Learning strategies to improve students' speaking skills at Islamic elementary school

Suprapti[1] , El Santika Manulang[1], Arif Yudi Asmara[1*]

[1] Raden Mas Said State Islamic University of Surakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Arif Yudi Asmara

Abstract

This study aims to describe the learning strategies employed by teachers in developing students' speaking skills at State Islamic Elementary School (MIN) 4 Baki Sukoharjo in the Academic Year 2024/2025. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with the fifth-grade Indonesian language teacher as the subject, and the principal and students as informants. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation, analyzed through an interactive model. The findings reveal that teachers implemented a constructivist approach and group discussion methods to create engaging learning, foster students' confidence, and gradually enhance their communication skills.

Keywords: Student, Learning, Strategies, Speaking skills

Introduction

The importance of learning strategies in developing students' speaking skills lies in their ability to transform students from being initially less confident in conveying ideas into becoming fluent and active speakers. Moreover, during the teaching process, students are expected to provide feedback on classroom activities.

One of the essential aspects that students must master is speaking, as speaking skills support the development of other language abilities. Speaking is not a hereditary skill, even though humans naturally possess the ability to speak. According to [1], speaking is the ability to produce linguistic sounds to express or convey thoughts, ideas, or feelings orally. Suhaimah [2] also emphasizes that speaking proficiency is crucial, as it influences children's social adjustment and personality development.

In the educational context, students are required to be capable and skillful in speaking [3]. They must be able to articulate knowledge verbally during learning activities, ask questions to explore and obtain information about the material presented by the teacher, and actively participate in class. However, all these activities must be facilitated and perfected by teachers. Buchari [4] explains that the fundamental function of teachers in the teaching process is as the director of learning. This means that every teacher is responsible for directing student learning activities toward achieving success [5, 6].

Learning strategies play a vital role in developing speaking skills. With appropriate strategies, teachers can help students construct narratives and engage effectively in storytelling. Krissandi *et al.*, [7] asserts that, in communicative language teaching, teachers serve both as facilitators of language learning and as independent participants within the learning group. Therefore, teachers must create supportive learning environments and employ various innovative teaching methods [8, 9]. For instance, using storytelling techniques, practicing public speaking, and providing constructive feedback can significantly enhance students' speaking skills. With consistent support and guidance, students gain greater confidence to express themselves through spoken language [10]. This not only strengthens their speaking proficiency but also encourages active collaboration and idea-sharing within a supportive classroom atmosphere.

The aim of this study is to observe the teaching process carried out by teachers to develop speaking skills. The researcher explores various strategies employed, such as the use of learning media, group activities, independent practice, and individual guidance. The study also seeks to examine the challenges teachers face during instruction and the responses of students toward these strategies.

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of language learning because they enable students to express ideas, participate actively, and provide feedback during lessons [11]. However, many students still lack confidence in speaking, highlighting the need for effective learning strategies to strengthen these abilities.

Effective learning strategies, such as storytelling, speaking exercises, and constructive feedback, are essential to building a supportive learning environment. Teachers act as facilitators and motivators so that students gain confidence in expressing their ideas verbally [12].

This study is significant in observing and evaluating the teaching strategies applied by teachers, the challenges they encounter, and students' responses. The results are expected to serve as a reference for improving the quality of speaking skill instruction in madrasahs.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Bogdan and Taylor [13], qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observed individuals and behaviors. The purpose of this approach is to systematically and factually examine learning strategies for developing students' speaking skills at MIN 4 Baki Sukoharjo in the 2024/2025 Academic Year. The research was conducted from October 2024 to April 2025.

The research subject was the fifth-grade Indonesian language teacher, while the informants consisted of the school principal and fifth-grade students. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation method, in the form of direct examination of objects, conditions, situations, processes, or behaviors [14], was used to directly observe the process of teaching speaking skills in the fifth grade. Interviews were conducted to obtain information from the fifth-grade Indonesian language teacher, the school principal, and the students, which were further strengthened by supporting documentation.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, including both source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation enhanced the reliability of data by cross-checking information obtained from multiple informants [15]. Technique triangulation was carried out by cross-verifying observation, interview, and documentation methods, which were then combined to draw conclusions [16]. Data analysis involved the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing [15].

Results and Discussion

Planning learning strategies

The planning of learning strategies carried out by teachers prior to the teaching activities at MIN 4 Baki Sukoharjo, particularly the fifth-grade Indonesian language teacher, involved preparing teaching modules and instructional strategies specifically for the Indonesian language subject on speaking skills. These teaching modules and strategies were prepared by the teacher to facilitate the learning process so that the material delivered could be effectively understood by the students.

Learning approach

The approach employed by the teacher was a constructivist approach combined with group discussion methods. This approach positioned students as active learners. In the context of speaking skills, it allowed students to discover and develop their own ways of speaking based on experiences, observations, and social interactions. As stated by [17], constructivist learning begins with a problem (often emerging from the students themselves) and subsequently guides students in solving and finding steps toward resolution. The teacher also applied this approach because it emphasized the connection between lessons and students' real-life experiences. When students spoke about things they encountered in daily life, they found it easier to express themselves using natural and contextual language [18, 19].

Furthermore, group discussions enabled students to practice listening, responding, and articulating opinions orally. Lamajau [20] asserted that the group discussion method is more effective in training general language skills, such as listening and speaking.

Designing engaging learning

One strategy used by teachers to make learning more engaging was incorporating interactive activities such as group discussions, writing simple narratives about daily life, or providing pictures for students to describe [21]. According to [22] teachers can design engaging lessons by using interactive activities like group discussions, short narratives, or visual media. Such methods help prevent boredom and keep students actively involved in learning. The aim of these activities was to ensure that students understood the material while enjoying and participating actively in the learning process.

In practice, the Indonesian language teacher at MIN 4 Baki Sukoharjo began by identifying the lesson topic and getting to know the students in the classroom. The teacher then related the material to students' everyday lives and included storytelling or simple picture-based activities, which provided a more engaging learning experience.

Creating positive learning environment

Teachers demonstrated positive reinforcement to students, for example, by appreciating even small achievements such as correctly answering a question [23, 24]. In addition to providing appreciation, teachers sometimes included games in the lesson. As stated by Suharjono [25], students engaged in enjoyable learning through games tend to gain a better understanding of concepts and are more capable of applying them in relevant contexts.

The Indonesian language teacher at MIN 4 Baki Sukoharjo, particularly the fifth-grade teacher, encouraged students to respect one another, not be afraid to ask questions, and work collaboratively. Teachers also frequently expressed appreciation for their students' efforts.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that, in preparing to develop students' speaking skills at MIN 4 Baki Sukoharjo, teachers designed teaching modules and prepared learning strategies to be applied in relevant subjects and lessons. Teachers adopted a constructivist approach combined with group discussion methods to align the material with students' needs. This approach was also intended to encourage students to become more active and to facilitate their understanding of the subject matter.

Furthermore, teachers designed engaging learning activities to prevent students from feeling bored, particularly in speaking lessons. Teachers also fostered a positive learning environment, enabling students to develop self-confidence and communicative attitudes that will continue to grow throughout subsequent stages of education.

Reference

1. Firawati, Ade Y, Prasuri K. Problematika keterampilan berbicara dalam bahasa Jerman siswa kelas XI SMA Islam Al-Azhar 12 Makassar. JIRK, 2023, 3(1).
2. Suhaimah A. Manfaat model pembelajaran kooperatif tipe jigsaw terhadap keterampilan berbicara siswa. Ibtidaiyah, 2023, 3(1).
3. Zega YS. Effective strategies for enhancing English speaking competence among learners in English education study programs. J Educ Soc Commun Stud. 2025;2(2):88–100.
4. Buchari A. Peran guru dalam pengelolaan pembelajaran. J Ilm Iqra. 2018;12(2):106.
5. Charokar K, Dulloo P. Self-directed learning theory to practice: a footstep towards the path of being a life-long learner. J Adv Med Educ Prof, 2022, 10(3).
6. Sanova A, Bakar A, Afrida A, Kurniawan DA, Aldila FT. Digital literacy on the use of e-module towards students' self-directed learning on learning process and outcomes evaluation courses. J Pendidik Indones. 2022;11(1):154–64.
7. Krissandi DSA, Widharyanto B, Dewi PR. *Indonesian language learning for elementary schools: approach and techniques.* Diman T, editor. Media Maxima, 2018.
8. Baars S, Schellings GLM, Joore JP, Van Wesemael PJV. Physical learning environments' supportiveness to innovative pedagogies: students' and teachers' experiences. Learn Environ Res. 2023;26(2):617–59.
9. Suratullah G, Ahmad SB, Hassan AJ, Manu SMT. Self-regulated learning in the teaching of speaking and listening skills integrated with self-confidence and linguistic awareness: a lesson learned from a university in Turkey. J Lang Lit Stud. 2023;3(2).
10. Agustina L. Encouraging students to do collaborative learning in ESP course to strengthen students' oral communication skill. J Lang Lang Teach. 2022;10(1):76.
11. Adisaturrahimi A, Iswahyudi SR, Akbal FA, Marlia M, Setiadi MA. Teacher's communication strategies for enhancing students' speaking motivation: verbal and non-verbal. Al-Ta Lim J. 2025;32(1):13–22.
12. Rahmani Z, Hijran M, Oktariani D. Peran pendidikan ekonomi syariah terhadap pembangunan karakter bangsa. Al-Muqayyad. 2023;6(1):42–8.
13. Yusra Z, Zulkarnain R, Sofino S. Pengelolaan LKP pada masa pandemi COVID-19. J Lifelong Learn. 2021;4(1):15–22.
14. Sugiyono. *Research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and R&D.* Alfabeta; 2013.
15. Sugiyono. *Educational research methods (quantitative, qualitative, and R&D approaches).* Alfabeta; 2013.
16. MS Z, Yanty S, Rachmadtullah R, Angger W. Keterampilan menulis narasi melalui pendekatan konstruktivisme. 2017;8(2). Available from: https://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/jpd/article/view/5359
17. Ericsson E, Sofkova Hashemi S, Lundin J. Fun and frustrating: students' perspectives on practising speaking English with virtual humans. Cogent Educ. 2023;10(1):2170088.
18. Ericsson E, Johansson S. English speaking practice with conversational AI: lower secondary students' educational experiences over time. Comput Educ Artif Intell. 2023;5:100164.
19. Lamajau E. Peningkatan kemampuan keterampilan berbicara siswa kelas V SDN Sampaka melalui metode diskusi kelompok, 2017, 5(1).
20. Muir T, Wang I, Trimble A, Mainsbridge C, Douglas T. Using interactive online pedagogical approaches to promote student engagement. Educ Sci. 2022;12(6):415.
21. Pantić N, Wubbels T. Teacher competencies as a basis for teacher education: views of Serbian teachers and teacher educators. Teach Teach Educ. 2010;26(3):694-703.
22. Macalisang SD, Bonghawan RG. Teachers' learning reinforcement: effects on students' motivation, self-efficacy and academic performance. Int J Sci Res Manag. 2024;12(2):3218–28.
23. Brandmo C, Gamlem SM. Students' perceptions and outcome of teacher feedback: a systematic review. Front Educ. 2025;10:1572950.
24. Suharjono GES, Harianingsih, Ellianawati, Avrilianda D. Learning at the right level (TaRL) with the help of learning media: impact on students' mathematics learning outcomes. J Educ Action Res. 2025;9(3):382-94.