

Approach Theory of language The theory of language underlying Audiolingualism was derived from a view proposed by American linguists in the 1950s a view that came to be known as structural linguistics. Since many languages do not have a written form and we learn to speak before we learn to read or write, it was argued that language is "primarily what is spoken and only secondarily what is written" (Brooks 1964). Therefore, it was assumed that speech had a priority in language teaching. This was contrary to popular views of the relationship of the spoken and written forms of language, since it had been widely assumed that language existed principally as symbols written on paper, and that spoken language was an imperfect realization of the pure written version. This scientific approach to language analysis appeared to offer the foundations for a scientific approach to language teaching. In 1961 the American linguist William Moulton, in a report prepared for the 9th International Congress of Linguists, proclaimed the linguistic principles on which language teaching methodology should be based: "Language is speech, not writing....A sophisticated methodology for collecting and analyzing data developed, which involved transcribing spoken utterances in a language phonetically and later working out the phonemic, morphological (stems, prefixes, suffixes, etc.), and syntactic (phrases, clauses, sentence types) systems underlying the grammar of the language. The reaction against traditional grammar was prompted by the movement toward positivism and empiricism, which Darwin's Origin of the Species had helped promote, and by an increased interest in non-European languages on the part of scholars. By the 1930s, the scientific approach to the study of language was thought to consist of collecting examples of what speakers said and analyzing them according to different levels of structural organization rather than according to categories of Latin grammar. The phonological system defines those sound elements that contrast meaningfully with one another in the language (phonemes), their phonetic realizations in specific environments (allophones), and their permissible sequences (phonotactics). Many nineteenth-century language scholars had viewed modern European languages as corruptions of classical grammar, and languages from other parts of the world were viewed as primitive and underdeveloped. (b) Language samples could be exhaustively described at any structural level of description (phonetic, phonemic, morphological, etc.).