

# Enhancing EFL Learners' Speaking Skills through the Audio-Lingual Method

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**ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS  
THROUGH THE AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD**

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SUBMISSION TRACK	A B S T R A C T
Submitted : 24 February 2022 Accepted : 10 March 2022 Published : 18 March 2022	<b>1</b> The teaching method is one of the contributing factors to successful English language learning. The appropriate use of a teaching method is one of the ways to enhance learners' speaking skills. The present study aims at reviewing the use of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), one of the teaching methods to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills. The present study employs library research to delineate the use of ALM to enhance learners' mastery of speaking skills. The data were obtained from documentation study and previous research findings and further analyzed qualitatively. Therefore, it reviews the brief of ALM, the purposes of ALM. Moreover, it scrutinizes the strategies used in ALM, the benefits of using and the implication of using ALM in classroom teaching. Finally, some important points on the use of ALM are highlighted in the conclusion part.
<b>KEYWORDS</b> Audio lingual method, EFL learners, Enhancing, Speaking skills	
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### Introduction

Teaching profession is a challenging profession because teachers should possess a number of requirements such as pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills. In addition, teachers should know the varieties of language teaching methods, be flexible and creative, so they can attract their students' attention in their instructional design (Saepullah, *et al.*, 2021; Herawati, 2012). Since English is a global language, everyone uses it to communicate with others and it is essential for educational growth (Harmer, 2003; Haycraft, 2002). In Indonesia, for instance, English is not only taught at the higher level of education but also the secondary level. Therefore, Indonesian EFL learners are urged to master the four English language skills, namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

Speaking is the ability to produce oral output that consists of creating organized verbal utterances to express meaning (Nunan, 2003; Nazara, 2011). Furthermore, when we speak, we generate text, and that text should be meaningful (Derewianka, 1990). Brown, (2004) confirms that speaking is considered as the most important skills to be learned. Based on the four language skills, the system may be divided into two categories; spoken and written abilities (Mart, 2018; Nunan, 2003; Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Teachers should possess knowledge of different method of language teaching and be flexible in their instructional design. Indeed, it is hard to pict out one best single method for all due to the learners' age, language level, and the materials being taught. Most teachers combine their teaching methods to facilitae their learning and teaching. Therefore, teachers should be flexible in their instructional design, selecting and adapting them when needed.

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 a suitable teaching method is considered

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 because learners at the same time should comprehend several language components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Leong and Ahmadi, 2017). That is why an appropriate teaching method should be presented to ensure that EFL learners possess communication skills.

Literature review showed that the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is one of the suitable teaching methods that may be applied to teach speaking skills because it ignites learners' willingness to communicate in the target language. It is in line with Freeman (2000), who states that learners could improve their speaking skills through the use of the ALM. Moreover, it helps EFL learners communicate in the target language and achieve communicative competence in a wide range of foreign languages. In its implementation, the ALM utilizes repetition, replacement, and question-answering to develop learners' speaking abilities, particularly their vocabulary. According to Richard and Rodgers (1986), language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learned in the target language are presented in the spoken form before they are seen in written form.

The present study attempts to delineate the utilization of the ALM to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills. The reason why the ALM is because this particular teaching method is in line with the language learning objectives is to learn how to use the language to communicate (Freeman, 2000). Besides, it is widely used to train learners to communicate in a target language.

The present study is worth conducting because it may shed some light on the effective teaching method used to enhance learners' speaking skills. Besides, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge, especially in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), in terms of the knowledge of an appropriate teaching method which will be used by EFL teachers to suit the needs of EFL learners in the classroom setting. Bearing in mind the importance of the aforementioned issues, this article reviews the brief of the ALM and its purposes. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the strategies used in the ALM, the benefits, and the implication of using the ALM in classroom teaching. Several important points on the use of ALM are highlighted in the conclusion part as the final remarks.

### **Literature Review**

Freeman's (2000) states that one of the ALM principles in language learning is a process of habit formation which means that the more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning. Therefore, positive reinforcement helps learners to develop correct habits. Literature review revealed that the ALM is a method of teaching a foreign or second language that prioritizes speaking and listening before reading and writing. Thus, it emphasizes conversation as the primary method of language drills, and it discourages the use of mother tongue in the classroom. Additionally, it is referred to as the aural-oral approach because it uses exercises in terms of dialogues practice which make use of memorization as a model. Furthermore, Freeman, (2000) notes that the ALM is a method for training learners in the usage of grammatical patterns that are existed in the linguistic and psychological theory.

EFL learners must be able to communicate, which includes selecting the appropriate form, correctly arranging them, and creating the correct meaning (Bygate, 2000). According to Syakur (1987), four components of speaking skills, namely comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Comprehension

means oral communication necessitates a subject's ability to both respond to and initiate speech. Grammar means learners must be able to arrange a suitable phrase in conversation and distinguish between permissible and incorrect grammatical forms. Vocabulary refers to the appropriate diction that is used when speaking. Moreover, pronunciation is the way how the students speak and one of the speaking parameters if they are fluent or not (Wei, 2002; Yangklang, 2006; Yates, 2002; Schaetzel and Low, 2009). Fluency refers to the phonological process, which is a component of grammar that is composed of the pieces and rules that regulate how sounds fluctuate and pattern in a language.

According to Scoot (2005), there are various requirements for speaking activities that must include productivity in order to be maximally language productive to give the optimal circumstances for autonomous language usage, including the following characteristics such as; a) Purposefulness: increasing language productivity frequently means ensuring that the verbal activity has a clear purpose, especially if it requires learners to collaborate to achieve a common goal; b) Interactivity, actions should be needed when participating in interactive activities, learners should be challenged to evaluate the influence of their actions on their audience; c) Challenge, the activity should challenge the students so that they will be compelled to use all of their communication resources to complete it; d) Safety, while learners should be challenged to examine the impact of their actions on their audience when participating in interactive activities; and d) Authenticity, speaking tasks should be related to real-life language usage in some way.

Several studies have been conducted to examine the use of the ALM towards students' speaking achievements. For instance, Suryani (2012), conducted a study to describe the implementation of teaching the ALM in teaching English of the fourth year students. To gather the data needed, she did an observation, interview, and studied several related documents. The results of the analysis revealed that students' class participation level was higher in terms of sentence repetition drilling. She suggested that EFL teachers use the ALM to teach speaking for young learners because they can memorize the word easily.

Sidabutar (2021), conducted a study to examine the effect of the ALM on EFL students' ability in the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The findings revealed that students' speaking abilities have improved significantly after using the ALM. The next study has performed by Rahman (2021), who reviewed the background, history, and progress of ALM. He confirms that the ALM is used to teach foreign languages and emphasizes speaking and listening skills. Another study was conducted by Saepulloh *et al.*, (2021) who performed the teaching speaking by using the ALM with the oral application. The findings revealed that the ALM brings positive effects to students' motivation to speak English. In addition, students are happy to learn as it was an enjoyable learning atmosphere.

From those point of views, we may conclude that ALM ignites EFL learners to participate in the communication activities during the learning and teaching process. The existance of ALM in the foreign language learning, especially in the English language teaching (ELT) brings positive impact on the learners' oral proficiency. The ability of learners to articulate sounds in foreign language has improved significantly as they have been drilled in the aspect of pronunciation. Besides, learners have the opportunities to learn more about vocabulary for daily communication. The appropriate use of a teaching method can overcome EFL learners' problem in learning foreign language. For instance, the use of ALM can help learner to improve their vocabulary which is very important when they communicate in foreign language. According to Susanto (2021), students find

some difficulties in learning vocabulary as they difficult in choosing an appropriate meaning and pronouncing the words. Therefore, the ALM offers the best way for EFL learners to learn the vocabulary in a natural way to communicate in target language.

### **Research Method**

The present study utilizes a qualitative descriptive research design to delineate the use of the ALM in its relation to the enhancement of EFL learners' mastery of speaking skills. The data required were obtained from library research and further analyzed qualitatively. Therefore, the present article reviews the brief of the ALM, its purposes, and the development of the ALM. Moreover, it scrutinizes the strategies of using the ALM, benefits of using and the implication of using the ALM in English language teaching. Finally, some important points on the use of ALM are highlighted in the conclusion part. Furthermore, a literature review was used to elucidate the findings from the previous studies. Since there are several teaching methods that can be used to teach the English language, then the present study focuses on reviewing the use of the ALM to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills. The reason why ALM is because this particular teaching method is in line with the language learning objective is to learn how to use the language to communicate (Freeman, 2000). In addition, this particular teaching method has been widely used to train learners to communicate in a target language.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### *A Brief of Audio Lingual Method*

The ALM is a technique for teaching foreign languages that focuses on the comprehension of speaking and listening. This procedure relies on the behaviorist theory. It is an empirically based theory of behavioral change. This is also a way of teaching foreign languages that understands that certain characteristics or characteristics of living things can be educated through reinforcement systems that prioritize listening and speaking instruction above reading and writing instruction. This style of teaching and learning is mostly composed of talk, exercises (drills), and pattern practice (pattern practice). Thus, this strategy is based on repetition and memorizing, and it becomes the primary task in this method.

There are several principles underlying the ALM, including the following: language is spoken and not written; each language is unique; learning language is essentially a mechanistic habit-building process; and skills in learning language will be more effective if the target language aspect are learned through the four language skills.

In applying the audio approach of the lingual method, a teacher might employ a variety of techniques, one of which is memorizing dialogue; with this technique, learners memorize brief dialogues or discussions between two persons. Finally, there is the build-up drill (Lusiani, 2011). It is utilized when learners struggle to memorize lengthy dialogues. Another strategy is a single-slot substitution, which involves the teacher reading a single line of dialogue and the student responding with a few words or groups of words. Students are tasked with simulating a previous dialog by successfully typing a single or set of words.

This is the same practice as one drill substitute slot, but larger. Not just one exchange, but an entire exchange. For instance, a teacher may offer learners a sentence and instruct them to rewrite it in various forms, including interrogative, negative, positive, passive, and imperative forms. The ALM evolved from highly effective foreign language teaching methodologies created at the University of Michigan during World War II to

swiftly acquire advantageous speech abilities in a variety of foreign languages for military force. The ALM is more consistent with learning and speaking instructing rehearsals. The ALM resembles the immediate strategy that is additionally an oral-based methodology.

#### *The Purposes of Audio-Lingual Method*

The principle of a method is built on goals that were upheld at the beginning of time. According to Harmer (2003), the Audio-Lingual Method has four main objectives that include learning English as a foreign language as; a) Learners can understand a foreign language when speaking at a normal pace and care about the ordinary things that happen around their speech. The learning process is not instant, as well as English where commitment and consistency are needed in the learning process; b) Language learners can write to good standards. Writing English well requires mastering various components of the language such as sentence arrangement and sentence type. Learners must also understand properly the use of punctuation, capitalization, and the preparation of ideas to compose a sentence that is good and easy to understand.

#### *Strategies Used in the Audio Lingual Method*

Speaking is the ability that distinguishes and elevates human beings above other living animals. Speaking is a very sophisticated cognitive and linguistic ability. A youngster acquires the ability to communicate in their native language through interaction with those around him or her. Every normal adult is capable to speak in his or her native language without effort, as it is a natural ability. However, speaking a foreign language is not natural, and the entire process involves conscious effort.

According to Harmer (2003), communication happens when speakers and listeners have communicative goals. It indicates that the objective of speaking is to convey what the speaker wants to express to the listener and to obtain information from the speaker and grasp what is said at a regular pace, as well as the capacity to answer questions that demand a quick or long answer. According to Freeman (2000), several strategies can be utilized in the Audio Lingual Method:

- a. Backward build-up (expansion) drill where the learners recite a portion of the sentence, generally the line's last syllable. They then extend what they are saying part by part until they can repeat the complete phrase, following the teacher's lead.
- b. Repetition drill  
Learners are instructed to precisely and swiftly duplicate the teacher's model. This practice is frequently used to teach dialog lines.
- c. Chain drill  
As learners ask and respond questions, a chain of conversation forms around the room, gaining the term "chain drill." The instructor starts the chain by welcoming or asking a specific student. The reaction of that learner then shifts to the one next to him. The chain continues with the first student greeting the second and asking a question of the second student.
- d. Single-slot substitution drill  
The teacher frequently says a sentence from the conversation. The teacher next speaks a word or phrase that is known as the cue. The learners repeat the phrase that the teacher has given them, inserting the cue where it belongs in the line. The ultimate goal of this drill is for learners to practice locating and filling the gaps in a phrase.

- e. Multi-slot substitution drill  
The single-slot replacement drill is quite similar to these drills in appearance and function. The difference is that the teacher presents cue phrases one at a time that corresponds to the various instances in the dialog line; the learners are responsible for understanding which part of speech each cue belongs to, or at the very least where it fits into the sentence and making any necessary alterations, such as subject-verb agreement. Then they recite the statement that corresponds to the cue phrase on the relevant line of the script.
- f. Transformation drill  
The teachers give the student a certain sentence pattern, such as an affirmative phrase, based on their performance. Learners are tasked with converting this statement into a negative sentence of their own. As an alternative, students may be instructed to convert a statement into a question, an active sentence to a passive sentence, and directed speeches into reports.
- g. Question and answer drill  
This exercise allows students to practice answering questions. The learners should respond to the teacher's question as fast as possible. The teacher might potentially cue the learners to pose the question themselves. This allows learners to become more familiar with the question pattern.
- h. Use of minimal pairs  
The teachers use pairs of words that differ only in one sound, such as ship and sheep. The students are initially asked to distinguish between the two terms. After doing a contrastive analysis, or a comparison of the student's native language and the language they are studying, the instructor chooses the sounds to focus on.
- i. Complete dialogue  
Selected words from a discourse that learners have memorized are removed. The dialogue is completed by learners filling in the gaps with the missing words.
- j. Grammar game  
In the ALM, the activities are intended to allow learners to practice a grammatical topic in a realistic setting. They could express themselves, however, it is limited in this simulation.

#### *The benefit of Using Audio Lingual Method*

Speaking abilities help both speakers and listeners, as the ability to integrate words into coherent sentences expresses one's thoughts, opinions, and feelings. In the present day, certain schools, for instance, in Indonesia, English as a mandatory subject that all teachers and students must understand. Language as a means of communication plays a critical role in our daily lives. In school, students learn how to speak English more easily since teachers and friends can act as facilitators and pairings for English practice.

Furthermore, in the ALM to manifest the skills not only arise from the teacher, but also the students. Maaliah *et al.*, (2016) confirmed that by using the ALM, the student's motivation in learning a language is increasing, while (Mart, 2018) also concluded the use of ALM made it easy for learners to achieve their language achievements. Hasanah and Dahniar, (2017) state that the ALM has some advantages, such as the students more freely to do the exercises, students are ready to use their skills, students have good pronunciation, learners can be able to communicate orally well because of intensive

listening and speaking exercises, the class is conducted in an enjoyment situation. Iskandarwasid and Sunendar, (2009) state the strategies that can be used in learning the speaking skills are by choosing the right method so that they can establish their language usage habits.

#### *The Implications of ALM in the Classroom Teaching*

Several implications of the ALM in the classroom teaching are as follows: a) The EFL learners can communicate effectively in the target language when teachers applied an appropriate teaching method to suit the nature of learners; b) The EFL teachers possess pedagogical knowledge and therefore they would implement varieties of teaching method for their class; c) The combination of certain teaching method would make it possible for them to perform better teaching and learning process, which in turn to make students achieve their learning objectives; d) The EFL teachers can compare and contrast among the teaching methods in terms of their practicality; e) The EFL learners are accustomed to communicating in the target language during the teaching and learning process.

#### **Conclusion**

Several necessary points are highlighted concerning the use of the ALM in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills, they are; 1) The ALM is one of the suitable methods of teaching that may be applied to teach speaking skills because it ignites learners' willingness to communicate in the target language; 2) The use of a teaching method depends on several factors, such as learners' age, level of the students' mastery on English, and the material being taught; 3) Teachers need to be flexible in their instructional design, selecting and adapting the method when needed to help students become more confident in their English communication skills; 4) Teaching English is not an easy task, therefore teachers must possess pedagogical knowledge and acknowledge the varieties of language teaching methods; 5) The use of a suitable teaching method is considered necessary for EFL teachers when teaching English language skills, and the appropriate use of a teaching method is one of the ways to enhance learners' speaking skills; 6) The ALM has a positive impact on EFL learners to enhance their speaking skills. We recommend that the next researchers may conduct an empirical study on the implementation of ALM in the teaching listening. In addition, they can also examine the effectiveness of ALM to improve EFL learners' achievement in listening and speaking skills.

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