Using Audio Lingual Method (ALM) On Speaking Fluency; A Case Study of Iranian EFL Students in Zahedan

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Abstract

ALM focuses on the development of speaking skills, where the teacher leads the class by modeling new structures and having students repeat them later. This process proves the effectiveness of this method for improving students' speaking skills (Novillo, 2017). The objective of this study was to discover the significant effect of students' speaking when they were taught by ALM. To this end, 25 intermediate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) female students were selected randomly. First, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to determine the homogeneity of these Iranian EFL students. Learners in this research were divided into experimental (n=10) and control (n=10) groups, each with a different teaching system. Both groups were given pre-test and post-test. SPSS was used to analyze the data and findings. The results of the study indicate that the treatment was effective, with distinct effects on learning processes between the experimental and control groups being evident. Based on the result of this study ALM has a significant impact on speaking fluency.

Keywords: ALM, Speaking fluency.

1. Introduction

English is an international language that everyone uses to communicate with people from different countries and is very important for the development of education (Suryani, 2012). English as an international language of communication plays an important role in many fields (Qureshi, 2013). The main aim of English language teaching is to give learners the ability to use the English language effectively and correctly in communication (Davies & Pearse, 2000). EFL learners should be able to communicate, including choosing the

appropriate format, placing them correctly, and creating the correct meaning (Bygate, 2009). English is divided into four skills which are as follows: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Schmitt, 2012).

Speaking as one of the English skills is very important for everyone. To communicate well, people must be able to speak English (Nita & Syafei, 2012). Speaking is a tool for communicating with others. Acquiring English skills enables people to communicate with others, express their thoughts, and know others` ideas as well (Qureshi, 2013). communicating in English is not easy for students. They have to think more when they speak English. Because even if your pronunciation is good, They still have to come up with the right sentences and the right words. This reality forces teachers to think about how students acquire speaking skills (Nita & Syafei, 2012).

Several teaching methods may be applied to teach the four language skills, such as Direct Method, Audio Lingual Method, Communicative Language Learning, and Communicative Language Teaching. The use of suitable teaching is necessary when teaching English language skills. The appropriate use of a teaching method is one of the ways to enhance learners' speaking skills. However, teaching speaking is not an easy task as learners need to understand several language elements such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary at the same time. (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

The literature review showed that the ALM is one of the suitable teaching methods that may be applied to teach speaking skills because it awakens learners' willingness to communicate in the target language (Putra et al., 2022). It was derived from Skinner's Behaviorist Psychology. It is one of the methods in English teaching-learning process. ALM trains students to reach conversational proficiency in a variety of foreign languages and emphasizes behavior (Suryani, 2012). ALM is a method that focuses on teaching pronunciation. In this method, the teacher drills the students' pronunciation (Nita & Syafei, 2012).

1.1 ALM

The ALM is a technique for teaching foreign languages that focuses on the comprehension of speaking and listening (Putra et al., 2022). This procedure relies on the behaviorist theory. The United States' entry into World War II played an important role in American language education. The government commissioned American universities to develop foreign language programs for military personnel. Therefore, in 1942, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was established to provide the U.S. government with personnel fluent in German, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, and other languages. The Army program's goal was to help students become fluent in a variety of foreign languages. ALM has been improved over time by linguists. It is also known as Army Method, Oral Approach, Structural Approach, Linguistic Method, Michigan Method, and Oral-Aural Approach (Sokol, 1946; Richards & Rogers, 2014)

ALM is an oral language approach based on Skinner's behaviorist theory. This theory proposed that humans can acquire language in a short time by using reinforcement methods. This approach is based on two main concepts: the behavioral theory of psychology and structural views of language. To begin, the Audio-lingual method's structural view of language focuses on grammatical structures that describe how grammatical elements are put together. The teaching approach is based on the behavioral principle that learning a foreign language is achieved through reinforcement, habit formation, and association. Behavioral theory is based on the idea that grammar is reinforced when it is used correctly and actively; students are more likely to become proficient in using the language (Mart, 2013).

A literature review revealed that ALM is a method of teaching a foreign or second language that prioritizes speaking and listening over reading and writing. Therefore, it emphasizes conversation as the primary method of language practice and discourages the use of the mother tongue in the classroom (Freeman, 2000). In ALM, language teaching focused on spoken language through dialogues and practice. This method systematically presents the grammatical structures of the second language, moving from the simplest to the more complex sentences, often in drills that the students had to repeat after the teacher said. (Tambunan & Gintings, 2012).

It is in line with Freeman (2000) who states that learners can improve their speaking skills by using ALM. In addition, it helps EFL learners communicate in their target language and acquire communicative competence in a variety of foreign languages. In its implementation, ALM uses repetition, substitution, and question-answering to develop the learner's speaking skills, especially vocabulary. According to Brown (2001), "the ALM advocates the habit-formation model of learning which is perfectly married with the mimicry drills and repetition."

1.1.1 ALM Techniques

Anggraeni (2007)describes that there are some techniques derived from the principle of the ALM as follows:

1. Students to a native-like model such as the teacher of a tape recorder.
2. Students repeat the new material together and individually.
3. The teacher immediately and directly corrects the student's mistakes.
4. Dialoguesrized by reversing roles between (teacher-student)(students-students)
5. Students are encouraged to change certain keywords and phrases in their conversations.
6. Students will write a short guided paper on a given topic
7. Students are encouraged to introduce grammar rules.
8. Students engage in language games and role-plays.
9. The teacher asks questions about new items and asks general questions.
10. Substitution drills, chain drills, transformation drills, and expansion drills are used.
11. Language laboratories are used for the intensive practice of language structures.
12. The dialogue is copied into the student's notebook.
13. Students are asked to read aloud.

Freeman (2000) describes in detail some common or typical techniques closely related to ALM including:

1. " Dialogue memorization: Students memorize an opening dialogue using mimicry and role-playing.
2. Backward Build (Expansion Drill): The teacher breaks a line into several parts; students repeat each part at the end of the sentence and "expand" backward through the sentence, adding each part in sequence.
3. Repetition drill: Students repeat the teachers model as quickly and accurately as possible.
4. Chain drill: Students ask and answer each other one by one in a circular chain around slot Substitution' in the classroom.
5. Single drill Substitution drill: The teacher states a line from the dialogue, and then uses a word or phrase as a "cue" that students, must substitute into the sentence in the correct place.
6. Multiple-slot Substitution drill: Same as the single-slot drill, except that there are multiple cues to be substituted into the line.
7. Transformation drill: The teacher provides a sentence that must be turned into something else, for example, a question to be turned into a statement, an active sentence to be turned into a negative statement, etc.
8. Question and Answer drill: should answer or ask questions very quickly.
9. Use Minimal Pairs: Analysis, the teacher selects a pair of words that sound identical except for a single sound that typically poses difficulty for the learners-students to pronounce and differentiate the two words.
10. Complete the dialogue: Selected words are erased from a line in the dialogue-students must find and insert.
11. Grammar games: Various games are designed to practice a grammar point in context, using lots of repetition. "

1.2 Speaking fluency

Speaking is being capable of speech, expressing ideas, or changing thoughts through the use of language. "Speaking is a productive aural/oral skill and it includes producing systematic verbal utterances to deliver meaning" (Mart, 2012). Speaking is a productive skill necessary to communicate effectively in any language, especially if the speaker is not using their native language. Language learners tend to think that the ability to speak a language is a product of language learning. However, this ability is also an integral part of the language-learning process (Yahay & Kheirzadeh, 2015) Speaking is part of everyday life and everyone should develop a nuanced and detailed language (Schmitt,2012). Speaking is one of the challenges faced by EFL students. An effective method of teaching speaking will guide EFL students to develop their speaking skills better (Widodo, 2020).

There are several components of speaking skills that should be considered for effective English speaking performance, such as accuracy and fluency (Yahay & Kheirzadeh,

2015). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) defined fluency as "the production of language in real-time without undue pausing or hesitation" (p. 139). According to Foster and Skehan (1999), pronunciation, vocabulary, and collocations are emphasized as important factors for fluency in EFL speakers. The concept of fluency is used frequently in applied linguistics, but there is no global consensus on what fluency is (Chambers, 1997). Richards (2006) points out that fluency is the use of naturally occurring language when a speaker engages in and sustains meaningful communication. This communication would be understandable and continuous despite the limitations of one's communication competence.

2. Statement of problem

Regarding the problems second language speakers face in developing their speaking fluency, the current study was carried out to delve into using ALM in teaching speaking fluency. The researcher in this study uses fluency as a variable to demonstrate the value of ALM in teaching speaking. This study aimed to see how ALM affects students' ability to speak English fluently. The research was carried out among high school students in Zahedan.

3. Research question

The main research question which is the spark of the study can be stated as the following:
To what extent ALM method be used effectively in teaching speaking fluency to EFL students?

4. Research hypothesis

ALM does not have much effect on EFL students' speaking fluency.

5. Methodology

The researcher measures the effects of ALM as a dependent variable on speaking fluency as an independent variable in this quantitative analysis.

5.1. Participants

25 female Iranian EFL learners were recruited for this study which was chosen based on random sampling. As a pre-test, Oxford Placement Test was administered to these students to identify students who were at the same level in terms of language skills. According to the results, only 20 students in the entire group have the same degree of proficiency and are homogeneous. Half of the participants were randomly considered the control group, and the other half were selected as the experimental group.

5.2. Instrument

Oxford placement test was used to homogenize the participants. The pre-test and post-test of the present study were standard speaking questions that the participants had to answer orally were the instruments used in this study.

5.2.1. Fluency measures

According to the theoretical principles of measuring fluency, the same measures will be used in this study as Chenoweth & Hayes (2001) and Ellis & Yuan (2004).

5.3. Data collection

This study was conducted during the last semester of university education and the data collection took about three months. For collecting the data, the researcher distributed a proficiency test to ensure the students would be on the same level of proficiency. Selected students were divided into two groups randomly; the control group and the experimental group. A speaking test was taken from both groups as pre-test. The experimental group was educated using the ALM method, while the other group was educated using the traditional method. After three months, a standard speaking test was administered as a post-test. It measures the number of words and syllables per minute to consider the ALM method's effects.

5.4. Data analysis

This quantitative study is based on evaluating the effect of the ALM method on speaking skills. The researcher segmented, coded, and scored all speaking productions of two groups, and data were analyzed via SPSS version 27. in part of descriptive data analysis (Mean, Standard Deviation).

6. Result

The effects of ALM on EFL Intermediate learners' speaking fluency were investigated in this research.

Table 6.1
Descriptive Statistics

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pretest	Control group	10	28.00	55.25	40.9260	9.19437
	Experimental group	10	28.78	54.32	42.4880	8.68633
Posttest	Control group	10	29.25	56.25	41.7110	9.13750
	Experimental group	10	36.00	58.75	48.4620	7.56145

As is shown in Table 6.1, the mean score in the control group increased from 40.92 to 41.71, and in the experimental group increased from 42.48 to 48.46. This shows that the mean score of the posttests is higher than that of the pretests. To continue, the standard deviation decreased from 9.19 to 9.13 in the control group and in the experimental group, it decreases from 8.68 to 7.56. It means that the control group developed fewer words and syllables per minute than the experimental group.

Based on these results and statistics, it can be said that changes in values were observed in both groups, but these changes were more considerable in the experimental group. This increase indicates that the treatment in the experimental group has been effective on speaking fluency. A paired-sample T-test was used to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test subject means was statistically significant.

Tables below (6.2 & 6.3) are obtained based on a paired-samples T test for control group:

Table 6.2
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control group	Pre-test	40.9260	10	9.19437	2.90751
	Post-test	41.7110	10	9.13750	2.88953

Table 6.3
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control group	Pre-test Post-test	-.78500	.54953	.17378	-1.17811	-.39189	-4.517	9	.001

The most important statistic is the p-value under the Sig. column. of This value should be compared to the significance level (that is, 0.05) to determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test group results is statistically significant. A p-value less than 0.05 indicates a significant difference between the two evaluation sets, and a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the difference did not reach statistical significance (Mazahery et al., 2021).

The results indicate a not significant difference between speaking fluency before training (M=40.92; SD=9.19) and speaking fluency after training (M=41.71; SD=9.13).[t (9) = - 4.517, p <.05 (two-tailed)] .

The 95 % confidence interval of the difference between the means ranged from -.1.1 to -0.3 and did not indicate a difference between the means of the samples.

Tables below (6.4 & 6.5) are obtained based on a paired-samples T test for experimental group:

Table 6.4
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental group	pre-test	42.4880	10	8.68633	2.74686
	post-test	48.4620	10	7.56145	2.39114

Table 6.5
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Experimental group	Pre-test Post-test	-5.97400	2.31771	.73292	-7.63199	-4.31601	-8.151	9	.000

Table 6.4 shows that the results indicate, there was a statistically significant increase in speaking fluency Before training (M=42.48; SD=8.68) and speaking test score after training (M=48.46; SD=7.56).[t (9) = -8.1, p<0.5(two-tailed)].

The 95% confidence interval of the difference between the means ranged from -7.6 to -4.3 and indicates a there is a difference between the means of the samples.

Table 6.5 reveals that the Sig. (2-tailed) the value represents a p-value lower than the significance level (.000 <.05).This suggests that the difference in EFL speaking fluency before and after the test was statistically significant.

7. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of ALM on speaking skills. According to the results of this report, ALM affects speaking skills, the ALM approach improves fluency in terms of words and syllables per minute.

The findings of this study agree with Mart (2013) who says that ALM is an easy way to improve student's communication skills through dialogue. Students should get into the

habit of repeating dialogues and pattern exercises to develop quick and automatic responses. Exercises are useful in foreign language teaching because they allow students to put into practice what they have learned.

The results of this study are also in line with the findings what Maaliah et al. (2017) claim that using ALM can improve students' speaking skills. Language skills such as fluency in understanding the topic being communicated when using ALM. Selection of appropriate vocabulary for dialogue space. Pronounce terms and pronounce sentences with proper intonation and pronunciation. And it is necessary to use the correct grammatical structure. Finally, spoken language methods are suitable for teaching speaking skills. Teachers should use spoken language methods to teach students how to communicate in English in a safe and comfortable environment. Since the students are categorized as infants, the instructor must be able to handle the class. A concentration approach should be used to direct the students (Maaliah et al., 2017).

9. Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of ALM on speaking skills. From the results of examination and analysis using the SPSS formula, it was found that ALM has a significant impact on the speaking skills of high school students.

Based on observations and discussions, some conclusions may be drawn. First, the English skills of the students who were taught using ALM were significantly different from the other group who were taught using the traditional method. Second, in ALM the interaction between students and teacher will be close because students had repeated and practiced many times, they were more successful in speaking and were more fluent.

In addition, more research could potentially use a wider range of topics and media. Further research is needed to examine how ALM techniques affect speech fluency. Research like this will help us better understand how ALM improves communication skills.

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