

Modernizing The Audio-Lingual Method Through Gamification For Speaking Fluency

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ABSTRACT

Speaking proficiency is a vital indicator of English language mastery, yet many students struggle with anxiety and limited practice opportunities. This paper explores the modernization of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)—a traditional approach focused on habit formation through repetition—by integrating gamification elements. While ALM provides structural precision, it is often viewed as monotonous for modern learners. This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design to develop a framework that incorporates game mechanics such as points, levels, and rewards into ALM drills. The findings suggest that this integration enhances student motivation, reduces speaking anxiety, and creates an interactive environment suitable for the digital generation. The study concludes that gamified ALM serves as a sustainable model for improving speaking fluency in 21st-century EFL contexts.

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ABSTRACT

Kemampuan berbicara merupakan indikator penting dalam penguasaan bahasa Inggris, namun banyak siswa menghadapi kesulitan akibat kecemasan dan terbatasnya kesempatan untuk berlatih. Artikel ini membahas modernisasi Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)—sebuah pendekatan tradisional yang berfokus pada pembentukan kebiasaan melalui pengulangan—dengan mengintegrasikan unsur gamifikasi. Meskipun ALM memberikan ketepatan struktur bahasa, metode ini sering dipandang monoton oleh pembelajar modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian konseptual kualitatif untuk mengembangkan sebuah kerangka kerja yang mengintegrasikan mekanisme permainan seperti poin, level, dan penghargaan ke dalam latihan-latihan ALM. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi tersebut dapat meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa, mengurangi kecemasan dalam berbicara, serta menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang interaktif dan sesuai dengan karakteristik generasi digital. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa ALM berbasis gamifikasi merupakan model pembelajaran yang berkelanjutan untuk meningkatkan kefasihan berbicara dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) di abad ke-21.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking ability or speaking skill is a crucial aspect of learning English, indicating how well students can use the language for communication. Nonetheless, in reality, numerous students continue to face difficulties in speaking fluently. They frequently experience anxiety, fear of errors, and do not have enough chances to practice speaking during lessons. Conversely, educators encounter the difficulty of fostering an interactive learning atmosphere and promoting active involvement from students in speaking. This phenomenon shows that teaching speaking still needs strategic innovation to enhance the learning process and make it more enjoyable.

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is a traditional technique for language instruction that emphasizes developing habits via repetition (drills) and mimicry. This method has shown to be successful in practicing sentence forms and patterns; however, in contemporary education, ALM is frequently viewed as tedious and lacks sufficient space for student creativity. This results in a disconnect between the efficiency of standard ALM structured activities and the requirements of 21st-century education, which calls for interactivity, emotional involvement, and significant learning experiences.

In response to these challenges, gamification is becoming a cutting-edge method in education. Gamification employs game components like points, levels, challenges, and rewards to enhance engagement and motivation in the learning process. In language learning, gamification has demonstrated its ability to enhance student engagement, boost self-esteem, and render the learning experience more enjoyable (Abu Qub'a, et al., 2024).

Updating the Audio-Lingual Method with Gamification techniques. The core idea involves combining ALM principles with gamification techniques to enhance speaking fluency. This strategy goes beyond incorporating a game aspect into conventional methods; it aims to rejuvenate ALM, making it more applicable and significant for contemporary learners. Through the integration of organized repetition alongside the competitive and cooperative aspects characteristic of gamification, it is anticipated that students will engage in speaking practice with increased enthusiasm, concentration, and consistency.

Recent studies indicate that gamification has considerable promise in enhancing students' speaking abilities. For instance, (Al-Sabbagh, 2023) revealed that following the application of a gamification strategy at a university in the United Arab Emirates, students showed marked improvements in their speaking abilities, along with a notable increase in their motivation to learn. Moreover, a study conducted by (Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2024) demonstrated that Duolingo, as a mobile game-oriented language learning tool, positively influences students' speaking

skills. Consequently, the enhancement of the Audio-Lingual method via gamification can serve as a creative option in English instruction, particularly to boost students' speaking fluency in an enjoyable, relevant manner that aligns with the traits of digital generation learners. This article aims to: 1. Re-examine the relevance of the Audio-Lingual method in the context of modern learning. 2. Explain gamification integration strategies to increase student motivation and engagement. 3. Present a conceptual framework for implementing a modernized ALM to improve speaking skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual research design. Unlike field-based research, conceptual research focuses on the development of new ideas, perspectives, or models through the synthesis of existing theories to address contemporary pedagogical issues. The methodological stages employed in this study are outlined as follows:

1) Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a systematic literature review of academic publications released between 2018 and 2025. The data sources included reputable journal articles, textbooks, and empirical research reports focusing on two primary domains:

- (1) the effectiveness and limitations of the traditional Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and
- (2) the implementation of gamification elements in English language education within the EFL context.

2) Analytical Instrument

The primary instrument of this study was the researcher as a human instrument, who conducted critical evaluations of the selected texts. The analysis employed comparative analysis and theoretical synthesis techniques. The researcher examined the behaviorist principles underlying ALM—such as reinforcement and habit formation—and compared them with motivational elements of gamification, including point systems, levels, and immediate feedback.

3) Data Analysis Stages

The analytical process followed a logical sequence, as illustrated in the conceptual framework, to ensure the objectivity of the findings:

Gap Identification: Analyzing why traditional ALM is often perceived as less effective for digital-native learners.

Gamification Element Mapping: Identifying game features that demonstrate functional alignment with ALM drill techniques.

Conceptual Synthesis: Formulating integration strategies that combine the rigid structural nature of ALM with the flexible and interactive characteristics of gamification.

Model Formulation: Developing the “Gamified ALM Loop” framework as a theoretical solution to enhance students’ speaking fluency.

4) Theoretical Validation

The conclusions drawn were validated by comparing the proposed model with findings from recent empirical studies to ensure that the framework is theoretically grounded and applicable to real classroom practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) The Continued Relevance of ALM in the Digital Era

Based on the analysis of recent literature, the findings indicate that the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) continues to hold strong pedagogical relevance, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The literature highlights that the principle of language automatization, which characterizes ALM, remains essential for beginner-level learners in developing foundational sentence structures and accurate articulation (Rilling, 2018). However, this relevance has undergone a functional shift. ALM is no longer viewed as a rigid, stand-alone method, but rather as a structural foundation that requires support from more interactive approaches to prevent cognitive fatigue and learner disengagement (Sholikhah et al., 2025).

2) Strategies for Gamification Integration

To modernize ALM without diminishing its core principle of repetition (drills), this study formulates three key integration strategies:

Progressive Leveling (Digital Scaffolding).

Repetitive practice is no longer implemented randomly but is organized into a hierarchy of increasing difficulty. Learners experience a tangible sense of progress as they successfully “unlock” more complex language levels.

Immediate Reinforcement (Instant Feedback).

Traditional teacher-centered verbal reinforcement is supplemented with digital point systems and badges. This approach aligns with the principles of operant conditioning in behaviorist theory, where immediate rewards strengthen memory retention and habit formation (Abu Qub’a et al., 2024).

Challenge-Based Missions.

Monotonous substitution and transformation drills are reframed as competitive “missions.” Empirical evidence suggests that this strategy effectively lowers learners’ affective filter, thereby reducing speaking anxiety and increasing willingness to communicate (Al-Sabbagh, 2023).

3) Proposed Conceptual Framework: The Gamified ALM Loop

As its primary theoretical contribution, this study proposes a conceptual framework termed “The Gamified ALM Loop.” This model integrates the behavioural cycle of ALM with the engagement cycle of gamification through the following stages:

Stage 1: Input (The ALM Core).

The teacher presents accurate language structures through mimicry techniques. This stage ensures that learners receive grammatically and phonetically correct input.

Stage 2: Engagement (The Gamified Drills).

Learners engage in repetitive practice through game mechanics. At this stage, the traditional monotony of ALM is mitigated by challenges, point systems, and healthy competition. Repetition occurs intensively but is perceived as playful and engaging by learners (Lestari et al., 2024).

Stage 3: Output (Fluency and Confidence).

The outcome of this motivated repetition is speech automatization. Learners are able to produce sentences spontaneously with greater confidence, having undergone an enjoyable and low-anxiety practice phase.

Discussion

This integration directly addresses criticisms regarding the limited creativity associated with traditional ALM (Shenderuk, 2018). By embedding ALM within a gamified structure, one-way instructional interaction is transformed into objective-driven interaction. The proposed framework demonstrates that traditional methods do not need to be abandoned; rather, they should be revitalized through modern psychological and technological elements to meet the expectations of 21st-century learners, who are deeply immersed in digital environments.

CONCLUSION

The modernization of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) through gamification effectively addresses the limitations of traditional drill-based practice. While ALM provides structural precision, gamification contributes emotional engagement and learner motivation. This integration results in a balanced instructional model that is well aligned with the needs of 21st-century digital learners.

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