



Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills (Mahārāt al-Kalām) through Mosque-Based Collaborative Role-Play Simulation

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya kemampuan maharah kalam mahasiswa, khususnya yang berasal dari latar belakang non-keagamaan, serta tingginya tingkat kecemasan berbahasa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas strategi simulasi bermain peran kolaboratif berbasis konteks masjid dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mahasiswa pada program bahasa Arab intensif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain one-group pretest-posttest yang melibatkan 34 mahasiswa semester dua di sebuah universitas Islam negeri. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes berbicara dan dianalisis menggunakan uji t sampel berpasangan untuk menguji signifikansi peningkatan, serta analisis N-gain untuk mengukur tingkat efektivitas pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan maharah kalam mahasiswa, dengan rata-rata skor meningkat dari 58.41 pada pretest menjadi 78.26 pada posttest ($p < 0,05$). Nilai N-gain sebesar 0.48 menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan berada dalam kategori sedang. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa strategi simulasi bermain peran kolaboratif berbasis konteks masjid efektif dalam menciptakan pembelajaran yang komunikatif, kontekstual, dan kolaboratif, serta mampu meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan partisipasi aktif mahasiswa dalam berbahasa Arab. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan model pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang adaptif terhadap keragaman latar belakang mahasiswa melalui integrasi pendekatan komunikatif, kolaboratif, dan kontekstual.

Kata kunci: Maharah al-Kalam, Simulasi Bermain Peran Kolaboratif, Pembelajaran Kontekstual

Abstract

This study addresses the low level of students' maharah kalam (speaking skills), particularly among those from non-religious backgrounds, as well as the high level of language anxiety in Arabic language learning. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a mosque-context-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy in improving students' speaking skills in an intensive Arabic language program. This research employs a quantitative approach using a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 34 second-semester students at a public Islamic university. Data were collected through speaking tests and analyzed using a paired-sample t-test to determine the significance of improvement, along with N-gain analysis to assess the

level of learning effectiveness. The results show a significant improvement in students' maharah kalam, with the mean score increasing from 58.41 in the pretest to 78.26 in the posttest ($p < 0.05$). The N-gain score of 0.48 indicates a moderate level of improvement. These findings suggest that the mosque-context-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy is effective in fostering communicative, contextual, and collaborative learning, as well as enhancing students' confidence and active participation in using Arabic. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of Arabic language learning models that are adaptive to diverse student backgrounds through the integration of communicative, collaborative, and contextual approaches.

Keywords: Arabic Speaking Skill (Maharah al-Kalam), Collaborative Role-Play Simulation, Contextual Learning

مستخلص البحث

تتبع هذه الدراسة من انخفاض مستوى مهارة الكلام لدى الطلاب، ولا سيما أولئك الذين ينحدرون من خلفيات غير دينية، إضافةً إلى ارتفاع مستوى القلق اللغوي في تعلم اللغة العربية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقويم فاعلية استراتيجية المحاكاة التمثيلية التعاونية القائمة على سياق المسجد في تنمية مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب في برنامج مكثف لتعليم اللغة العربية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة المنهج الكمي باستخدام تصميم المجموعة الواحدة باختبار قبلي-بعدي، وذلك بمشاركة ٣٤ طالبًا من طلاب الفصل الدراسي الثاني في إحدى الجامعات الإسلامية الحكومية. جُمعت البيانات من خلال اختبارات التحدث، ثم حُلِّلت باستخدام اختبار (ت) للعينات المرتبطة لتحديد دلالة التحسن، إلى جانب تحليل الكسب المعدل (N-gain) لقياس مستوى فاعلية التعلم. وأظهرت النتائج وجود تحسن دال إحصائيًا في مهارة الكلام لدى الطلاب، حيث ارتفع متوسط الدرجات من ٥٨,٤١ في الاختبار القبلي إلى ٧٨,٢٦ في الاختبار البعدي ($p < 0.05$). كما بلغت قيمة الكسب المعدل (٠,٤٨)، مما يشير إلى مستوى تحسن متوسط. وتدل هذه النتائج على أن استراتيجية المحاكاة التمثيلية التعاونية القائمة على سياق المسجد فعالة في تعزيز التعلم التواصلي والسياقي والتعاوني، وكذلك في تنمية ثقة الطلاب بأنفسهم وزيادة مشاركتهم الفاعلة في استخدام اللغة العربية. وبناءً على ذلك، تُسهم هذه الدراسة في تطوير نماذج تعليم اللغة العربية بما يتناسب مع تنوع خلفيات الطلاب، من خلال دمج المقاربات التواصلية والتعاونية والسياقية

الكلمات الرئيسية: مهارة الكلام، المحاكاة التعاونية القائمة على لعب الأدوار، التعلم السياقي

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills (maharah kalam) constitute one of the essential competencies in learning Arabic and serve as a key indicator of students' success in engaging in active and contextual oral communication (Alamsyah et al., 2025; Rizki, 2023). In second language acquisition research, speaking ability does not merely reflect mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures, but also involves fluency, confidence, and the ability to use language in authentic contexts aa. Nevertheless, within the context of Arabic language studies at the university level—particularly in intensive programs at public Islamic institutions—the development of maharah kalam continues to face several challenges, especially among students from non-religious backgrounds.

Students enrolled in second-semester intensive Arabic programs generally come from diverse academic backgrounds, many of whom lack prior religious education or previous experience in learning Arabic. This situation results in considerable variation in initial proficiency levels, where some students remain at a basic level, while others possess limited prior exposure. Moreover, the requirement for all students, including those from non-religious majors, to participate in intensive programs often leads to resistance, low intrinsic motivation, and discomfort in using Arabic orally. These findings are supported by evidence suggesting that language anxiety and low self-confidence are major factors hindering speaking ability in foreign language learning (Horwitz, 2001). As a result, despite intensive instruction, students' maharah kalam does not develop optimally.

This issue is further influenced by teaching methods that remain focused on structural mastery and memorization, along with the limited use of strategies that promote authentic communicative interaction. Teacher-centered approaches tend to position students as passive recipients of information rather than active language users (Littlewood, 2007). From the perspective of contemporary language learning theory, speaking skills can only develop effectively through direct practice in relevant and meaningful contexts (Nunan, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for innovative instructional strategies that can bridge the gap between linguistic knowledge and real communicative practice, particularly for students from non-Arabic or non-religious backgrounds.

Several previous studies have shown that communicative approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), are effective in enhancing students' speaking skills through task-based activities and social interaction (Ellis, 2003). In addition, role-play has been widely used in language learning to improve students' speaking ability and confidence, as it provides opportunities to practice in simulated contexts that closely resemble real-life situations (Sa'diyah Halimatus, 2018). Other studies also emphasize that collaborative learning can enhance students' participation and accelerate language development through interaction and negotiation of meaning among learners (Dörnyei, 2001; Wertsch & Sohmer, 1995). However, these studies are generally broad in scope and do not specifically address the characteristics of students in intensive programs, particularly those from non-religious backgrounds with varying levels of learning motivation. In addition, the use of role-play in Arabic

language learning remains partial and has not been fully integrated with collaborative approaches and authentic contexts relevant to students' lives within Islamic university environments. Meanwhile, religious contexts, such as mosque-related activities, are closely connected to students' daily experiences in Islamic higher education institutions and have strong potential as meaningful and relevant learning media that can enhance both emotional and spiritual engagement in the learning process.

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a mosque-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy as an innovative approach in teaching maharah kalam. This strategy integrates the principles of role-play, cooperative learning, and authentic religious context into a unified instructional design that enables students—including those from non-religious backgrounds—to learn Arabic through direct, meaningful experiences. By simulating roles such as imam, muezzin, or mosque administrator, students are encouraged to actively engage in Arabic communication within a more natural and less intimidating environment.

Although previous studies have examined communicative approaches, role-play, and collaborative learning in language education, most have treated these elements separately and have not integrated them within a contextualized instructional framework. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of research that specifically utilizes authentic religious contexts, such as mosque-based activities, as a medium for Arabic language learning, particularly for students from non-religious backgrounds. Therefore, a significant research gap exists in developing instructional models that not only focus on linguistic competence but also address affective barriers, such as language anxiety, through contextual-religious approaches.

Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in the integration of communicative, collaborative, and contextual-religious approaches specifically applied to students in interdisciplinary intensive programs. This study is expected to contribute not only to the development of Arabic language learning models that are responsive to diverse student backgrounds, but also to provide practical solutions for enhancing students' confidence and speaking ability in a sustainable manner. The innovation of this research resides in the combined application of collaborative learning, role-play strategies, and authentic religious contexts to simultaneously address both linguistic and affective challenges in learning maharah kalam among non-religious students.

This absence indicates a clear gap: the lack of an integrated, context-sensitive instructional model that simultaneously addresses linguistic, affective, and cultural barriers to Arabic speaking development. In doing so, the study bridges the divide between communicative language pedagogy and the sociocultural realities of Islamic university students, offering a contextualized alternative to conventional, teacher-centered approaches. This research contributes to a more inclusive understanding of Arabic language acquisition, highlighting how contextual and affective dimensions can be leveraged to support learners who might otherwise remain disengaged. These contributions collectively address the identified gap and offer new directions for future research on contextualized Arabic speaking instruction.

Based on the above considerations, this study seeks to address the central issue concerning the effectiveness of instructional strategies in improving students' speaking skills within diverse intensive Arabic language programs. Specifically, this study is guided by two research questions: (1) how is the mosque-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy implemented in teaching maharah kalam to second-semester students in an intensive Arabic program? and (2) how does students' speaking ability improve following the implementation of this strategy?

In line with these research questions, this study aims to describe the implementation of the mosque-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy in Arabic language instruction and to analyze the improvement of students' maharah kalam after the implementation of the strategy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design in the form of a one-group pretest–posttest design, which aimed to assess the improvement in students' maharah kalam before and after the implementation of the instructional strategy. This design was selected because it enables researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment within a single group without requiring a control group, making it suitable for intensive classroom settings where random assignment is not feasible (HUA & CHANG, 2017; Ishtiaq, 2019).

The participants of this study were second-semester students enrolled in an intensive Arabic language program at a public Islamic university. The students came from diverse academic backgrounds (non-religious disciplines), with a total of 34 students in one class. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which participants were selected based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives, namely students participating in an intensive Arabic program with varied levels of initial language proficiency (Etikan, 2016).

The study was conducted in several stages. First, the researchers designed instructional materials based on a mosque-context-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy, including role scenarios, vocabulary, and assessment rubrics for maharah kalam. Second, students completed a pretest to evaluate their initial speaking ability through tasks related to daily activities in a mosque context. Third, the intervention was implemented over three to four sessions using the simulation strategy, in which students assumed roles such as imam, muezzin, and other mosque-related positions. Finally, students completed a posttest to measure their improvement after the intervention.

The instruments used in this study included: 1) A speaking test to assess students' maharah kalam before and after the intervention, based on indicators such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, confidence, and courage; 2) An assessment rubric developed based on criteria for speaking ability in foreign language learning, using a structured scale to ensure objectivity in evaluation; 3) An observation sheet to monitor students' participation and engagement during the learning process.

The speaking test instrument was validated by two experts in Arabic language education. In addition, the reliability of the assessment was tested using

inter-rater reliability by involving two independent raters. The results showed a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of scoring consistency.

Quantitative data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the mean, maximum score, minimum score, and standard deviation. Meanwhile, a paired-sample t-test was employed to examine the significance of improvement in students' maharah kalam, following a normality test of the data. This test aimed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (Massey et al., 2013). In addition, learning improvement was also analyzed using the N-gain score to assess the level of effectiveness of the intervention in greater detail (Hake, 1999).

RESULTS

A. The Effectiveness of Strategy Implementation from a Theoretical Perspective

Based on the study conducted with 34 second-semester students enrolled in an intensive Arabic language program, data and analyses were obtained regarding students' maharah kalam before (pretest) and after (posttest) the implementation of a mosque-context-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy, as presented below:

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Statistics	Pretest	Posttest
Sample Size	34	34
Minimum Score	45	65
Maximum Score	72	90
Mean	58.41	78.26
Standard Deviation	6.85	6.12

Table 2.

Paired Sample t-test Results

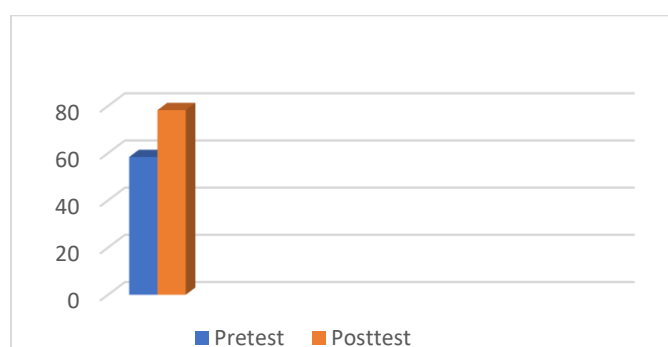
Aspect	Value
t-value	12.47
Significance (p-value)	0.000
Significance Level	0.05
Decision	Significant

Based on Tables 1 and 2, this study demonstrates that the collaborative strategy in the form of a mosque-context-based role-play simulation is effective in significantly enhancing students' engagement in learning maharah kalam. This is reflected in an increase of 19.85 points in the mean score. Since $p < 0.05$, there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, and the score distribution appears to be more stable in the posttest.

B. Improvement of Speaking Skills (Maharah Kalam) in Cognitive and Affective Dimensions

Figure 1.

Comparison of Mean Scores between Pretest and Posttest



Based on the presented figure, a significant improvement in students' speaking ability can be observed following the intervention. The mean score increased from 58.41 to 78.26, which not only reflects the development of linguistic competence but also indicates changes in students' affective dimensions.

Observational data further reveal that students became more confident in speaking after participating in the simulation-based learning activities. This can be attributed to the reduction of speaking anxiety, supported by a more conducive and collaborative learning environment.

Moreover, the use of the mosque as a learning context contributed significantly to student engagement. The familiar and contextually relevant environment within Islamic higher education facilitated students' understanding of communicative situations and encouraged active participation.

C. The Role of Collaboration in Advancing Interaction and Language Proficiency

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the learning process became more dynamic through student interaction. Through collaborative methods, students were encouraged to actively engage in communication, not only by expressing their ideas but also by listening, responding, and refining each other's language use.

DISCUSSION

A. The Effectiveness of Strategy Implementation from a Theoretical Perspective

This finding is closely related to the alignment of the strategy with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes that language is learned more effectively through authentic communicative situations. Students not only practiced dialogues but also created meaningful interactions through simulations of mosque-related activities such as organizing events, engaging in discussions, and delivering information.

Furthermore, this strategy is consistent with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), in which learning is oriented toward the completion of meaningful communicative tasks (Ellis, 2003; Ladousse, 2020). The simulation activities provided to students represent authentic communicative tasks that require natural language use in context. This is evidenced by the significant improvement in speaking scores, indicating that students were able to internalize the language through direct practice. From a social constructivist perspective, the effectiveness of this strategy can also be explained through (Kozulin, 2012) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Interaction among students within groups facilitates scaffolding, where more proficient learners support their peers in understanding and using the language. This process accelerates the development of speaking skills collectively, as reflected in the relatively even improvement across participants.

The findings of this study not only confirm the practical effectiveness of the proposed strategy but also contribute to theoretical development by integrating Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, and social constructivism within a unified instructional framework. This integration is specifically applied to Arabic language teaching that incorporates religious values and contexts. The use of the mosque as a learning environment naturally connects the dimensions of form, meaning, and language use. Therefore, this strategy does not merely represent a new instructional method but also extends contemporary language learning theories into a localized context characterized by strong religious nuances, which has been relatively underexplored in the literature. This constitutes a valuable contribution to the field of contextualized language learning in Arabic at the international level.

In contrast to previous studies that tend to situate communicative approaches within general contexts, this study demonstrates that the use of a religious context closely related to students' lived experiences plays a crucial role as a mediating factor in enhancing language learning outcomes. The mosque context functions not only as a simulation setting but also as a meaningful space that strengthens students' emotional engagement. These findings suggest that the success of language learning is not determined solely by instructional methods, but also by the relevance and meaningfulness of the context in which learning takes place.

B. Improvement of Speaking Skills (Maharah Kalam) in Cognitive and Affective Dimensions

The significant improvement in students' speaking ability reflects not only the development of linguistic competence but also changes in students' affective dimensions. In the context of language learning, affective factors such as confidence, motivation, and anxiety play a crucial role in determining learning success (Dörnyei, 2001).

Observational data further reveal that students became more confident in speaking after participating in the simulation-based learning activities. This can be attributed to the reduction of speaking anxiety, supported by a more conducive and collaborative learning environment. These findings are consistent with (Horwitz, 2001), who argues that language anxiety can be alleviated through interactive and low-pressure learning activities (Irulappan, 2025).

Moreover, the use of the mosque as a learning context contributed significantly to student engagement. The familiar and contextually relevant environment within Islamic higher education facilitated students' understanding of communicative situations and encouraged active participation. This finding aligns with the concept of situated learning, which posits that learning becomes more effective when it occurs within meaningful and contextually relevant settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Furthermore, the observed improvements in both cognitive and affective domains indicate a reciprocal relationship between language competence and learners' psychological states. As students develop greater mastery of linguistic structures and vocabulary (cognitive domain), they tend to experience increased confidence and reduced anxiety (affective domain), which in turn encourages more active participation in speaking activities. Conversely, a positive affective state also facilitates language acquisition, as learners are no longer hindered by fear of making mistakes. This finding is consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that lower affective barriers enable more efficient language input processing. Therefore, the mosque-based simulation strategy not only effectively enhances functional speaking skills but also fosters a supportive learning environment that promotes students' overall psychological development.

C. The Role of Collaboration in Advancing Interaction and Language Proficiency

Drawing on interaction theory, (Long, 1981) argues that interaction plays a central role in language acquisition, as it enables learners to negotiate meaning. In the context of this study, students actively engaged in clarification requests, repetition, and self-repair during the simulation activities, which significantly contributed to the development of their speaking competence. Furthermore, (Swain, 2005), through the Output Hypothesis, posits that language production—particularly speaking—plays a substantial role in language development. The requirement for students to speak during the simulation sessions prompted them to

organize their thoughts in Arabic, leading to improvements in both fluency and accuracy.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that role-play simulations are effective in enhancing speaking skills and building learners' confidence (Ladousse, 2020), that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) promotes authentic language use (Ellis, 2003), and that collaborative learning strengthens interaction and improves academic outcomes (Dörnyei, 2001). More specifically, this study highlights a unique contribution by integrating role-play simulation, collaborative learning, a religious context (mosque-based setting), and diverse student backgrounds (non-religious disciplines) (Arif et al., 2014; Waluyo, 2019). This combination remains underexplored and offers valuable insights for the development of more contextually relevant Arabic language teaching models in intensive programs (Jannah, 2020; Zulianingrum, 2025).

Beyond that, the effectiveness of collaboration observed in this study underscores that interaction is not merely a medium for language practice, but also a process for shaping cognitive and social development. Through collaboration, students participate in the co-construction of knowledge, where language understanding emerges through dialogue and reflection. Such interaction facilitates immediate feedback, both from peers and from the communicative context itself, allowing errors to be quickly identified and corrected. Therefore, collaboration not only increases the quantity of language use but also enhances the quality of language processing, ultimately accelerating students' communicative competence in a more comprehensive and sustainable manner (Seedhouse, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion of this study indicate that a mosque-based collaborative role-play simulation strategy significantly improves the speaking skills (maharah kalam) of second-semester students in an intensive Arabic language program. This approach effectively fosters a more dialogic, dynamic, and contextually relevant learning environment, which in turn encourages students to actively practice Arabic in real-life simulated situations. The improvement in students' oral proficiency is evident from the comparison between pretest and posttest scores, reflecting gains in fluency, accuracy, and confidence. In addition, this strategy has proven effective in reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing students' engagement throughout the learning process.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and social constructivism in Arabic language instruction, particularly for students with diverse academic backgrounds. Practically, educators may adopt this strategy as an alternative approach to enhance maharah kalam instruction, making the learning process more engaging, meaningful, and suitable for intensive classroom settings with interdisciplinary participants. From a policy perspective, intensive Arabic language programs should integrate communicative and contextual approaches while designing curricula grounded in the sociocultural environment of Islamic higher education.

This study has several limitations. First, the absence of a control group restricts the ability to draw strong causal inferences. Second, the relatively small sample size, limited to a single class, reduces the generalizability of the findings. Third, the short duration of the intervention (3–4 sessions) may not fully capture the long-term effects of the strategy on language retention. Furthermore, the study focuses primarily on speaking skills and does not comprehensively examine other language aspects, such as listening or grammar.

Therefore, future research is recommended to employ experimental designs with control groups, involve a larger and more diverse sample, and utilize mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Further studies should also explore the impact of this strategy on other variables, such as motivation, anxiety, and additional language skills, as well as examine its effectiveness across different contextual settings beyond mosque-based environments to test its broader applicability.

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