFL students are less exposed to the target language than their ESL counterparts.



**Keywords:** Audio-lingual method, Direct methods, Oral English, Fluency, Accuracy.

## **Introduction**

As a dynamic system of linguistic symbols, language serves as a fundamental tool for communication among members of a community, playing a crucial role in society by facilitating interaction, the exchange of ideas, and the preservation of culture, thereby highlighting its indispensable value in human connections and social development. Language, a distinctive human reality and a fundamental system of communication within any given community, is essential for expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions, making it a vital aspect of human interaction that has always been of great importance to society, while its study remains central to the work of researchers seeking to understand its structure, evolution, and impact. As defined by Yule (2022), language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols that allows both members of a certain culture and those who have learnt the system to interact or communicate. Language is regarded as the source of human life and power. Its possession enables an individual to have human essence; the distinctive qualities of mind that are unique to man. Language is also defined as a system of conventional vocal signs by means of which human beings communicate (Algeo & Pyles, 2004). Fabbro, et al. (2022) asserted that language is a system made up of signs, symbols, and vocal acts that are arbitrary and typically employed by people in communication. Additionally, it is regarded as the most advanced way of communication in life and the essence of humanity (Akindele, et al. 2022). Language has a number of qualities, including being a basic form of communication, being used by people in a conventional manner, functioning within an organised system, and influencing people's habits and behaviour (Obiukwu & Ogwudile, 2023).

From the foregoing, it is clear that language is a human means of communication and one may infer that life existence is difficult without communication. People whose mother tongue is not English are becoming more interested in the language for a number of reasons, yet knowing a language is useless if they cannot communicate in it (Olagbaju, et al., 2023). Nowadays, the concept of language is intimately linked to development. Some languages are becoming more used useful



to their importance for processing information and being related to other parts of the world. In line with Chukwukere and Ajileye (2024), English has become one of the most important languages in education in today's fast-paced, technologically advanced world. The fact cannot be denied that it is a global language. As the most commonly spoken language in the world, English has achieved this status through a combination of historical, political, economic, cultural, educational, and technical influences (Salomone & Salomone, 2022). Furthermore, with over 700 million speakers worldwide-less than half of whom are native speakers-English is the most widely taught foreign language in more than 100 nations (Khan & Ali, 2023).

In addition to being one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, it also provides access to contemporary information across numerous fields (Kamordeen, 2021). Consequently, individuals whose mother tongue is not English are becoming more and more interested in the language for a variety of reasons. In light of this, Vulchanova, et. al. (2022) asserted that English is now the property of its users rather than its native speakers as a mother tongue or first language. DeFries (2021) supports this approach by comparing the English language to creeping plants that are so firmly entrenched in the soil that they cover native plants with a layer of tendrils that threaten to choke them. English is a language that is widely spoken throughout much of the world (DeFries, 2021).

Obiakor (2024) assessed the linguistic situation in Africa and concluded that, due to its prevalence, especially in Nigeria, English is no longer a foreign language. Additionally, Yasmin and Yasmeen (2021) noted that the English language makes people all around the world viable and practicable. Because of its globalisation level in trade, politics and the rich literature provided to the world's science and technology, through the ever-growing number of books and media, the entire world depends so much on the English language for communication. For the purpose of reaching a larger worldwide audience, English is employed for publications (Mazza, 2024). Because of its crucial role in enabling contact with people around the world, the language is becoming more and more popular in this context, especially in French-speaking nations. This is particularly critical when interacting



with the most developed countries, like the United States and the United Kingdom, where English is the predominant language of communication. One needs it for either professional purpose or academic use, while others simply burn the desire to speak the worldwide language and acquire good communication skills to be able to relate with other people. Although French is their official language, francophone countries need English to relate with non-French speakers. West African French-speaking nations, such as the Republic of Benin, are surrounded by English-speaking countries, necessitating cooperation because of their shared borders (Olakunle, 2024).

The requirement for English language training has significantly increased worldwide as a result of the growing need for proficient English communication abilities (Abraham, et al., 2022). Given this, teaching may be viewed as a vital means of acquiring information and education since it is an endeavour to promote meaningful learning using pedagogically sound and ethically good approaches (Marougkas, et al., 2023). Teaching methods are considered by Babajide and Smith (2022) as procedures for guiding and giving direction on how to reach the goals of teaching. School curricula must pass the implementation stage in order to be useful. Implementing the curriculum means putting the concepts and materials into practice on a big scale (Ajake, et al., 2024). The curriculum is implemented effectively at the classroom level and the teacher is the key implementer. Ngole and Mkulu (2021) noted that teachers are essential to the successful and efficient execution of a school programme. They are in charge of utilizing suitable teaching techniques to convert the curriculum's tenets into useful lessons (Lawal, 2000). One of the key issues affecting educational advancement is still pupils' poor academic performance.

Effective teaching strategies have a direct impact on students' academic performance because while poorly designed or inappropriate strategies might impede comprehension and achievement, well-organized and interesting strategies can improve learning results (Nasamu, 2021). In this regard, educational administrators often find it essential to operate perpetual reforms in order to take up recurrent challenges. In the words of Tamimi et al. (2023), performance is the sum of a student's scores on an accomplishment or aptitude exam and is



widely recognized as the official measure of achieving academic success. Three levels of performance can be distinguished; these are also sometimes referred to as excellent, ordinary, and poor performance, respectively. However, many learners in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and English-as-Foreign-Language (EFL) contexts face difficulties in communicating effectively. In spite of the status of the English language in the world, one of the major problems related to its teaching-learning in many countries is students' performance in the subject.

Sanusi (2022) highlighted that learning should not be a passive process in which pupils only take in information from textbooks and lecturers. Especially when it comes to foreign languages, language instruction should be dynamic and backed by suitable pedagogical techniques. Teaching methods, which are practical applications of language learning approaches, have been shaped by the evolution of language learning approaches across time. While Lawal (2000) emphasised that there is no one best approach, methods should be chosen based on the lesson objectives, available resources, class size, and time, Fadairo and Olarisade (2006) characterised techniques as crucial instruments for teachers to assist learning. Lawal (2004) reported that a large number of secondary school teachers often employ, inefficient teaching strategies. Studies on how well students score in English on the SSCE WAEC and other external tests have looked at a number of teaching methods. The usefulness of cooperative, skeletal, multisensory, and metacognitive teaching approaches was investigated in studies by Ayodele, et al. (2021) and Rogti (2024), highlighting the significance of well-structured approaches for effective foreign language acquisition.

There are many different approaches to teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language. Adebileje and Akinola (2020) identified seven major approaches, including Grammar-Translation, Direct, Audio-Lingual, Situational, Communicative-Language-Teaching, Task-Based Learning, and the Eclectic Approach. Similarly, Geneyikli (2020) highlighted a number of methods, including Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual, Cognitive-Based, Total Physical Response (TPR), and the Natural Approach. Language teaching methods have changed over



time, with each gaining popularity before being supplanted by new approaches. This study focused on the Audio-Lingual and Direct methods, which are still useful despite newer alternatives. Nwani (2021) stressed that language teaching is more of an art than a science, depending on the teacher's intuition and flexibility. Teachers should prioritise practical experimentation and choose approaches based on instructional objectives rather than trends because there is no one method that is always better.

Based on the idea that language is essentially a system of sounds for communication, with writing serving as a secondary purpose, the Audio-Lingual Method was created by American linguists in the 1950s (Bermeo-Lima, 2023). Speaking is given priority in foreign language instruction, with a focus on oral proficiency through conversations that strengthen the development of habits (Jendli & Albarakati, 2024). With its roots in behaviourist theory, it encourages learning by using positive reinforcement and repetition, with the goal of substituting the target language's habits for those of the original tongue (Albukbak & Msimeer, 2021). It has been criticised for its strict drills, lack of real-life language context, and overemphasis on speaking over other learning techniques, while being successful in improving oral fluency (Samifanni, 2020).

The Direct Method, sometimes referred to as the conversational or natural method, is highly recommended since it helps students improve their foreign language communication abilities. Through emphasising common language and employing questions and answers to improve speaking and listening abilities, it promotes oral proficiency (Mart, 2006). Instead of using translation, the method uses realia, photos, or pantomime to directly link meaning to the target language. Its foundation lies in the idea that language is learnt by thorough listening, contextual speaking, and reinforcement of speech through proper behaviour (Mart, 2006). The target language is used exclusively in the classroom to promote active student participation (Lake, 2013). In order to encourage natural language acquisition, teachers use visual aids and examples to convey new vocabulary, and conversational interactions are crucial (Wijayanti, 2015).

In the words of Abimbola (2004), traditional teaching methods such as lectures, discussions, recitations, tutorials, laboratory work,



demonstrations, play-way, and field excursions usually entail the teacher asking questions and providing vocal explanations. Although teachers shouldn't be restricted to just one approach, the discussion method was used in this study. Helping students become proficient is the ultimate goal of teaching foreign and second languages, and excellent instruction is essential, particularly in nations where EFL learning is difficult. According to Olajide (2010), the main goal of teaching English is to facilitate basic communication. The four fundamental skills of language proficiency-speaking, listening, reading, and writing-are necessary for successful second language learning (Lawal, 2000). Particularly important are speaking (which involves using a language's sound system), and listening (which involves perceiving and reacting to spoken messages). Since speech is the foundation of all languages, written language is derived from it.

Language is inherently oral, and speaking is essential for verbalising thoughts. However, many students in ESL and EFL contexts struggle to learn and communicate effectively in English, particularly in the Republic of Benin, where young learners face challenges in acquiring the language. In the EFL context, motivations are often academic, and public opinion, influenced by the widespread difficulty in speaking English, advocates for changing teaching methods to improve academic performance. Despite numerous attempts, researchers agree that the goal of English language teaching-effective communication in the target language-remains unachieved (Yaha, 2005; Babalola, 2010; Iwikotan, 2012; Lanmantchion, 2012). In response, the Ministry of Education has introduced curriculum changes to adopt a more communicative approach, including socio-cultural considerations (Republic of Benin, Policy of Education, 2008). However, while Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has succeeded elsewhere, its effectiveness in Benin is limited (Iwikotan, 2012). This study aims to identify pedagogical strategies to address the decline in English teaching, especially in developing speaking and oral skills.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the Republic of Benin, a Francophone country, English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL), yet many students struggle to master and speak it fluently even after nearly seven years of study. It



was noted that despite English being taught from secondary school to university, most students fail to use it effectively. Performance in both internal and external examinations remain poor, with Baccalauréat examination failure rates in English ranging from 52% to 60% between 2013 and 2017 (DOB statistics, 2013-2017). To the best knowledge of the present researcher, no empirical research in Benin has explored the relevance of older methods within the communicative framework, particularly the audio-lingual and direct methods in improving oral proficiency among senior secondary school students. This study therefore bridged the gap identified in the Beninese EFL context.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the comparative effects of audio-lingual and direct methods on senior secondary school students' achievement in oral English in the Republic of Benin. Specifically, the study examined the:

1. general level of achievement of the senior secondary school students exposed to audio-lingual method, the direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods in the fluency aspect of oral English.
2. general level of achievement of the senior secondary school students exposed to audio-lingual method, the direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods in accuracy aspect of oral English.
3. comparative effects of the audio-lingual method, the direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods on the senior secondary students' achievement in two aspects of oral English (accuracy and fluency).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were asked to direct the study:

1. What are the general levels of achievement of the students exposed to the audio-lingual method, the direct method and the combination of audio-lingual and direct methods in the fluency aspect of oral English?
2. What are the general levels of achievement of the students exposed to the audio-lingual method, the direct method and the





combination of audio-lingual and direct methods in the accuracy aspect of oral English?

3. Will there be any difference in the effectiveness of the audio-lingual method, the direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods on the Senior Secondary School students' achievement in fluency and accuracy aspects of oral English?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested in the study:

- H0<sub>1</sub>:** *There will be no significant difference in the effectiveness of the audio-lingual, the direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and the direct methods on the achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in the accuracy and fluency aspects of oral English.*

### **Methodology**

This study is a quasi-experimental research type with pre-test, post-test non-randomised, non- equivalent control group design. It adopted a factorial design of 4x2 to test the null hypothesis. The first four factorial levels are the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), the Direct Method (DM) and a Combination of the Audio-lingual Method and the Direct Method (ALM&DM) and the Conventional method.

The population for this study comprised all senior secondary school students in the Republic of Benin. The target population consisted of all senior secondary schools students in Arts (A<sub>1</sub> A<sub>2</sub>) classes. The total population of public A<sub>1</sub> A<sub>2</sub> students in Benin is about 12,000. They were selected because English was a core subject. The sample was made up of one hundred and eighty senior secondary school students from four randomly selected senior secondary schools from two hundred and forty-three (243) public schools in the Republic of Benin. Random sampling technique was used to select the study sample from the arms of 2<sup>nde</sup> classes. The criterion for the selection was the availability of the senior level Arts in the secondary school as well as the availability of an English teacher. Intact A<sub>1</sub> A<sub>2</sub> classes were used in each of the four schools. English Speaking Performance Test (ESPT) was the instrument used for pretest and posttest.



The first and second research questions were answered using mean. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the formulated hypothesis in this study. The essence of using ANCOVA, at 0.05 level of significance, was to discover initial difference that might likely occur both within and between the experimental and control groups before treatment. It was also used to reduce common threats to the internal validity related to factorial designs.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** *What are the general levels of achievement of the students exposed to the audio-lingual method, direct method, and the combination of audio-lingual and direct methods on the Senior Secondary School students' achievement in aspects of fluency in oral English?*

In order to answer this research question one, students' post-test scores in four groups identified were subjected to percentage analysis. The result is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Achievement Levels of the Students Exposed to the Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method, and the Combination of Audio-Lingual and Direct Methods in Aspects of Fluency in Oral English**

Groups	Characteristics	F	(%)	Mean	Infer.
Control	Low	34	55.7	37.10	Low
	Medium	23	37.7		
	High	4	6.6		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0</b>		
Direct	Low	27	48.2	45.18	Below Average
	Medium	20	35.7		
	High	9	16.1		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>		
Audio-Lingual	Low	18	27.3	57.83	High
	Medium	22	33.3		
	High	26	39.4		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>		
	Low	14	22.2		



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<b>Combina tion</b>	Medium	20	31.7		
	High	29	46.0		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>63.83</b>	<b>Very High</b>

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Table 1 indicates the level of achievement in fluency in oral English of the three different experimental groups and one control group that were exposed to treatments and placebo respectively. The students were taught in their natural environments without any randomisation of subjects into either group. In the control group, 61 students were taught oral English language using the conventional teaching method and their post-test mean score was 37.10 which translates to a “low” level of fluency in oral English. In the direct teaching method, 56 students were taught and they recorded a mean score of 45.18 which implies a “below average” level of fluency in oral English.

Further still, the 66 students were exposed to the audio-lingual teaching method and had a mean score of 57.83 which is above “high” level of fluency in oral English. Lastly, the 63 students were taught through a combination of direct and audio-lingual teaching and had a mean score of 63.83% which indicates that their level of fluency in oral English is “high”.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the general levels of achievement of the students exposed to the audio-lingual method, direct method, and the combination of audio-lingual and direct methods on the Senior Secondary School students’ achievement in aspect of accuracy in oral English?*

**Table 2: Level of Achievement of the Students Exposed to the Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method, and the Combination of Audio-Lingual and Direct Method on the Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in Aspects of Accuracy in Oral English**

Groups	Characteristics	F	(%)	Mean	Infer.
<b>Control</b>	Low		60.7%		
	Medium	24	39.3%		
	High	0	0.0%	<b>37.15</b>	<b>Low</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		
<b>Direct</b>	Low	4	7.1%		
	Medium	52	92.9%		
	High	0	0.0%	<b>45.71</b>	<b>Below Average</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		
<b>Audio-Lingual</b>	Low	3	4.5%		
	Medium	55	83.3%		
	High	8	12.1%	<b>56.68</b>	<b>Average</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		
<b>Combina tion</b>	Low	0	0.0%		
	Medium	41	65.1%		
	High	22	34.9%	<b>63.38</b>	<b>High</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		

Table 2 indicates the level of achievement in accuracy in oral English of the three different experimental groups and one control group that were exposed to treatment and placebo respectively. The students were taught in their natural environment without any randomisation of subjects into either group. In the control group, 61 students were taught oral English language using the conventional teaching method and their accuracy were examined and having mean score 37.15 which translates to low level of accuracy in oral English. In the direct teaching method, 56 students were taught the same topics and were examined using the same instrument and their mean score is 45.71 which implies below average level of accuracy in oral English.



Further still, 66 students participated in the classroom activities using audio-lingual method and their mean score is 56.68 which inferred an average level of accuracy in oral English. Lastly, 63 students were also taught the same topics using combination of direct and audio-lingual teaching and their mean score is 63.38 which shows that their level of accuracy in oral English is high.

### Hypothesis Testing

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There will be no significant difference in the effectiveness of audio-lingual, direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods on the achievement of Secondary School students in the fluency and accuracy aspects of oral English.*

**Table 3: ANCOVA Difference in the Effectiveness of Audio Lingual, Direct Method and the Combination of the Audio-Lingual and Direct Methods on the Achievement of Secondary School Students in the Fluency and Accuracy Aspects of Oral English**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	In fe r.
<b>Corrected Model</b>	28710.875 <sup>a</sup>	4	7177.719	60.543	.000	
<b>Interce pt</b>	227720.942	1	227720.942	1920.807	.000	
<b>Pretest</b>	2.768	1	2.768	.023	.879	
<b>Groups</b>	27106.099	3	9035.366	76.213	.000	<b>S</b>
<b>Error</b>	28571.706	241	118.555			
<b>Total</b>	1307328.50 0	246				
<b>Corrected Total</b>	57282.581	245				

P < 0.05

Table 3 shows that the calculated F-value of 76.21 and the calculated significance is 0.00 computed at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated level significance (0.00) is less than the chosen



0.05 level of significance, Hypothesis One is hereby rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of audio-lingual, direct method and the combination of the audio-lingual and direct methods on the achievement of Secondary School students in the Fluency and Accuracy aspects of oral English. To ascertain where the significant difference lies, Scheffe Post Hoc was computed and the result is reported in Table 4.

**Table 4: Scheffe Post Hoc Showing Effectiveness of Audio-Lingual, Direct Method and the Combination of the Audio-Lingual and Direct Method on the Achievement of Secondary School Students**

Groups		Subset for alpha = 0.05			
		1	2	3	4
Control	61	41.1021			
Direct	56		53.1837		
Audio-Lingual	66			64.8306	
Combination of Direct and Audio-Lingual	63				78.8300
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Table 4 indicates that the combination of direct and audio-lingual teaching methods is the most significant with a mean score of 78.83 in Subset 4. It is followed by audio-lingual teaching method with a mean score of 64.83 in Subset 3. Direct teaching method is the third with a mean score of 53.18 in Subset 2, while the last teaching group is the control with mean of 41.10 in Subset 1.

### Discussion

It was found that each of the methods had a significant effect on the students' oral English achievement and they (DM, ALM and ALM & DM) were more effective than the Conventional Method (CM), the control group. However, the Scheffe post hoc test shows which of the three methods is the most favoured. Through the test, it was found that the combination of the Audio-lingual method and the Direct method (ALM & DM) is the most effective, followed by the Audio-Lingual method (ALM) and lastly the Direct method (DM).



This finding supports the submission of Marzuki, (2018) that each method is actually not free from weaknesses. While realising the weakness of each method, it is rational not to stand on only one method in the language teaching. For him, in combining two methods to teach, the language teacher will gain advantages and omit weaknesses of each method. He also stressed the fact that focusing on forms creates learners with good accuracy and weak fluency. Meanwhile, if the focus is on the function of the language, the learners will lack accuracy although their fluency may be good. The fact that communication will face many obstacles if it is not backed up with good grammatical rules is already proved in many studies in ESL/EFL context.

Furthermore, Alhomaïdan (2018) stressed the importance of Audio-Lingual and Direct Methods for improving oral English. He also asserted that a clear majority of research works in his literature review suggest the use of both methods, because using them will improve the students' speaking abilities. Therefore, the combination of Audio-lingual and Direct methods can be used to arouse both the fluency and accuracy, sustain the interest of the students in oral English and also improve the quality of their achievement in English language skills in general.

### **Conclusion**

The study's results demonstrate that the combination of the Audio-lingual and Direct teaching methods significantly enhances students' fluency and accuracy in oral English better than other methods. The statistical analysis revealed a clear hierarchy in effectiveness, with the combined method yielding the highest achievement levels, followed by the audio-lingual method, the direct method, and the conventional approach, which showed the lowest performance. These findings highlight the importance of employing diverse and interactive instructional strategies to improve oral English proficiency among secondary school students, by emphasising the need for an integrated teaching approach in language education.

### **Recommendations**

English language teachers should incorporate more activities that enhance learners' oral proficiency, emphasising drilling and



repetition due to EFL students' limited exposure to the target language. Listening activities must be frequent, with the integration of audio-tapes, computer software, and mediated instructional tools like loudspeakers. Schools should expand beyond textbooks, incorporating visual and audio materials to support drilling and listening exercises, with students and parents contributing where possible. Teacher trainers should modify programmes to emphasise context-appropriate methodologies and develop engaging audio-visual materials. Textbook writers and publishers should include CDs and structured listening exercises to enhance speaking skills. Government and stakeholders must collaborate to provide essential facilities such as language laboratories, and well-equipped libraries while training teachers in their use. Future researchers should explore other aspects of EFL, such as listening, reading, and writing, and replicate the study in different learning contexts, including ESL environments and among diverse learner groups.

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