



Integrating the Audio-oral Method and Wordwall Gamification in Teaching Arabic Speaking and Grammar: A Case Study at The New College, Chennai, India

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Abstract

This study investigates the integration of two pedagogical approaches-the Audio-Oral Method and Wordwall game-based learning-in teaching Arabic speaking skills and grammar at the Department of Arabic, the New College, Chennai. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with instructors and students, and analysis of instructional materials. The study involved 30 undergraduate students divided into two proficiency-based groups. Findings reveal that the Audio-Ooal method effectively enhances pronunciation and dialogue practice through repetition and translation, while Wordwall serves as an engaging formative assessment tool that increases student motivation, vocabulary retention, and collaborative learning. However, challenges include the lack of an immersive Arabic language environment, local language interference, monotonous teaching practices, and unequal student participation in gamified activities. The study concludes that blended use of these methods can significantly improve Arabic language acquisition if supported by structured planning, diversified teaching strategies, and equitable classroom engagement techniques.

Keywords: Audio-oral method, wordwall, gamification, arabic language teaching, speaking skills, grammar, formative assessment

Acknowledgments: The author wish to express their sincere gratitude to The New College (Autonomous), Chennai, and the participating undergraduate students for their essential support and cooperation in making this study on Arabic pedagogical innovation possible.

For citation:

Zubair, K. M. A. A. (2026). Integrating the Audio-Oral Method and Wordwall Gamification in Teaching Arabic Speaking and Grammar: A Case Study at The New College, Chennai. *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education*, 4(8),1801-1807. <https://doi.org/10.56778/jdlde.v4i8.630>

Introduction

Speaking proficiency and grammatical mastery constitute the indispensable pillars of Arabic language acquisition, serving as the primary vehicles for both nuanced, meaningful communication

and rigorous linguistic precision in academic discourse (Azhar et al., 2022; Abdullah & Samsudin, 2022). Within the sphere of higher education particularly in geographical regions where Arabic is neither the native tongue nor the primary medium of social interaction—educators frequently encounter multifaceted hurdles that impede student progress, ranging from suboptimal learner engagement and phonetic inaccuracies to the persistent struggle of internalizing complex morphological and syntactic structures (Aeni et al., 2022; Alshammari et al., 2024). Historically, traditional pedagogical frameworks, most notably the Audio-Oral Method, have prioritized structural fluency through an emphasis on rhythmic repetition, systematic translation, and intensive oral drills designed to embed linguistic habits (Pica, 2000). In stark contrast, the emergence of contemporary digital game-based learning platforms, such as Wordwall, has introduced a paradigm shift toward interactive, formative assessment-driven experiences that significantly bolster intrinsic motivation and provide the immediate feedback loops necessary for modern cognitive development (Pica, 2000; Aprilia & Nasekhah, 2025).

This research undertakes a critical investigation into the synergistic implementation of these two divergent pedagogical approaches within the Department of Arabic at The New College, Chennai a distinguished institution operating under the MEASI umbrella with a long-standing scholarly commitment to Arabic linguistics and Islamic studies (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Deterding et al., 2011). While a substantial body of previous scholarship has underscored the singular effectiveness of the Audio-Oral Method in refining phonetic accuracy through structured imitation and choral response (Almelhes, 2024; Azhar et al., 2022), and whereas gamified environments like Wordwall have demonstrated remarkable success in accelerating vocabulary retention and conceptual understanding (Ari Widhiatama & Brameswari, 2024), the scholarly understanding of how these distinct methodologies might be harmonized within the specific socio-cultural and academic landscape of Indian higher education remains limited. This lack of integrated focus suggests that the potential for a "hybrid" linguistic discipline, which captures the strengths of both classical and digital tools, has yet to be fully realized in the contemporary Arabic classroom.

The strategic integration of traditional pedagogical rigor with modern technological interventions represents a necessary evolution in addressing the increasingly diverse learning styles and expectations of 21st-century students. Although the Audio-Oral Method provides a robust and disciplined phonetic foundation that is essential for formal communication, its inherently repetitive nature can occasionally culminate in learner fatigue and a subsequent decline in classroom interest (Almelhes, 2024); (Azhar et al., 2022). Conversely, while digital platforms like Wordwall offer the dynamic gamification elements required to sustain high levels of psychological engagement, they may sometimes lack the rigorous oral discipline and structured phonetic repetition inherent in classical linguistic approaches (Ari Widhiatama & Brameswari, 2024).

By investigating the convergence of these two methods at The New College, this study seeks to articulate a more holistic and adaptive pedagogical framework that balances the traditional demands of phonetic precision with the modern necessity for digital interactivity. This inquiry provides a comprehensive empirical foundation for understanding how such a dual-track methodology can simultaneously enhance spontaneous communicative competence and formal grammatical proficiency among undergraduate learners. Accordingly, the primary objective of this research is to investigate the integration of two pedagogical approaches—the audio-oral method and Wordwall game-based learning—in teaching Arabic speaking skills and grammar at the Department of Arabic, the New College, Chennai.

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to provide an in-depth analysis of pedagogical interventions within the Department of Arabic at The New College, Chennai. This method was chosen to capture the nuanced experiences of students and instructors in a real-world

academic setting.

Participants and setting

The study involved 30 undergraduate (UG) students, purposively sampled and categorized into two distinct groups based on initial oral proficiency assessments: Group A (High Proficiency) and Group B (Medium Proficiency). The cohort predominantly comes from a Tamil-medium educational background (63.3%), with a significant portion (36.7%) having prior Madrasa education, which influences their initial engagement with the Arabic language.

Data collection instruments

To ensure data triangulation and validity, three primary instruments were utilized:

- Classroom observations: Systematic monitoring of student behavior and interaction during both audio-oral and wordwall-integrated sessions.
- Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth discussions with the Arabic instructor and selected students to capture qualitative perceptions of the teaching methods.
- Document & log analysis: A comprehensive review of teaching materials, student performance records (Pre-test vs. Post-test), and Wordwall activity logs to track real-time engagement and progress.

Teaching procedure and integration

The methodology followed an integrated flow where traditional phonetic training was reinforced by digital gamification.

1. The audio-oral phase: As detailed in Table 3, the process began with instructor-led dialogue introduction and choral repetition to solidify phonetic patterns and intonation.
2. The wordwall integration phase: Following the oral drills, Wordwall templates were introduced as formative tools. Activities like Spin the Wheel and Sentence Completion were strategically used to transition students from rote imitation to active grammatical application (nahwu).

Data analysis framework

Data analysis was conducted using the Interactive Model by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity:

1. Data reduction: Coding and distilling raw observation and interview notes.
2. Data display: Utilizing tables and diagrams to organize and visualize patterns of improvement.
3. Conclusion drawing/verification: Identifying the synergy between the two methods and verifying findings through triangulation.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the audio-oral method

The instructor followed a structured process (Fudhaili, 2024; Gharaibeh & Alhassan, 2023): Introduction of dialogues via audio recordings; translation and pronunciation modeling in arabic; choral repetition and individual imitation; use of mobile recordings for self-correction; practice through varied conversational exercises. Students showed improved pronunciation and increased willingness to speak, though local language influence and limited conversational practice outside class remained hurdles (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1. Identified challenges and suggested solutions

Challenge	Frequency (Observed sessions)	Proposed solution
Lack of Arabic-speaking environment	100%	Create Arabic-only zones; conversation clubs
Local language interference	90%	Contrastive pronunciation drills; phonetic feedback
Monotonous teaching materials	70%	Rotate digital and physical media; use multimedia
Unequal participation in Wordwall	65%	Use role rotation; individual accountability scores
Technical issues (internet/device)	40%	Offline backup activities; lab-based sessions
Low motivation for grammar Drills	75%	Gamify grammar rules; use storytelling context

Table 2. Instructor feedback on method effectiveness

Aspect	Audio-oral method	Wordwall	Combined approach
Ease of implementation	High	Medium	Medium-High
Student participation	Moderate	High	Very High
Skill development (speaking)	High	Low	High
Skill development (grammar)	Low	High	High
Resource requirement	Low	Medium	Medium
Recommended for future use	Yes	Yes	Strongly Yes

Integration of wordwall as a formative tool

The strategic integration of Wordwall within the Arabic language curriculum functions as a dynamic formative assessment tool, specifically designed to reinforce vocabulary acquisition and grammatical precision (nahwu) through various interactive digital templates. By using exercises such as sentence completion, matching activities, anagram puzzles, and spin-the-wheel quizzes, the platform transforms conventional learning into an immersive experience. These gamified elements significantly increased student engagement, encouraged a spirit of teamwork, and simultaneously provided the immediate feedback necessary for linguistic correction.

However, despite these benefits, the implementation revealed certain pedagogical and logistical limitations. More professional students often dominate classroom participation, potentially overshadowing those still struggling with basic concepts. Additionally, the success of this digital program was occasionally affected by technical problems, such as unreliable internet and equipment limitations, which interrupted the learning process and needed quick fixes (Hollister et al., 2022; Hopkyns et al., 2021; (Zubair, 2025).

Combined Pedagogical Impact

The strategic blending of the audio-oral method and Wordwall's gamified platform created a complementary and multifaceted learning environment that addressed various aspects of Arabic language acquisition. In this hybrid model, the audio-oral sessions served as the bedrock for developing foundational speaking skills and phonetic accuracy through disciplined repetition and dialogue. This was effectively balanced by Wordwall activities, which functioned to reinforce

vocabulary and complex grammatical structures (nahwu) within a low-pressure, game-based format.

As a result, students felt much more motivated and less anxious about language learning compared to the stress that usually comes with traditional grammar drills. This synergy not only solidified their technical understanding but also fostered a more positive and receptive attitude toward mastering the Arabic language (Hanani & Naser, 2020; Hasibuan et al., 2024).

Identified Challenges

Despite the pedagogical benefits observed, several significant challenges persisted throughout the implementation of these methods. A primary obstacle was the lack of an immersive Arabic language environment outside the classroom, which limited the students' opportunities for spontaneous practice. This issue was further compounded by the strong linguistic influence of Tamil and English, which frequently interfered with the students' mastery of authentic Arabic pronunciation and phonetic nuances. Finally, the integration of technology was hindered by technical limitations and occasional digital access issues, such as unstable connectivity and varying levels of device compatibility, which disrupted the seamless delivery of gamified lessons (Gök & Kesik, 2022; Haleem et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This study addresses the challenges of Arabic language acquisition in non-Arabic speaking environments, specifically aiming to evaluate the integration of the audio-oral method with Wordwall gamification. Findings indicate that this hybrid approach significantly improves both speaking fluency and grammatical competence by balancing structural discipline with interactive engagement. In conclusion, the synergy between traditional and digital tools provides a more effective and motivating pedagogical model for undergraduate students. The implication is that instructors should adopt blended learning strategies to reduce student anxiety and enhance participation. Despite limitations such as a small sample size and technical connectivity issues, this research suggests that future studies should explore long-term skill retention and the use of mobile learning to foster a more immersive language environment.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

The research and writing of this article were funded by personal funds.

Author contribution

K. M. A. Ahamed Zubair: conceptualization, methodology, software, data curation, writing-original draft preparation, visualization, investigation, supervision, software; validation, writing-reviewing and editing.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI) tools or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing or data analysis process in this study.

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