

USING ISLAMIC TOPICS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING FLUENCY

Miss Nabeelah Yohtae¹
Muhammad Rafi'i²

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara
nabilahjasyari@gmail.com
muhammadrafi@umsu.ac.id

Abstract: English speaking fluency remains a persistent challenge for learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly in educational settings where English is not used for daily communication. One pedagogical approach that has gained increasing attention is the integration of culturally and religiously familiar content into language instruction. This study investigates the effectiveness of using Islamic topics as instructional content to improve English speaking fluency among EFL learners. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study involved 60 undergraduate students enrolled in an Islamic studies program. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-speaking fluency tests, while qualitative data were obtained from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal a significant improvement in learners' speaking fluency, confidence, and participation after the integration of Islamic-themed materials. The qualitative results further indicate that familiarity with Islamic content reduced learners' anxiety and increased their motivation to speak English. The study concludes that integrating Islamic topics into English speaking instruction provides a meaningful, culturally responsive, and pedagogically effective approach to enhancing speaking fluency in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Islamic topics, English speaking fluency, EFL learners, culturally responsive pedagogy, communicative competence

Introduction

English is now the main language used for worldwide communication in academic, professional, and sociocultural contexts in the age of globalization. Speaking English fluently is now a necessary academic and professional skill for students studying English as a foreign language (EFL). Speaking fluently helps students communicate their thoughts, negotiate meaning, and contribute successfully to international conversation. However, many EFL learners still struggle greatly to achieve oral fluency, especially in formal educational contexts, despite extended exposure to English instruction.

The lack of meaningful and genuine communication opportunities is one of the most enduring problems in EFL speaking instruction. Speaking exercises in many classes are limited to planned conversations, regulated drills, or brief answers that put grammatical correctness ahead of effective communication. Because of this, students frequently don't get enough practice producing speech on their own, which is crucial for developing fluency. Additionally, learners often face psychological obstacles like nervousness, low self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes, all of which severely limit their readiness to communicate.

These challenges are particularly evident in Islamic educational institutions, where English is taught as a foreign language alongside religious and disciplinary studies. Students in such contexts often perceive English as disconnected from their academic identity and everyday

experiences. This perceived disconnect may reduce learners' motivation and engagement, leading to passive participation in speaking activities. Consequently, there is a growing need for instructional approaches that bridge the gap between English language learning and learners' sociocultural and religious realities.

The significance of contextualized and meaningful learning has been highlighted by recent advancements in language instruction. According to communicative and content-based approaches, language learning is more successful when students interact with subjects that are familiar, pertinent, and cognitively accessible. When students are asked to talk about issues they are unfamiliar with or that are culturally distant, they may put in too much cognitive effort to comprehend the material, which reduces the amount of resources available for language output. On the other hand, familiar topic enables students to concentrate more directly on structuring concepts, choosing suitable vocabulary, and speaking clearly.

Literature Review

Fluency in English in EFL Situations

The capacity to speak clearly, concisely, and with little hesitation is referred to as speaking fluency. Nation (2014) asserts that substantial opportunities for meaningful oral practice are necessary for the development of fluency. Speaking exercises are still scarce, teacher-centered, and more concerned with accuracy than communication in many EFL courses.

Affective elements, like fear and self-confidence, have been found to be significant barriers to speaking fluently in earlier research. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), students frequently have a fear of making mistakes, which prevents them from speaking freely. Therefore, gaining oral proficiency requires establishing a familiar and encouraging learning environment.

Language Learning and Content-Based Instruction

Learners can acquire language through meaningful engagement with ideas thanks to knowledge-Based Instruction (CBI), which blends language learning with subject matter knowledge. CBI improves motivation, understanding, and communication skills, according to research (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Learners can concentrate more on language use when they are familiar with the material since there is less cognitive strain.

Content-Based Education and Speaking Training

Via the integration of language learning with subject matter information, information-Based Instruction (CBI) enables students to acquire language via meaningful engagement with concepts. CBI places more emphasis on using language as a tool for communication and knowledge development than it does on teaching language in isolation. CBI has been shown to improve motivation, comprehension, and communicative competence, especially in speaking and listening (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Students are encouraged to debate, clarify, and negotiate meaning in relation to subject matter in CBI classrooms. Extended speech output, interaction, and meaning negotiation are all naturally encouraged by these activities, which are essential for the development of fluency. Additionally, learners face less cognitive burden when they are familiar with the material, which promotes more automatic language use.

Pedagogy in Language Education That Is Culturally Responsive

The integration of students' cultural origins, values, and experiences into teaching methods is a key component of culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2018) contends that by making learning more relevant and meaningful, culturally responsive teaching fosters academic

engagement and supports students' identities. This method encourages teachers to base language instruction on themes that are culturally familiar.

Method

Design of Research

In order to gain a thorough grasp of the impacts of incorporating Islamic subjects into English speaking education, this study used a mixed-methods research approach. The researcher was able to assess increases in speaking fluency while simultaneously investigating students' attitudes, views, and classroom experiences by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered during the same teaching period, evaluated separately, and then combined at the interpretation stage using a convergent mixed-methods framework. This design was chosen in order to use methodological triangulation to increase the validity of the results.

Context of Research

The study was carried out in an Indonesian Islamic higher education institution where students enrolled in Islamic studies programs are required to take English. In this context, English serves as a foreign language and is mostly utilized in educational settings. The institutional curriculum places a strong emphasis on both academic and religious knowledge, which makes it a good place to look at how Islamic subjects might be incorporated into English-speaking training.

Participants

Sixty undergraduate students in their second year of study at an Islamic studies faculty made up the participants. The students had comparatively similar educational backgrounds and ranged in age from 18 to 22. Based on institutional placement examinations, all participants were categorized as having intermediate-level English competence after completing fundamental English courses. To make sure the participants fulfilled the requirements pertinent to the study's goals—specifically, being familiar with Islamic subject and having enough English competence to take part in speaking exercises—purposive sampling was used.

Treatment for Instruction

Two 90-minute speaking-focused sessions were held every week for the duration of the ten-week educational intervention. Islamic subjects were methodically incorporated into the speaking curriculum and matched with the goals of communicative learning. Islamic moral principles, biographies of notable Islamic individuals, Islamic historical occurrences, everyday religious rituals, and current problems impacting Muslim communities around the world were among the subjects covered.

Pre-speaking, while-speaking, and post-speaking phases comprised the systematic sequence that each educational unit adhered to. Students were exposed to the subject during the pre-speaking phase through brainstorming exercises, brief readings, or visual cues intended to draw on past knowledge. During the while-speaking stage, students participated in communicative activities such role-plays, problem-solving exercises, small-group discussions, and brief oral presentations that were all done in English. Reflective conversations and feedback sessions centered on communicative effectiveness, fluency, and clarity rather than just grammatical accuracy during the post-speaking phase.

Over a 10-week period, Islamic topics were integrated into speaking lessons. Topics included Islamic ethics, historical figures in Islam, contemporary Muslim issues, and daily

religious practices. Speaking activities consisted of group discussions, role-plays, short presentations, and debates conducted entirely in English

Data Collection Instruments

1. **Speaking Fluency Test:** Administered before and after the intervention, assessed using fluency indicators such as speech rate, pauses, and coherence.
2. **Observation Checklist:** Used to document students' participation and interaction patterns.
3. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted with 15 selected participants to gain insights into their experiences.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to identify significant differences between pre- and post-test scores. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns related to motivation, confidence, and engagement.

Quantitative Results

The results revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking fluency after the intervention ($p < 0.05$). Students demonstrated faster speech rates, fewer unnatural pauses, and improved coherence. These findings suggest that using Islamic topics positively influenced learners' oral fluency.

Qualitative Findings

Classroom observations indicated increased student participation and reduced reluctance to speak. Interview data revealed three major themes:

Familiarity and Confidence: Students reported feeling more confident because they already understood the topics.

Reduced Anxiety: Discussing Islamic themes minimized fear of making content-related mistakes.

Increased Motivation: Learners expressed greater enthusiasm for speaking English when discussing meaningful and relevant issues.

Qualitative Findings

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Discussion

The findings support the view that culturally familiar content enhances communicative competence. By integrating Islamic topics, learners were able to allocate more cognitive resources to language production rather than content comprehension. This aligns with theories of affective filter reduction and communicative language teaching

The results of this study show that including Islamic subjects into English-speaking lessons greatly enhances students' speaking fluency. Both qualitative indicators, such as improved confidence, active participation, and prolonged engagement in speaking tasks, and quantitative measures of fluency, such as increased speech rate and decreased hesitation, show this improvement. The educational value of culturally and religiously recognizable content in EFL speaking classrooms is empirically supported by these findings.

Learners' familiarity with the course material is a major factor in the observed improvement in speaking fluency. Students can use well-established conceptual knowledge when discussing Islamic subjects, which enables them to devote more cognitive resources to language production. This result is consistent with cognitive load theory, which postulates that learners can concentrate more successfully on language formulation when content-related processing demands are reduced. Since

Conclusion

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The inclusion of Islamic subjects improved the emotive aspects of language acquisition in addition to its cognitive advantages. When discussing subjects intimately associated with their religious and cultural identities, learners reported feeling less nervous and more confident. This decrease in fear encouraged students to take chances in oral communication by creating a more encouraging and psychologically secure learning environment. Reducing affective barriers is essential for promoting meaningful language use as speaking fluency grows via repeated practice and impromptu conversation.

Additionally, the incorporation of Islamic subjects improved students' enthusiasm and communication readiness. Learners showed more ownership of the learning process when English was given as a means for expressing familiar values, ideas, and perspectives rather than just as an academic subject. In addition to encouraging students to participate more actively in conversations, role-plays, and presentations, this relevance promoted deeper involvement in speaking assignments. This greater involvement gave students more chances to practice speaking aloud for longer periods of time, which is crucial for improving fluency

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