



Investigating Speaking Skills Acquisition Through the Audio-Oral Method in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, India

K. M. A. Ahamed ZUBAIR*

Associate Professor of Arabic, Postgraduate and Research Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, India.

*Corresponding author: ahamedzubair@thenewcollege.edu.in

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the teaching of speaking skills using the audio-oral method among students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai as well as to identify the challenges faced in this approach. Employing a qualitative methodology, data was gathered through observations, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was structured around three key components: data reduction, data presentation, and extrapolation. To ensure data validity, triangulation was utilized. The findings indicate that speaking skills are taught using the audio-oral method by providing dialogues that are subsequently translated and modeled in the Arabic dialect. Students listen to these pronunciations and practice imitating them; at times, a mobile phone recorder is employed to enhance their proficiency in speaking Arabic accurately. The teaching process is complemented by additional exercises involving diverse Arabic dialogues. The challenges encountered in teaching speaking skills using the audio-oral method at this institution are primarily related to the language environment, the influence of the local language, and issues stemming from a monotonous teaching approach and inadequate learning materials.

Keywords: Audio-Oral Method; Speaking Skills; Arabic Curriculum; Teaching Method

Acknowledgments: Thank you to all faculty members and students of the department, who have participated in helping in the process until the completion of this research.

For citation:

Zubair, K. M. A. A. (2024). Investigating Speaking Skills Acquisition Through the Audio-Oral Method in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, India, *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education*, 3(7), 1168-1174. <https://doi.org/10.56778/jdlde.v3i7.379>.

Introduction

Speaking skill is one of the four core language skills and plays a significant role in the process of teaching the Arabic language (Almelhes, 2024); (Hasibuan et al., 2024); (Azhar et al., 2022). For a student to succeed in learning Arabic, their instruction must include the ability to speak, as speaking is a fundamental skill and a key objective of language study, even though it also serves as a means of communication with others. Through speaking, individuals connect with people from other nations, convey their emotions, thoughts, and needs, and fulfill their goals. Speaking, therefore, stands as one of the most frequent actions in human life. Speaking plays an important role in society and is considered one of the four essential Arabic language skills, including the skill of speaking. The most critical aspect of teaching speaking is to practice practicing speaking. The skill of speaking enables speakers to articulate sounds or words to express ideas, opinions, intentions, or feelings. This allows students to communicate linguistically correctly and naturally in the Arabic they are learning. However, teachers must seize opportunities to draw from their experience, make use of the curriculum they are working with, and adapt to educational situations they encounter (Ni'mah, 2018).

It is well-known that teaching has two prominent aspects: the method of teaching and the instructional tools. As instructional tools serve as an integral part of the teaching approach within the educational environment organized by the teacher, they play an essential role in the learning process. A skilled teacher understands how to motivate students, enhancing their enthusiasm to learn the subject matter. Hence, we understand that teaching the speaking skill relies heavily on both the method and the teacher. It is necessary to guide the learner step by step according to the appropriate methods and strategies that lead to accurate speaking. In reality, the success of teaching depends on three factors: first, the completeness of lesson preparation; second, the teaching methods; and third, the student's ability to engage sincerely with the lessons and fully understand them (Jensen et al., 2018); (Tong et al., 2022). Mahmoud Ismail Sini also addresses these points in his book *A Study on Methods of Teaching Arabic Language* (Gharaibeh & Alhassan, 2023). Foreign languages require a general plan for systematically presenting linguistic material, without contradictions, and based on a specific approach. When considering the number of learners interested in the Arabic language, teachers must select and determine the appropriate method, approach, or model applicable in the process of teaching Arabic. This choice greatly influences the success and achievement of the objectives of Arabic language education. Selecting the correct method serves as an effective solution in addressing challenges, benefiting from the latest and suitable scientific research outcomes. Therefore, teaching methodology is an essential tool needed to resolve educational challenges (Haleem et al., 2022); (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024); (Kim et al., 2019). One such method is the audio-lingual approach, which begins with presenting sound patterns before teaching reading and writing. This method utilizes audio cassettes, videos, films, slides, and other media, sometimes incorporating the mother tongue as a teaching aid.

The Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, includes various departments, among them the religious department, which focuses on teaching Arabic and the use of heritage texts. This department consists of several educational sections, including the Arabic language teaching section. Among the linguistic skills that female students in this department highly value is speaking. These students are required to use Arabic in their daily activities as a means of communication, and the audio-lingual approach has been selected as the preferred teaching method for the Arabic language teacher. The goal of the teacher in using this approach is for the students to be able to speak Arabic well, using a wide range of vocabulary heard via recorded media to acquire new words for use in speaking. Furthermore, many students use colloquial Arabic rather than formal language in their speech. Although the teacher consistently strives to provide guidance in each lesson, it is challenging to instill formal usage entirely.

We recognize that speaking is one of the most important language skills, as it is the practical component that the learner practices. Speaking represents an essential part of Arabic language education and conversation skills, as well as a lack of attention by the students in correcting their

speech, despite the teacher's capability to assist them. The researcher chose this college as a case study because it combines both religious and various modern sciences. Therefore, these phenomena are intriguing and significant, particularly in teaching speaking skills through the audio-lingual approach.

Methodology

To keep the study focused, it was narrowed down to two main objectives. The first objective is to understand how speaking skills are taught through the audio-lingual method to the male students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai. The second objective is to identify the challenges in teaching speaking skills using this method at the same college. This research employs a qualitative approach, as the data consists of qualitative information expressed in words or descriptions rather than numbers. The data includes primary information about teaching speaking skills using the audio-lingual method and the related challenges, as well as supplementary information from educational documents and scientific studies. Data collection methods include two aspects: the first pertains to the teaching process data obtained from observations and interviews with the teacher, head of the Arabic language teaching department, vice principal of academic affairs, and vice principal of administrative affairs. The second aspect concerns the challenges of teaching speaking skills using the audio-lingual method, gathered through interviews with the teacher and some students. For data analysis, the researcher employed the interactive model, consisting of three basic steps: data reduction, data display, and concluding. To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation, which Lexy Molcong describes as re-verification using multiple sources.

Results and Discussion

Teaching Arabic at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai

The New College, Chennai, is an educational institution under the aegis of MEASI. This college has various departments and educational sections, including the Arabic language department. This information was collected from an interview with Arabic language teacher Dr. Mateen on October 28, 2024. The college includes several departments. Arabic language activities are held at various occasions and educational activities as well. These activities take place at 4 to 6 occasions in an academic year. There is significant participation, with a total of 62 students divided into two groups (from UG and PG) in this research. The textbook used in this group is the *Duroos allugha alarabiyyah, al-arabiyya baina Yadaika and functional Arabic* books, which include a variety of dialogues aimed at enhancing speaking skills through the audio-lingual method under the guidance of the instructors. Teaching Speaking Skills through the Audio-Lingual Method for Students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai. The teaching process has long been conducted in an organized manner, introducing vocabulary, requiring memorization, and teaching Arabic grammar, such as syntax and morphology, to develop the students' ability to speak Arabic in daily life. In the current year, the Arabic language teaching section's instructors have focused on developing speaking skills. The section is staffed by three instructors: one serves as the section head, named Instructor Mateen, while the other two are Arabic language instructors named Instructor Fareed (in charge of Group A) and Instructor Yousuf (in charge of Group B).

The head of this section divided the students into two groups, "Group A" and "Group B," to facilitate active participation in learning activities based on students' abilities. Students with a strong foundation in speaking skills are placed in Group A for Arabic language instruction, while Group B is designated for those who require additional support, aiming to aid their progress in mastering the Arabic language. The introduction to this teaching is quite busy, as it falls under the general section of students in Arabic language education. The results are assessed through oral examinations. The administrator of this work has decided to focus on teaching speaking skills, as it is one of the essential skills in the Arabic language. The teaching method chosen and employed in the process of teaching

speaking skills to students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai is the audio-oral method. The steps involved include the teacher providing dialogues, translating them, demonstrating the pronunciation in the Arabic dialect, and having the students listen to them before imitating. Sometimes, a Mobile Phone recorder is used to improve students' Arabic speaking skills correctly, while the instruction continues with extensive practice in various Arabic dialogues. Therefore, training relies on translation and providing Arabic dialogue material, such as conversations, using the dialogue book or a Mobile Phone recordings that the students listen to before engaging in the activities.

One reason for choosing this method, as mentioned by the instructor, is to train the students' ability to speak Arabic with correct pronunciation, as Indonesian structures differ from those of the Arabic language. Furthermore, the method aims to enable students to speak proper Arabic, ensuring that they only use correct and eloquent language. Speaking Arabic in a local dialect, such as the Madurese dialect, would be strange and inappropriate for the purpose of teaching this language (Fudhaili, 2024). One of the indicators of proficiency in a foreign language is the fluency of speech (Tavakoli et al., 2023). The dialogue book is also used to enhance the teaching of speaking skills among students, as it includes various types of dialogues. The audio-oral method is a comprehensive plan that teachers utilize to achieve the desired goals of language learning, especially in improving speech in targeted conversations, p. 16). The method encompasses various techniques, procedures, and specific educational materials that teachers used to employ in their teaching. The data obtained by the researcher from the interview with the Arabic language teacher, Instructor Mateen, was recorded on October 29, 2024. Students who are well-prepared are placed in Section (A) for Arabic language learning, while those needing more foundational support are placed in Section (B). These placements are based on an oral examination conducted at the beginning of this instructional program. (data from interview with the Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, p. 14).

The head of the department decided to focus on teaching speaking skills, as it is one of the essential skills in Arabic language learning. The selected and applied method in teaching speaking to students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai is the Audiolingual method. The process involves the teacher presenting dialogues, translating them, modeling Arabic pronunciation, and allowing students to listen and then practice, sometimes using a Mobile Phone recordings to enhance their accuracy in Arabic speaking through repeated exercises in various dialogues. The training relies on translation and providing Arabic dialogue content, whether through a conversational book or Mobile Phone recordings that students listen to before engaging in the speaking exercise (data from interview with the Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, p. 15). "The instructor chose this method for several reasons, as noted by the teacher. One is to foster students' ability to speak Arabic with a correct accent, given that Indonesian sentence structures differ from Arabic. A second reason is to enable students to speak Arabic accurately, as the approach seeks to ensure that students speak only correct and eloquent Arabic. If Arabic is spoken with, for example, a tamil accent, it may sound strange and be unsuitable for the language's educational goals. Fluency in speech is one of the hallmarks of proficiency in a foreign language. The textbook used for teaching is also intended to improve students' speaking skills through a variety of dialogues. The Audiolingual method provides a comprehensive plan that helps the teacher achieve specific learning objectives, particularly in enhancing spoken language skills toward the intended proficiency" (data from interview with the Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, p. 16).

This method involves the techniques, procedures, and specific teaching materials employed by the teacher. (data from interview with the Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, p. 17). "Skill teaching requires practice, and the educational process itself demands a great deal of training to instill habits. In teaching speaking skills, in addition to the activities of the Audiolingual method, numerous exercises are necessary to help students become accustomed to speaking Arabic in their daily lives" (data from interview with Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, p. 18).

The researcher concludes that the process of teaching speaking skills using the Audiolingual method for students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, includes the following steps. (data from educational activities in the Arabic Language Department, Al-Jadeed, 2023-2024, p. 09).

Steps involved in the Audiolingual method:

1. The lesson begins with a greeting.
2. The teacher presents the dialogue material, sometimes through Mobile Phone recordings.
3. The teacher translates the intended dialogue material.
4. The teacher demonstrates proper pronunciation in Arabic and lets the students hear individual words or phrases in correct Arabic pronunciation.
5. The teacher instructs the students to repeat in unison or memorize the material.
6. Exercises focus on word patterns within the dialogue.
7. The teacher provides a vocabulary for students to form into short sentences.
8. The teacher assigns tasks such as creating Arabic compositions, short stories, or speech texts that follow grammar, morphology, and rhetoric rules to enhance their Arabic language proficiency.
9. The session concludes with a review.

"Challenges in teaching speaking skills using the Audiolingual method to students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, exist, as each educational process comes with various issues that teachers need to address and find ways to solve. This ensures that teaching is effective and aligns with the teacher's goals in achieving the intended learning objectives" (data from an interview with an Arabic teacher, Dr. Mateen, October 29, 2024, and from observation of educational activities in the Arabic Language Department, February 12, 2020).

The problems in teaching speaking skills using the Audiolingual method to students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai include:

Problems Related to the Environment

Teaching the Arabic language requires a linguistic environment that helps students get accustomed to and practice speaking Arabic. Unfortunately, there is no Arabic linguistic environment in the institution and college; students practice Arabic during limited activities in this program. The teacher, students, and college principal must provide times and spaces conducive to a linguistic environment, adhere to the established regulations, and commit to using and practicing Arabic throughout the program (Abdullah & Samsudin, 2022).

Problems Related to the Local Language

Students find it challenging to pronounce Arabic in the correct dialect due to their habitual use of the local language (Shendy, 2022). Teachers should increase the number of dialogue practices in Arabic and ensure that speaking exercises are consistently applied both in and outside the classroom (Ritonga et al., 2023); (Hanani & Naser, 2020); (Hopkyns et al., 2021); (Alshammari et al., 2024)

Problems Related to Monotonous Teaching Methods and Educational Tools

Students often feel unmotivated or bored due to the repetitive presentation of material in a monotonous manner and the limited use of educational resources. Teachers should diversify their teaching approaches and utilize various educational materials to create engaging and effective learning experiences, thereby reducing boredom among students (Sanger, 2020); (Hollister et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Speaking skills were taught using the Audiolingual method at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai by having the teacher provide dialogues, translate them, model pronunciation

in the Arabic dialect, and allow students to listen and imitate, sometimes using audio recordings to improve their speaking skills in correct Arabic. This approach included continuous training with various dialogue types in the Arabic dialect. The problems in teaching speaking skills using the Audio-visual method to students at the Department of Arabic, The New College, Chennai, include environmental, local language, and teaching method issues. (data obtained by the researcher from interviews with Arabic language teachers on February 18 and 19, 2024). Arabic students of the New College, Chennai have three main problems: those related to the linguistic environment, the local language, and monotonous teaching methods and educational tools. Based on the results of this research, several recommendations should be considered to enhance the quality of Arabic language teaching, particularly concerning teaching speaking skills using the Audio-visual method. First, teachers, students, and the college administration should provide times and places that foster a linguistic environment and adhere to the established system and regulations, committing to using and practicing Arabic in their studies. Second, teachers should increase the number of practice dialogues in Arabic and consistently apply speaking exercises in and outside the classroom. Third, teachers should implement diverse teaching methods and various educational resources to achieve engaging and effective learning experiences while reducing feelings of boredom among students.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Abdullah, I. S., & Samsudin, D. M. (2022). Learning Arabic Language Skills for Adults (Jack C. Richard Thought Review). *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 3(2), 103–123. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v3i2.5924>
- Almelhes, S. (2024). Enhancing Arabic Language Acquisition: Effective Strategies for Addressing Non-Native Learners' Challenges. *Education Sciences*, 14(10), 1116. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14101116>
- Alshammari, A., Shaalan, D., & Al-onazi, B. (2024). Instruments measuring motivation to learn Arabic as a second language: Evidence of validity and reliability. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 887. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03381-y>
- Azhar, M., Wahyudi, H., & Promadi, P. (2022). Arabic Language Learning with Communicative Method and Factors Affecting Student's Speaking Ability. *Takuana: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains, Dan Humaniora*, 1(2), 92–101. <https://doi.org/10.56113/takuana.v1i2.33>
- Fudhaili, A. (2024). Dialectics and Madurese Language Accent in the Perspective of Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic. *Lensa: Kajian Kebahasaan, Kesusastraan, Dan Budaya*, 14(1), 145. <https://doi.org/10.26714/lensa.14.1.2024.145-160>
- Gharaibeh, M., & Alhassan, A. A. (2023). Role of teachers in teaching Arabic letters to young children of UAE: Exploring criteria of Arabic letters teaching. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2191392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2191392>
- Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review. *Sustainable Operations and Computers*, 3, 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susoc.2022.05.004>
- Hanani, A., & Naser, R. (2020). Spoken Arabic dialect recognition using X-vectors. *Natural Language Engineering*, 26(6), 691–700. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1351324920000091>
- Hasibuan, R., Jundi, M., Ali, I., Febriani, S. R., & Bedra, K. G. (2024). Game-Based Language Learning: Implementing Arabic Speaking Proficiency through Truth or Dare with Spin Wheel. *Lughawiyah: Journal of Arabic Education and Linguistics*, 6(1), 16. <https://doi.org/10.31958/lughawiyah.v6i1.12224>

- Hollister, B., Nair, P., Hill-Lindsay, S., & Chukoskie, L. (2022). Engagement in Online Learning: Student Attitudes and Behavior During COVID-19. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, 851019. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.851019>
- Hopkyns, S., Zoghbor, W., & Hassall, P. J. (2021). The use of English and linguistic hybridity among Emirati millennials. *World Englishes*, 40(2), 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12506>
- Jensen, J. L., Holt, E. A., Sowards, J. B., Heath Ogden, T., & West, R. E. (2018). Investigating Strategies for Pre-Class Content Learning in a Flipped Classroom. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 27(6), 523–535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-018-9740-6>
- Kim, S., Raza, M., & Seidman, E. (2019). Improving 21st-century teaching skills: The key to effective 21st-century learners. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 14(1), 99–117. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499919829214>
- Ni'mah, M. (2018). المقرر لتعليم الكلام في قسم اللغة العربية التابع لكلية الآداب وكلية التربية. *IJ-ATL (International Journal of Arabic Teaching and Learning)*, 2(2), 90–129. <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijat.v2i2.423>
- Ritonga, M., Armini, A., Julhadi, J., Rambe, M. H., & Jaffar, M. N. (2023). Audiolingual Method in Arabic Learning. *Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*, 15(1), 244–260. <https://doi.org/10.24042/albayan.v15i1.15449>
- Sanger, C. S. (2020). Inclusive Pedagogy and Universal Design Approaches for Diverse Learning Environments. In C. S. Sanger & N. W. Gleason (Eds.), *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education* (pp. 31–71). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1628-3_2
- Shendy, R. (2022). Learning to Read in an “Estranged” Language: Arabic Diglossia, Child Literacy, and the Case for Mother Tongue-Based Education. *Creative Education*, 13(04), 1247–1301. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2022.134077>
- Tavakoli, P., Kendon, G., Mazhurnaya, S., & Ziomek, A. (2023). Assessment of fluency in the Test of English for Educational Purposes. *Language Testing*, 40(3), 607–629. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02655322231151384>
- Tong, D. H., Uyen, B. P., & Ngan, L. K. (2022). The effectiveness of blended learning on students' academic achievement, self-study skills and learning attitudes: A quasi-experiment study in teaching the conventions for coordinates in the plane. *Heliyon*, 8(12), e12657. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e12657>
- Zamiri, M., & Esmaeili, A. (2024). Methods and Technologies for Supporting Knowledge Sharing within Learning Communities: A Systematic Literature Review. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14010017>