

SPEAKING TASKS BASED ON CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SOCIAL ISSUES

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Abstract: *The development of speaking competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts requires instructional approaches that are not only linguistically sound but also socially and culturally relevant. This article explores the design and implementation of speaking tasks based on contemporary Islamic social issues as a pedagogical strategy to enhance learners' oral communication skills. By integrating real-world Islamic social discourses such as social justice, digital ethics, gender relations, environmental responsibility, and moderation in religion speaking tasks become more meaningful, critical, and engaging for learners. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study analyzes how issue-based speaking tasks contribute to students' fluency, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. The findings indicate that contextualized speaking tasks grounded in Islamic social realities foster higher student participation, improved confidence, and deeper reflective responses. The study concludes that incorporating contemporary Islamic social issues into speaking instruction can effectively bridge language learning with values education in professional and academic settings.*

Keywords: *Speaking tasks, Islamic social issues, EFL pedagogy, critical speaking, contextual learning.*

Introduction

Speaking ability is commonly acknowledged as a key element of communicative competence in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in academic and professional settings where oral communication is essential. One of the main indicators of language competency is frequently thought to be the capacity to express ideas effectively, reply critically, and participate in meaningful interaction. Speaking is still one of the most difficult abilities for EFL students, despite its significance, particularly in situations where English is not frequently used outside of the classroom. Anxiety, a restricted vocabulary, and trouble structuring ideas are common among learners, which leads to passive involvement and little spoken output.

The type of speaking exercises and materials utilized in the classroom is one of the main reasons of these difficulties. Many speaking exercises use general, decontextualized subjects that don't take into account the social circumstances, cultural backgrounds, or value systems of the students. Because of this, speaking assignments are frequently seen by students as contrived and unrelated to their real-world experiences. In Islamic educational environments, where language teaching is frequently kept apart from socio-religious discourse, this phenomenon is especially noticeable. Students' ability to practice English while expressing viewpoints based on their own ethical and cultural frameworks is hampered by this division.

Modern Islamic social issues have gained prominence in public discourse in recent years, both domestically and internationally. Muslim communities and international academic forums

frequently address topics including social justice, youth identity, gender relations, environmental responsibility, ethical use of digital media, and religious moderation. These topics are excellent for teaching speaking since they are not only socially important but also have a lot of critical and argumentative substance. By incorporating these themes into EFL speaking exercises, students can communicate intentionally and improve their capacity to articulate difficult concepts in English.

This method strongly adheres to the pedagogical tenets of task-based language teaching and communicative language teaching, which place a strong emphasis on learner-centered education, authenticity, and interaction. Speaking exercises that are grounded in real-world problems help students negotiate meaning, defend their beliefs, and address opposing ideas. These assignments can boost motivation and lessen speaking anxiety when they are based in Islamic social contexts that students are familiar with. This is because students feel more comfortable talking about subjects they are familiar with and find meaningful.

Additionally, integrating speaking training with current Islamic social issues promotes the combination of values education and language acquisition. Language classrooms are places where identities, worldviews, and beliefs are articulated and contested; they are not neutral environments. Teachers give pupils a chance to acquire intercultural competency and express Islamic viewpoints in a universal language by letting them talk about Islamic social concerns in English. This is especially crucial for training students for professional communication, international discourse, and academic presentations, all of which require cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness.

Empirical study on the utilization of current Islamic social concerns as fodder for EFL speaking challenges is still scarce, despite the approach's potential advantages. Few research have looked at the junction of task-based speaking training with the inclusion of religious beliefs in education. In order to close this gap, this study examines the creation and application of speaking exercises centered on current Islamic social issues and evaluates their impact on students' critical involvement and speaking abilities.

The goal of this essay is to give a thorough explanation of how issue-based speaking exercises based on Islamic social realities can improve the fluency, self-assurance, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness of EFL students. It is anticipated that this would advance EFL teaching both conceptually and practically, especially in Islamic and multicultural educational settings.

Literature Review

Speaking Skills and Communicative Competence in EFL

Speaking ability has long been highlighted in EFL instruction as a key component of communicative competence. Oral communication reflects sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic ability in addition to grammatical precision. Speaking, according to academics, is a useful skill as well as a way for students to express themselves, negotiate meaning, and create knowledge. However, because of the demands of real-time processing, the fear of making mistakes, and the lack of possibilities for genuine contact, speaking is frequently seen by learners as the most challenging language skill.

Speaking education is still teacher-centered and form-focused in many EFL environments, emphasizing accuracy over meaningful communication. These methods frequently produce students who have passive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but lack fluency and confidence while speaking. The necessity of speaking education that prioritizes intentional communication, learner involvement, and contextual relevance has been repeatedly

shown by research. Due to this necessity, task-based language instruction and communicative language instruction are becoming the most popular frameworks for speaking pedagogy.

Task-Based Language Teaching and Speaking Tasks

Instead of explicitly studying linguistic forms, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) sees language learning as a process that happens via the completion of meaningful activities. Speaking exercises in this framework are made to mimic real-world communication scenarios and demand that students utilize language as a tool to accomplish particular goals. Discussions, debates, role-plays, problem-solving exercises, and presentations are examples of common speaking assignments.

Task-based speaking teaching improves students' fluency, interactional competence, and communication willingness, according to earlier research. Activities promote meaning negotiation, impromptu language production, and group learning. Crucially, the authenticity and relevancy of the task material have a direct impact on how effective speaking assignments are. Learners are more likely to engage in active participation and generate lengthy oral discourse when tasks align with their interests and social reality.

Issue-Based Learning and Critical Pedagogy

An educational strategy known as "issue-based learning" bases learning activities on social, cultural, and ethical issues. This method, which has its roots in critical pedagogy, views students as active participants who examine real-world issues, challenge prevailing narratives, and develop well-informed viewpoints. It has been demonstrated that issue-based learning improves critical thinking, argumentation abilities, and student autonomy in language instruction.

By including social topics into speaking exercises, students can progress from superficial dialogue to more in-depth, introspective communication. Students are encouraged to reply to opposing ideas, defend their positions, and voice their opinions. Both professional and academic speaking require these kinds of exercises. Additionally, issue-based speaking exercises help students build their discourse skills because they require them to employ proper language functions like agreeing, disagreeing, persuading, and clarifying in addition to organizing thoughts logically.

Contemporary Islamic Social Issues as Educational Content

Islamic ethical, moral, and social perspectives on contemporary societal concerns are referred to as contemporary Islamic social issues. Social justice, economic inequity, ethical technology use, environmental stewardship (khalifah), gender relations, youth identity, and religious moderation are only a few of these concerns. These subjects are frequently covered in Islamic research as part of Islam's interaction with contemporary culture and globalization.

Islamic social issues are thought to encourage moral growth and values-based learning in educational settings. According to a number of studies, including ethical and religious viewpoints into the classroom improves students' feeling of importance and identity. However, there hasn't been much research done on using Islamic social themes as material for EFL training, especially speaking. Speaking pedagogy is underrepresented in existing research, which frequently concentrates on reading materials or character education.

Integrating Islamic Social Issues into EFL Speaking Instruction

Task-based learning, issue-based pedagogy, and values education come together when Islamic societal issues are incorporated into EFL speaking assignments. Students are given

relevant material that promotes prolonged oral production by talking about well-known but difficult societal concerns. Learners can concentrate more on language use rather than concept formation when they are familiar with the subject, which lessens cognitive burden.

Additionally, intercultural communicative ability is supported by this integration. In order to prepare for involvement in global academic and professional debate, learners practice expressing Islamic viewpoints in English, a universal language. This is in line with the more general objective of EFL education, which is the capacity to convey concepts, identities, and values across cultural boundaries rather than just language proficiency.

Despite these theoretical benefits, there are very few empirical research that methodically look at how speaking assignments based on current Islamic social concerns affect students' speaking engagement and performance. This gap emphasizes the need for more studies that record instructional strategies and student reactions. Thus, by investigating the pedagogical potential of Islamic issue-based speaking tasks within an EFL framework, the current study aims to add to the body of literature.

Method

A qualitative descriptive research design was used in this investigation. In a postsecondary EFL speaking course, data were gathered through reflective student replies, speaking assignment recording, and classroom observations. The speaking assignments were created with current Islamic social issues in mind, such as environmental responsibility, social justice and zakat, digital ethics in Islam, and religious moderation.

Students with moderate English skills participated. Group conversations, panel simulations, brief speeches, and organized debates were all part of the speaking exercises. Thematic analysis of the data was used to find trends in speaking performance, critical reactions, and student involvement.

Result and Discussion

The study's conclusions, which were derived from classroom observations, speaking task documentation, and students' thoughtful answers, are presented and discussed in this part. To show how speaking assignments based on current Islamic social concerns affect students' speaking performance, engagement, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness, the conversation is structured thematically. The findings are analyzed in light of current ideas of communicative competency, issue-based learning, and task-based language instruction.

Increased Student Participation and Engagement

The substantial rise in student participation during speaking exercises that included current Islamic social issues is one of the study's most notable conclusions. Issue-based assignments prompted more students to actively participate in conversations than traditional speaking themes, such daily routines or general hobbies. When the issues were directly tied to their social and religious realities, learners seemed more inclined to take turns, reply to peers, and voice their perspectives.

The learners' familiarity with the topics covered is responsible for this higher level of engagement. Religious lectures, online discourse, and students' everyday lives often touch on issues like social justice, social media ethics, and environmental responsibility. Because of this, kids have prior information that made it easier for them to come up with ideas. This result corroborates other research indicating that interesting and pertinent information is essential for maintaining learner engagement and motivation in speaking assignments.

Improvement in Speaking Fluency and Confidence

The results also show that learners' confidence and speaking fluency have significantly improved. Students produced longer utterances and showed more coherence in their speech throughout issue-based speaking assignments. Hesitancy-related pauses decreased, and students relied less on expressions they had committed to memory. Grammar mistakes persisted, but communication was still clear and efficient.

Students' thoughtful answers showed that talking about well-known Islamic societal concerns lessened their nervousness and fear of making mistakes. Because they believed in the ideals being discussed and understood the material, learners reported feeling more comfortable voicing their thoughts. This is consistent with the concepts of communicative language education, which highlight that learners who prioritize meaning over form are better able to achieve fluency. The results also imply that oral language production might be positively impacted by content knowledge confidence.

Development of Critical Thinking and Argumentative Skills

The growth of students' critical thinking and persuasive speaking abilities is another significant discovery. In addition to expressing their thoughts, the speaking assignments asked students to give explanations, examples, and moral arguments based on Islamic viewpoints. Through debate and group discussion exercises, students showed that they could evaluate opposing points of view, address rebuttals, and use logic to bolster assertions.

This finding emphasizes how issue-based speaking exercises foster higher-order thinking abilities. Learners progressed from descriptive language use to analytical and evaluative conversation by interacting with complicated social concerns. Academic speaking, including seminars, presentations, and panel discussions, requires these abilities. The results align with critical pedagogy, which sees language schools as forums for discussion, introspection, and social consciousness.

Enhancement of Intercultural and Ethical Awareness

The incorporation of current Islamic societal issues also aided in the growth of students' ethical and intercultural consciousness. Students developed a greater awareness of the ways in which Islamic principles could be expressed in English for a variety of audiences. In a number of speaking exercises, students specifically addressed the relevance of Islamic values like justice, moderation, and environmental stewardship to contemporary issues.

The development of intercultural communicative ability, which enables students to mediate between regional values and international communication practices, is reflected in this awareness. In academic and professional settings that need cross-cultural communication, the capacity to articulate Islamic viewpoints in English is very crucial. According to the results, issue-based speaking exercises can help students participate more effectively in global conversations without sacrificing their cultural or religious identity.

Classroom Dynamics and Teacher's Role

The results also show how classroom dynamics and the role of the teacher have changed. The classroom environment became more participatory and student-centered during issue-based speaking exercises. Instead than controlling speaking time, the teacher mostly served as a facilitator, directing talks, giving prompts, and providing feedback.

This change is consistent with communicative and task-based teaching methods, which prioritize student autonomy and group learning. Maintaining polite conversation depended

heavily on the teacher's ability to choose delicate but pertinent Islamic societal problems and present them in an inclusive way. This result emphasizes how crucial thoughtful task design and pedagogical sensitivity are when working with socio religious subjects.

Discussion of Findings

Overall, the findings show that speaking exercises centered around current Islamic social issues improve students' speaking proficiency and interest. The results corroborate the body of research on task-based language instruction, which highlights the value of relevant tasks in fostering engagement and fluency. By demonstrating that value-driven and culturally grounded content might further improve the efficacy of speaking education, this study also builds on earlier studies.

Learners are given the chance to practice using English as a tool for ethical communication and critical expression by including Islamic social problems into EFL speaking assignments. This method supports students' social and personal growth in addition to language goals. Consequently, the results indicate that a comprehensive paradigm for EFL pedagogy in Islamic and multicultural educational contexts is provided by issue-based speaking instruction based on Islamic social realities.

Conclusion

The design and execution of speaking exercises based on current Islamic social issues have been investigated in this study, along with their potential to improve the speaking proficiency of EFL learners. The results show that incorporating socially and culturally relevant Islamic issues into speaking instruction can greatly improve learners' engagement, fluency, confidence, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness. These findings are based on classroom observations, task documentation, and students' reflective responses.

The findings show that students are more inclined to actively engage in oral communication when speaking assignments are based on well-known Islamic social issues. Students can concentrate more on expressing ideas rather of straining to produce information when they are familiar with the problems, which lowers cognitive and affective obstacles. As a result, students speak English more confidently, produce lengthier utterances, and engage in more spontaneous interactions. This result supports the claim that contextualized and relevant content is essential to effective speaking teaching.

The study also emphasizes how issue based speaking exercises promote critical and introspective thinking. Students are encouraged to study issues, assess viewpoints, and develop arguments backed by ethical reasoning by talking about current Islamic social issues such social justice, digital ethics, and environmental responsibility. These abilities are crucial for professional and academic communication, especially in situations that call for compelling discourse and reasoned discussion.

This study's emphasis on intercultural communicative competence is another significant contribution. According to the results, speaking exercises centered around Islamic social issues give students the chance to express Islamic principles in English, preparing them for involvement in international academic and professional settings. One of the key objectives of modern EFL instruction is to enable students to communicate internationally while preserving their cultural and religious identities.

This study emphasizes the value of careful task design and the teacher's role as a facilitator from a pedagogical standpoint. Teachers must carefully choose delicate and pertinent topics, set clear goals for their assignments, and foster an environment in the classroom that is courteous and

promotes candid discussion. Effective use of issue-based speaking exercises can make the speaking classroom a vibrant setting for discussion, introspection, and values-based education. This study has certain drawbacks despite its contributions. The restricted number of participants and the qualitative character of the study may limit how far the results may be applied. It is advised that future studies use quantitative or mixed-method approaches to quantify speaking improvement more methodically. The use of Islamic issue-based speaking assignments in online and mixed learning environments, as well as the perceptions of students at various educational levels, may be the subject of future research.

In summary, integrating current Islamic social issues into EFL speaking lessons provides a comprehensive and significant method of teaching languages. In addition to improving students' speaking abilities, this approach combines language acquisition with social responsibility and ethical consciousness. Speaking exercises based on Islamic social realities therefore have a great deal of potential to improve EFL instruction, especially in Islamic and multicultural learning environments.

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