



The implementation of the communicative approach and project-based learning model to improve maharah al-kalam at MI Nurul Falah

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ABSTRACT

Arabic language learning in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (Islamic elementary schools) plays a crucial role in developing speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*), which serve as a key indicator of successful oral communication. However, preliminary observations at MI Nurul Falah, Bangka Regency, revealed that students' speaking proficiency remains low, characterized by limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and low motivation caused by monotonous conventional teaching methods. To address these issues, this study implemented the communicative approach (*al-madkhal al-ittisholi*) and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model. This research aimed to enhance Arabic-language skills among MI students. The study employed a two-cycle Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, utilizing observation, documentation, and performance assessments of speaking skills. The findings demonstrated significant improvement, with the mean score increasing from a pretest average of 58.27 to 75.36 in posttest in Cycle I, and further from a pretest of 80.51 to 90.62 in Cycle II. Authentic projects, such as developing dialogues (*hiwar*) and producing conversation videos, effectively fostered students' active participation, collaboration, and self-confidence, while teachers functioned as facilitators supporting contextual learning. Thus, implementing PjBL within a communicative approach proved effective in improving Arabic-speaking skills at MI and can be recommended as an innovative strategy for Arabic language instruction in elementary madrasah settings.

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ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran bahasa Arab di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) berperan penting dalam membentuk keterampilan berbicara (*maharah al-kalam*) sebagai indikator utama keberhasilan komunikasi lisan. Namun, observasi awal di MI Nurul Falah Kabupaten Bangka menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan berbicara siswa masih rendah, ditandai dengan keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan pelafalan, serta rendahnya motivasi akibat metode konvensional yang monoton. Untuk mengatasi hal tersebut, penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan komunikatif (*al-madkhal al-ittisholi*) dan model Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Arab siswa MI. Penelitian dilakukan dengan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) dua siklus menggunakan observasi, dokumentasi, serta penilaian kinerja berbicara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dari rata-rata pretest 58,27 menjadi 75,36 pada nilai posttest pada siklus I, dan dari rata-rata pretest 80,51 menjadi 90,62 pada nilai posttest pada siklus II. Proyek nyata seperti penyusunan *hiwar* dan pembuatan video percakapan terbukti meningkatkan partisipasi aktif, kerja sama, serta kepercayaan diri siswa, sementara guru berperan sebagai fasilitator yang mendukung pembelajaran kontekstual. Dengan demikian, penerapan PjBL berbasis pendekatan komunikatif efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Arab di MI dan dapat direkomendasikan sebagai strategi inovatif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab di madrasah dasar.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Arab; keterampilan berbicara; model PjBL; pendekatan komunikatif

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INTRODUCTION

At the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level of education, Arabic language learning plays an essential role in laying the foundation for students' communication skills, especially in speaking (*maharah al-kalam*). Speaking skills are among the most essential competencies in Arabic, especially for students learning Arabic as a foreign language. Speaking ability is a productive and active language skill, and is a key indicator of success in oral communication in the target language (Bahrun et al., 2024). Speaking skills refer to the ability to articulate sounds or words to express thoughts in the form of ideas, opinions, desires, or feelings to a conversation partner (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023).

Since language serves as a means of communication, developing students' language skills to interact effectively with others is the main objective of learning Arabic (Salsabila & Setiyawan, 2024). In the learning approach, it is emphasized that Arabic language teaching for beginners should focus on listening and speaking, with speaking skills second to listening in the hierarchy of language mastery. These skills aim to equip students, especially foreign speakers, with good oral communication skills. Therefore, pronunciation is an essential element in speaking skills, as it is a direct manifestation of the communication process that the interlocutor can understand.

However, in learning Arabic, several problems arise for foreign speakers, including linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, as well as non-linguistic factors such as student motivation and the quality of the learning media used (Wijaya & Trisnawati, 2025; Yuliasari et al., 2025). In this case, many educational institutions face significant obstacles in optimally developing students' speaking skills. One of the main problems is the low motivation and participation of students in the learning process, especially when learning still relies on conventional methods that are monotonous and do not actively involve students (Meldi et al., 2025).

These problems also happened at MI Nurul Falah in Bangka Regency. During field observations, it was found that the students' speaking skills were in the low range. This can be traced back to several fundamental problems, both linguistic and non-linguistic. From a linguistic perspective, students had difficulty pronouncing *Hijaiyah* letters and intonation, and had a limited vocabulary. Meanwhile, from a non-linguistic perspective, low motivation, minimal authentic interaction, and a monotonous, teacher-centered learning approach were the main obstacles to mastering *maharah al-kalam*. Observations also found that most of them were unable to express simple sentences in Arabic spontaneously. This was exacerbated by the use of memorization methods, which gave students little opportunity to practice in context actively. This learning pattern is not in line with modern learning principles that emphasize knowledge construction through direct student involvement in the learning process. The gap between what is idealized in the curriculum and the classroom learning practices is a significant concern in Arabic language education.

Based on the problems identified above, the communicative approach is considered effective for improving speaking skills because it emphasizes mastery of language rather than understanding of language structure (Bakri, 2022; Fitria & Abidin, 2023). In Arabic, the communicative approach is known as *al-madkhal al-ittashali*, a method that focuses on developing active, practical communication (Zaid et al., 2024).

Improving language skills through a communicative, contextual approach provides significant benefits, helping learners use language more effectively in a range of real-life situations. Therefore, 21st-century students need collaborative, Project-Based Learning that integrates real-world contexts to make the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable (Alfalah et al., 2023; Arifrabhani et al., 2023). One learning model that is increasingly relevant and applicable is the constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active, collaborative, and meaningful learning experiences for students (Aziz & Nurachadijat, 2023). The Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model offers a more effective alternative because the learning

process involves students in investigation, problem-solving, collaboration, and the presentation of results, thereby training critical thinking, creativity, and science literacy skills (Khoriyah & Ariefka, 2025). In this PjBL, teachers also act as facilitators, guiding students to learn through direct experience as they complete a project. This model allows students to develop a deeper understanding by working on tasks that reflect real-world situations (Salsabila & Setiyawan, 2024).

PjBL can create an active, collaborative, and meaningful learning environment. Previous studies have shown that PjBL can improve essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Undari et al., 2023). The implementation of PjBL has also shown positive results in improving students' speaking skills at the secondary level, as evidenced by research (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Maulana & Suparmadi, 2024). However, there has been little research specifically examining the application of PjBL in primary education—especially at the MI level—with a focus on Arabic-speaking skills and student involvement in projects that systematically structure contextual activities into oral practice.

In addition, the PjBL model also has the advantage of building critical and creative thinking skills. As a learning model that prioritizes collaborative problem-solving, PjBL can provide students with an engaging and challenging learning experience (Suradika et al., 2023). Through the project, students can practice speaking in more authentic and contextual situations, which in turn can improve their communication skills (Meldi et al., 2025). Innovative communicative approaches through Project-Based Learning (PjBL) are highly relevant for application in learning *maharah kalam* (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023).

Implementing PjBL in language learning can overcome several challenges posed by conventional methods. By involving students in relevant projects, they will be more motivated to learn and participate actively. For example, projects involving the creation of presentation videos, debates, or mock interviews can provide a more authentic and contextual speaking experience (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

This study focuses on fifth-grade MI students because, at this level, Arabic language instruction is more context-based, in line with a communicative approach (Nadiya et al., 2024). In addition, fifth-grade students generally have a sufficient basic understanding of Arabic, so they are ready to develop their speaking skills more actively. These characteristics make them the right sample for applying PjBL, as this learning model requires active student involvement in project-based activities that encourage authentic communication. With this approach, students can be more involved in meaningful language interactions, increase their confidence in speaking, and connect learning with real-life situations. Therefore, the selection of this sample is expected to yield optimal results in improving Arabic-speaking skills through a communicative approach and the PjBL model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Approach

The communicative approach holds that the ability to use language in communication is a goal of language learning. That language is not only a set of rules but also, more broadly, a means of communication. Thus, language is placed according to its function, namely as a tool for communication. The students fully implement the communicative approach, while the educator serves only as a facilitator, coordinating student activities and ensuring that classroom activities run smoothly (Wijaya & Trisnawati, 2025; Zaid et al., 2024).

The communicative approach (*al-madkhol al-ittisholi*) has emerged as the appropriate foundation for Arabic language learning. This approach assumes that language is a tool for communication, so its teaching must focus on principles and strategies that prioritize its communicative function (Hardiyanti et al., 2024). Essentially, the main objective of language teaching in schools is to develop communication

skills, both oral and written, using the language being learned. This concept underlies the communicative approach to language learning (Jamila & Khotimah, 2024). Language as a means of communication serves various functions. It is presented in meaningful contexts, not as isolated sentences, so that it can support a language-teaching and learning orientation grounded in communication tasks and functions (Shofuro & Manshur, 2025).

The communicative approach prioritizes Arabic language proficiency over structure. This approach also builds ways to learn the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing, as well as recognising and appreciating the interdependence of languages. Thus, the communicative approach emphasises language mastery over language structure. This is because the communicative approach argues that the main objective of language teaching is to improve students' language skills, as language is a tool for communication (Zaenudinn, 2024).

The communicative approach has the following characteristics: 1) Meaning is significant; 2) Conversation or dialogue, when used, focuses on communicative functions and is usually not memorised or formally remembered; 3) Contextualisation is an introductory statement or basic idea; 4) Learning a language means learning to communicate; 5) Effective communication is sought; 6) Sequential exercises or repetition may be used but should not be burdensome. 7) Comprehensible speech is essential; 8) Any means that can help learners is welcome, varied and must be adapted according to age, interests, and so on; 9) Efforts to communicate can be encouraged from the outset; 10) The judicious use of the mother tongue is permitted when necessary and appropriate; 11) Translation can be used when it is beneficial to learners; 12) Reading and writing can begin on the first day; 13) Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e. the ability to use linguistic systems effectively and appropriately); 14) Language variation is a central concept in teaching materials and methodology; 15) Educators assist learners in any way possible and motivate them; 16) Learners are expected to interact with others, both directly in pairs and groups and indirectly in written form (Gilda et al., 2023).

The procedures in the communicative approach according are as follows: 1) Presentation of a short dialogue, preceded by motivation (related to dialogue situations based on community experiences that learners may have encountered); 2) Oral practice of each part of the dialogue presented that day; 3) Questions and answers based on the topics of the dialogue and the situation itself; 4) Questions and answers must be related to the personal experiences of the students, but centred around the theme of the dialogue; 5) Oral introduction, interactive activities; 6) Other production activities, moving from guided activities to more free communication activities; 7) Engaging in dialogues found in the class text; 8) Providing examples of written homework assignments, if necessary; 9) Learning evaluation (Zaenudinn, 2024).

Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

The PjBL model plays a crucial role in determining the success of the learning process (Janul & Sunendar, 2024). The PBL model is among the approaches suggested for application in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centred learning (Nuzuli, 2025). In addition, PjBL is a learning model that helps students improve their ability to make better decisions when choosing topics, observing, and completing projects (Wulandari et al., 2024). Furthermore, Project-Based Learning is a learning model that centres on students' efforts to learn independently and gain a better understanding of ideas and principles through in-depth investigation of problems and the discovery of relevant solutions (Sholeh et al., 2024; Yuliasari et al., 2025). Similar to the above understanding, PjBL, with its characteristic requirement for students to work in groups and produce real projects, has the potential to overcome these challenges and significantly improve students' speaking skills (Shodiqoh & Mansyur, 2022).

The PjBL model provides students with opportunities to learn in context through real-world project-based activities. In this model, students are not only passively involved in the learning process, but also actively contribute to projects designed to achieve learning objectives. PjBL aligns with the basic principles of the Merdeka curriculum, which emphasise student-centred learning and project-based tasks (Susanto et al., 2022). Project-Based Learning models have been developed to create a learning environment that encourages students to develop their potential. The implementation of the independent curriculum is realised through various projects designed to enrich students' knowledge (Natasya & Nurhasnah, 2025). In addition, the PjBL model also has the advantage of building critical and creative thinking skills. As a learning model that prioritises collaborative problem-solving, PjBL can provide students with an engaging and challenging learning experience (Suradika et al., 2023).

The PJBL model also has several characteristics, namely: 1) Tasks are completed independently, from the planning and preparation stages to the presentation of the product; 2) Students are fully responsible for the project they are working on; 3) The project involves the participation of peers, teachers, parents, and even the community; 4) It develops creative thinking skills; 5) The classroom environment is highly tolerant of weaknesses and the development of ideas, weaknesses and the development of ideas (Haryanto et al., 2024). In PjBL, the steps involve formulating core questions, planning the project, organizing timelines, monitoring implementation, evaluating results, and reflecting on learning experiences (Astutik et al., 2021; Harianto et al., 2024; Yuliasari et al., 2025).

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) are the ability to produce sounds, articulations, or words to express thoughts in the form of ideas, opinions, desires, or feelings to a conversation partner (Zaid et al., 2024). *Maharah al-kalam*, or speaking skills, is the ability to construct appropriate sentences based on thoughts and feelings, thereby producing expressions that are correct and easy to understand (Bakri, 2022). Speaking skills reflect the active ability to express oneself verbally, demonstrating mastery of linguistic aspects such as phonology, syntax, and pragmatics. These skills fall under the category of productive language skills (*maharah al-intajiyah*) in oral form (Nuha & Tatang, 2024).

The objectives of speaking skills learning cover several important aspects. The first is fluency, which provides learners with space to practise intensively so they can speak fluently and confidently, both in small-group discussions and in front of an audience. The second is clarity, which requires proper articulation and clear word choice to convey ideas systematically. Third is the aspect of responsibility, which requires speakers to carefully consider the topic's context, the purpose of communication, the audience, and the situation of the conversation. Fourth is critical listening, which involves cultivating active listening skills and evaluating the information received. Finally, the aspect of habit formation emphasises the importance of establishing a routine of speaking Arabic through consistent daily interaction, both individually and in groups (Wijaya & Trisnawati, 2025).

The fundamental competencies in speaking skills encompass the understanding and ability to produce appropriate intonation, rhythm, and pronunciation (*talaffuz*) in Arabic. Pronunciation plays a crucial role as it directly affects the comprehensibility of messages by listeners. In the process of learning Arabic, students are expected to master the phonetic elements of the language, including the articulation of *hijaiyah* letters along with their respective *makharij*. The ability to pronounce words correctly not only supports clarity in communication but also reflects an appreciation of the beauty and distinctive characteristics of Arabic as the sacred language of the Qur'an (Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2021).

Communicative approach to speaking includes: 1) Students listen, read, and then practise a two-line dialogue with their partner; 2) Listen and repeat; 3) Listen to a model dialogue and then repeat it, replacing the names in the dialogue with their own names; 4) Reading the question prompts and formulating questions; 5) Reading the dialogue and practising with their partner; 6) Listening to/reading the model questions and asking their partner (Alam & Asyrofi, 2023; Zaid et al., 2024).

METHODS

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method to thoroughly examine the application of the communicative approach and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Arabic to improve *maharah kalam* at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI).

Research Setting and Participant Selection

The study was conducted at MI Nurul Falah, located in Kimak Village, Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. The site was purposively selected because Arabic is positioned as a core subject in its curriculum. The participants comprised Grade V students from classes V A and V B (34 students), Arabic teachers responsible for designing and implementing the communicative approach and PjBL, students actively engaged in the learning activities, the school principal overseeing curriculum policy and supervision, and the homeroom teachers. This heterogeneous group was intentionally involved to provide a comprehensive perspective on the implementation of the communicative approach and PjBL in Islamic primary education.

Data Sources

The data were derived from two principal sources. First, the primary data were obtained through direct classroom observations, pretests and posttests, and documentation throughout the implementation of the communicative approach and PjBL. Second, the secondary data were drawn from institutional documents, including the Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP), Arabic teaching resources (modules, student worksheets, and assessment rubrics), along with student portfolios comprising project outputs, photographs, and group reports. The use of triangulation across these sources strengthened both the validity and the depth of the findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques comprised both test and non-test methods. The tests were administered to assess students' speaking proficiency, whereas the non-test methods involved participatory observation and documentation of learning activities.

Research Instrument

The instruments used included observation sheets, test papers, and documentation in the form of project results and recordings of the teaching and learning process. Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative thematic approach through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, data validity was maintained through triangulation of techniques and sources, and confirmed by class teachers and Arabic language learning experts.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was carried out, guided by the Miles and Huberman model. The analysis followed three phases: data reduction, which entailed filtering and condensing essential information; data display, presented through narratives, thematic tables, and concept maps; and conclusion drawing/verification. Conducted inductively, the analysis explored the interconnections among categories, informants, and contextual factors within the framework of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* policy.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, several verification strategies were employed: source triangulation, involving cross-checking data from teachers, students, and the madrasah principal; method triangulation, by comparing information obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation; member checking, which validated findings with the informants; and an audit trail, ensuring systematic documentation of the entire research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Students' Initial Abilities Before Intervention

Prior to the implementation of the communicative approach and the PjBL model, students' initial Arabic-speaking skills at MI Nurul Falah remained low. Initial observations conducted by the researcher in the classroom showed that most students appeared passive when asked to speak Arabic. This research applied the Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, using a qualitative descriptive approach, drawing on the reflective spiral model by Kemmis and McTaggart, which comprises four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Utomo et al., 2024). The study was conducted in two cycles. The research subjects consisted of 34 students, purposively selected based on their readiness to participate in PjBL and their homeroom teachers' support.

Initial observations found that students still used their mother tongue or Indonesian to respond to teachers' questions and hesitated to express simple ideas orally in Arabic. Students also had difficulty constructing simple sentences, often ran out of vocabulary when speaking, and lacked confidence in speaking in front of the class. Documentation of students' assignments and oral exercises also showed that their use of *mufrodat* (vocabulary) remained limited to words they had memorised previously, without a strong understanding of context. Some students could mention only a few words about the parts of the body they had learned and their functions, and were unable to develop them into descriptive sentences.

Based on the pretest results and initial findings from observations and documentation, it is known that the Arabic-speaking skills of fifth-grade students at MI Nurul Falah are in the low category. The results of the pretest diagnostic test conducted on 34 fifth-grade students at MI Nurul Falah indicated that their Arabic speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*) remained low. In question-and-answer activities, most students were passive, rarely responded, or asked few questions in Arabic. Only a handful of students were active during the session. Their ability to describe things was also limited; most students could mention only a few words without forming complete descriptive sentences. In terms of speaking in front of the class, around 70% of students appeared nervous and lacked confidence, and some even avoided speaking to their friends.

The pretest results quantitatively confirmed these findings. The average scores across the speaking skills indicated that students still needed significant improvement, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Pre-test Results of Students' Speaking Skills (*Maharah al-kalam*) in Cycle I

Aspect	Score
Fluent speech (الفصاحة) and fluency (الطلاقة)	51.47
Accuracy of structure (موافاة النحوية)	54.41
Correctness of content (موافقة الجواب)	51.47
Pronunciation (النطق)	75.73
Average Score	58,27

Source: Research 2025

These results indicate that the students' overall Arabic-speaking ability remained below the expected standard, particularly in fluency, accuracy, and correctness. At the same time, pronunciation showed relatively better performance than the other components.

Fluency in speaking was also a problem, with many students experiencing long pauses, slurred pronunciation, and incomplete or unsystematic sentence structures. This is exacerbated by the use of inappropriate or minimal vocabulary, which is generally memorised without understanding the context. The pre-test results revealed that most students performed poorly in speaking. Their scores ranged from 31 to 81, yet only six students achieved the minimum passing score of 70 or higher. In contrast, 28 students failed to meet the established benchmark. The class average score was 58.27, underscoring the urgency of implementing more innovative, context-based learning strategies to enhance students' speaking competence. The detailed results are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Pre-test Results of Students' Speaking Skills in Cycle I

Indicators	Result	Percentage (%)
Students achieving ≥ 70	6 students	17.6%
Students below 70	28 students	82.4%
Class average score	58.27	

Source: Research 2025

Based on observations and data in **Table 1**, the main problems identified in students' speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) include limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and a lack of practice speaking Arabic in communicative classroom situations. This has an impact on the slow development of students' oral communication skills in Arabic.

Teaching Speaking Skills with a Communicative Approach and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at MI Nurul Falah

To overcome the initial problems, a different teaching approach was required—one that could stimulate active student participation, build their confidence, and provide opportunities for the functional and contextual use of Arabic. Before the program was implemented, speaking activities in Arabic lessons at

MI Nurul Falah were generally limited to memorisation of vocabulary and dialogues, with little emphasis on meaningful communication.

Through the treatment, the learning process shifted to a communicative approach combined with PjBL. This new teaching style was applied in two systematically designed action cycles. The primary focus was to strengthen students' speaking competence, especially in question-answer practice (*al-hiwar*), which was contextualised to students' everyday lives at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level.

Implementation of Cycle 1

The implementation of classroom action research (CAR) using a communicative approach and the PjBL model for fifth-grade students at MI Nurul Falah was conducted over four sessions from 29 August to 19 September 2025. The planning stage involved designing learning scenarios, assessment tools, and preparing vocabulary materials themed around professions. During the action stage, learning was carried out according to the PjBL design. The first meeting included an orientation activity in which the teacher presented the project challenge: compiling a dialogue about professions to be recorded on video. In the project planning stage, the teacher introduced professional vocabulary such as *طَبِيبٌ* (doctor), *مُعَلِّمٌ* (teacher), *فَلَّاحٌ* (farmer), and *شُرْطِيٌّ* (police officer), and gave examples of their use in simple sentences. Next, the schedule preparation stage involved agreeing on a project plan for four meetings. The teacher also conducted initial monitoring by assisting the groups in compiling a mind map of the conversation.

The second meeting focused on project development, namely the preparation of the dialogue text. The problem orientation stage involved reaffirming the project objectives. In the project planning stage, the teacher showed examples of simple dialogue texts, then the students practised reading them in turns. Next, each group composed a dialogue text according to their chosen profession, while the teacher monitored by correcting vocabulary and sentence structure. The schedule preparation stage was also carried out by agreeing on the flow of work for the text through to the video recording. The third meeting entered the practice stage, where students began to practise pronunciation, intonation, and fluency in speaking according to the dialogue text. During the monitoring stage, the teacher observed the practice, corrected pronunciation, and ensured that all students actively participated. The activity continued with video recording in stages according to the group schedule.

The fourth meeting focused on testing the results, namely the screening of dialogue videos made by each group. The teacher directed the students to assess the videos using a rubric that covered fluency, structure, content, and pronunciation. In the experience evaluation stage, students reflect individually on their learning experiences, the challenges they faced, and the achievements they made. The teacher closes the lesson by providing general feedback, appreciating the students' performance, and conducting a short oral post-test. During the observation stage, it was found that implementing PjBL successfully increased student engagement, group cooperation, and creativity. However, some students still faced obstacles in speaking fluency and vocabulary mastery. Reflections on Cycle I confirmed that speaking learning requires accompanying strategies, including gradual practice, modelling, and reinforcement of functional vocabulary. Therefore, Cycle II was designed by linking the project to students' personal experiences so that learning would be more contextual and could improve fluency and courage in speaking.

The results of the observation showed that implementing PjBL in Cycle I increased student engagement, group work, and creativity in composing dialogues. However, there were still obstacles, including limited vocabulary, uneven speaking confidence, and low fluency in pronunciation among some students. This shows that speaking and learning alone are not enough. They require accompanying strategies such as gradual practice, modelling, and strengthening functional vocabulary. The final reflection of the cycle confirms that, although student enthusiasm is relatively high, a more contextual approach is needed in

Cycle II, linking projects to students' personal experiences to strengthen their courage to speak and improve their fluency.

Implementation of Cycle II

Based on the results of the first cycle's reflection, the second cycle focused on improving courage in speaking, fluency in vocabulary use, and more active participation. Cycle II was conducted in four meetings: 26 September 2025, 1-3 October 2025, 15-17 October 2025, and 22 October 2025, as a follow-up to the reflection on Cycle I results. In this cycle, teachers continued to use a communicative approach and the PjBL model, with an emphasis on improving the quality of dialogue texts, fluency in speaking, and creativity in presentations.

The implementation of Cycle II of classroom action research (CAR) with a communicative approach based on PjBL at MI Nurul Falah was conducted in four meetings from 26 September to 22 October 2025. The planning stage involved preparing learning tools in the form of additional material on everyday expressions, assessment instruments, and a dialogue project design with the theme "at the zoo". In the action stage, learning activities were carried out according to the design, applying the PjBL stages. The first meeting began with opening activities: greetings, prayers, attendance checks, and apperception through repetition of vocabulary related to professions from Cycle I. The teacher provided icebreakers, then conducted a pre-test for Cycle II.

The pretest results quantitatively confirmed the students' performance across various aspects of Arabic speaking skills, as presented in the following **Table 3**.

Table 3. Pre-test Results of Students' Speaking Skills (*Maharah al-kalam*) in Cycle II

Aspect	Score
Fluent speech (الفصاحة) and fluency (الطلاقة)	64,72
Accuracy of structure (موافاة النحوية)	80,88
Correctness of content (موافقة الجواب)	80,88
Pronunciation (النطق)	95.51
Average Score	80,51

Source: Research 2025

The data show that students demonstrated strong pronunciation skills, with an average score of 95.51, followed by high accuracy in grammatical structure and content correctness, both with an average score of 80.88. However, their fluency and fluent speech received a lower score, indicating that students still needed improvement in maintaining smooth, spontaneous speech. Overall, the average score was 80.51, reflecting a generally 64.72 good level of speaking ability, though further enhancement in fluency remains necessary.

The pretest results also revealed the overall distribution of students' achievement in Arabic speaking skills. As shown in the following table, the data indicate the number and percentage of students who achieved a score of 70 or higher, those who scored below 70, and the overall class average score. This distribution provides a clearer picture of students' performance improvement after the learning implementation.

Table 4. Pre-test Results of Students' Speaking Skills in Cycle II

Indicators	Result	Percentage (%)
Students achieving ≥ 70	23	67,65
Students below 70	11	32,35
Class average score		80,51

Source: Research 2025

Based on the data in **Table 2**, 23 students (67.65%) achieved scores of 70 or higher, while 11 students (32.35%) scored below 70, with an overall class average of 80.51. These results indicate that, although most students have reached the minimum mastery level, a considerable proportion still face difficulties in achieving optimal performance. This suggests that some students continue to experience challenges in fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence when speaking Arabic, which may hinder their overall progress in developing effective oral communication skills.

In the problem orientation stage, the teacher presented the project challenge: to compose a more complex dialogue text, incorporating everyday expressions, in the form of a creative video. Next, the project planning stage involved introducing additional vocabulary, such as greetings, questions, and simple answers. The schedule formulation stage was carried out with the students on the workflow from text creation to recording, while the initial monitoring stage involved preparing a group mind map of the characters and the flow of conversation.

The second meeting focused on developing the dialogue text. At the beginning of the activity, the teacher opened the lesson with a greeting, a prayer, *apersepsi*, and an icebreaker. The problem orientation stage emphasised the importance of designing communicative dialogues. In the project planning stage, students composed dialogue texts by paying attention to professional vocabulary, sentence structure, and additional expressions. The schedule preparation stage involved allocating time so that all groups could complete their texts on time. The teacher carried out the monitoring stage by providing intensive guidance, correcting language errors, and encouraging students to be more creative. The meeting focused on the dialogue practice and recording stage. At the beginning of the activity, the teacher encouraged students to be confident in their speaking. In the problem orientation stage, the teacher explained that the focus of the meeting was practice and recording. The project planning stage involved improving the existing dialogue text, and the schedule preparation stage involved determining the order of the groups that would perform. The teacher conducted the monitoring stage by accompanying the practice and recording, providing feedback on pronunciation, intonation, and expression.

The fourth meeting was the culmination of the project, with all six stages of PjBL carried out. The problem orientation stage was conducted by reemphasising the importance of speaking skills. The project planning stage continued with technical preparations for video playback, while the schedule preparation stage focused on the presentation order. The teacher monitored by guiding activities and maintaining student engagement. The results testing stage was carried out by screening each group's video and providing assessments based on a rubric covering fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and creativity. Next, the experience evaluation stage involved completing individual and group reflections on the learning experience. The teacher closed the lesson by administering a Cycle II oral test, giving appreciation, praying together, and delivering follow-up instructions.

The observation stage in Cycle II showed that students were more enthusiastic, active, and creative than in Cycle I. They were able to compose more communicative dialogue texts, were brave enough to appear in video recordings, and showed improvement in vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation. Group

dynamics improved, participation was more evenly distributed, and students' confidence in speaking increased significantly. The research reflection confirmed that integrating the communicative approach with the PjBL model not only improved speaking skills but also strengthened students' confidence, cooperation, and independence in learning. Thus, the application of PjBL proved to be effective and relevant in supporting the Merdeka Curriculum in Arabic language learning in elementary madrasahs.

Improving Arabic Speaking Skills through a Communicative Approach and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at MI Nurul Falah

Based on the results of research conducted on fifth-grade students in classes A and B in Arabic language lessons, it can be seen that in cycles I and II, there was an increase in students' speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*) with the implementation of a communicative approach using the PjBL model. The following is a discussion of the research results.

With the implementation of the communicative approach and the PjBL model, the programme's success can be measured by the achievement of learning interest indicators. The average percentage of students' skills in Cycle I, as measured by the test, was 75.36%. The cycle continued to run better and more optimally. The average student interest in Cycle II, based on test results, was 90.62%.

Table 5. Average Percentage of Student Speaking Skill Achievement

Indicators	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)
Fluent speech (الفصاحة) and fluency (الطلاقة)	75,73	89,7
Accuracy of structure (موافقة النحوية)	66,18	80,88
Correctness of content (موافقة الجواب)	76,47	93,38
Pronunciation (النطق)	83,03	98,53
Overall average	75,36	90,62

Source: Research 2025

Thus, the results and discussion of the two cycles of action show that applying a communicative approach and the PjBL model can effectively improve the speaking skills (*maharah kalam*) of fifth-grade students at MI Nurul Falah. This finding reinforces PjBL's position as an appropriate and adaptive pedagogical approach for developing Arabic language skills at the elementary madrasah level.

Discussion

Initial observations indicate that traditional teacher-centred methods still dominate Arabic language instruction in class V at MI Nurul Falah. Students tend to be passive, listening to the teacher's explanations without actively engaging in speaking practice. This is evident when the teacher asks simple questions in Arabic; most students respond with only a single word or remain silent. This condition was also evident in the pre-test scores, where the class average was only 58.27, and the majority of students (82.4%) failed to reach the minimum passing score. These findings indicate that students' speaking competence had not developed optimally and confirm that conventional approaches focusing on memorisation and teacher explanations are insufficient for building communicative skills.

The results of the speaking skills pretest reinforce the above condition, given to students before the intervention. The average score obtained by students was only 58.27, with the distribution of scores showing the most significant weakness in sentence structure (موافقة النحوية). At the same time, the pronunciation aspect was relatively better, although not yet consistent. This pretest data shows that

students' initial Arabic proficiency remains low and that learning innovations are needed to increase their engagement, motivation, and language skills. Similar challenges were highlighted in earlier research, which showed that teacher-centred methods limit student participation and hinder the development of communicative competence (Ekawati & Arifin, 2022; Mulazamah, 2024). In this regard, the communicative approach and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model are highly relevant alternatives, as they have been proven to foster collaboration, critical thinking, and contextual speaking practice (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023; Rosita et al., 2024; Suradika et al., 2023).

Implementing actions in Cycle I brought positive changes to the classroom atmosphere. Teachers began to shift from being the centre of information to becoming facilitators who guided students through real projects, namely the creation of dialogue texts on the theme of professions. At the first meeting, teachers introduced vocabulary related to language professions. Students were invited to understand the meaning of these words through pictures and simple example sentences. This activity generated enthusiasm among the students, though some remained hesitant when asked to say the words in turn in front of the class. Such a shift in the teacher's role aligns with the principles of the communicative approach, which positions teachers as facilitators of meaningful interaction (Mulazamah, 2024). Similar findings were also reported that active and contextual learning strategies increased student motivation and participation (Ekawati & Arifin, 2022).

In subsequent meetings in Cycle I, students began training in composing simple dialogues based on the profession theme they had chosen together with their group. This process became a means of practising composing sentences according to context while introducing a pattern of two-way communication. The teacher accompanied each group, guiding them to select appropriate vocabulary and correcting inappropriate sentence structures. At this stage, it was evident that students were beginning to learn to work together with their groupmates to design interesting conversations. However, some students still relied on their teacher's examples. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that project-based dialogue tasks help students internalise communicative patterns while fostering collaborative learning (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023; Rosita et al., 2024; Shodiqoh & Mansyur, 2022).

The results of the Cycle I assessment showed that the average speaking skill score was 75.36, an increase of about 17.09 points from the pretest results. The highest increase was in content correctness, with a score of 76.47, followed by fluency (75.73), sentence structure accuracy (66.18), and pronunciation (83.03). These results illustrate that the application of the communicative approach and PjBL has begun to effectively encourage students' speaking skills (Ardiansyah et al., 2024; Gilda et al., 2023; Mulazamah, 2024). However, reflections from Cycle I also showed that there were still challenges, including students' hesitation when speaking, limitations in constructing correct sentence structures, and a tendency to mix Indonesian when encountering difficulties.

Based on these reflections, the teacher developed improvement strategies for Cycle II. The strategies implemented included increasing speaking practice through repeated dialogue and providing more varied examples of sentence structures. The teacher also introduced visual and audio media to support learning, enabling students to internalise vocabulary and pronunciation more easily, in line with previous findings that innovative media use enhances *maharah al-kalam* performance (Meldi et al., 2025; Wijaya & Trisnawati, 2025; Zaenudinn, 2024). In addition, project activities focused on creating more complex dialogues, encouraging students to think critically and creatively when composing conversations, consistent with studies highlighting PjBL's role in fostering critical and creative thinking (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023; Suradika et al., 2023). This model ultimately enabled students to learn through direct involvement in meaningful projects while naturally developing their speaking skills through collaboration and exploration of material closely related to their daily lives (Aziz & Nurachadijat, 2023; Fazarini et al., 2024).

The implementation of Cycle II showed that the classroom dynamics were becoming more conducive. In the planning stage, students were more active in designing dialogue ideas, writing dialogue scripts, and determining the flow of group conversations. Speaking practice activities became more intensive, with each group practising by dividing roles and rehearsing their dialogues repeatedly before recording them on video. Teachers actively provided feedback on pronunciation, sentence structure, and the use of communicative vocabulary. These activities not only improved students' language skills but also strengthened their confidence and cooperation, as noted in studies that found communicative and project-based approaches foster active participation and collaborative learning (Mauludiyah & Murdiono, 2023; Rosita et al., 2024; Undari et al., 2023).

The results of the Cycle II assessment showed a significant improvement, with an overall average of 90.62, an increase of nearly 15.26 points from the posttest in Cycle I and 10.11 points from the pretest in Cycle II. The indicators with the highest scores were pronunciation (98.53), followed by content accuracy (93.38), fluency (89.7), and structural accuracy (80.88). This improvement indicates that students did not merely memorise dialogues but also began to understand the context and provide contextually appropriate responses. The use of professional vocabulary in everyday conversation is also becoming more ingrained, proving the effectiveness of the PjBL approach in internalising language, a result that is consistent with previous findings showing that PjBL significantly improves Arabic speaking skills and supports contextual vocabulary acquisition (Meldi et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2024). The development of Average Arabic Speaking Skills is shown in **Figure 1**.

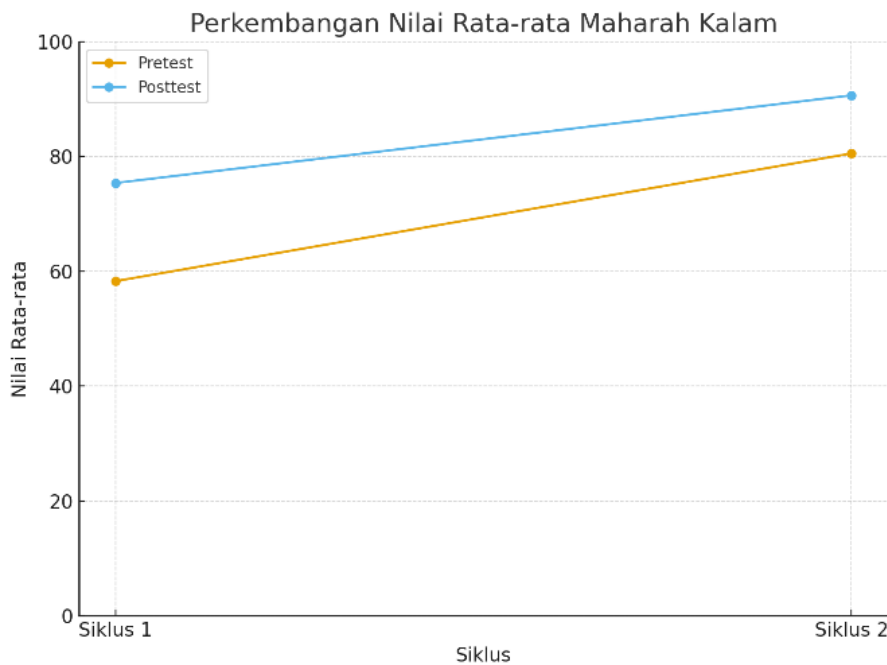


Figure 1. Development of Average Arabic Speaking Skills
 Source: Research 2025

These findings reveal a fundamental change in the learning process. Students are no longer positioned solely as recipients of material, but also as active subjects who construct knowledge through real experiences (Ekawati & Arifin, 2022). The process of group collaboration trains students to share ideas, listen to others, and respect others' opinions. Furthermore, social skills such as cooperation, responsibility, and self-confidence develop along with speaking skills (Mauludiyah & Murdiono, 2023). Teachers are increasingly able to manage classes in a participatory manner, positioning themselves as facilitators who

foster active communication in Arabic. Moreover, student involvement in contextual projects based on personal experiences—supported by relevant media and continuous teacher guidance—led to a significant increase in courage, fluency, and accuracy in spoken Arabic, as also noted in previous studies (Monalia & Khoiri, 2023). Thus, integrating the communicative approach with the PjBL model not only improved students' language performance quantitatively but also fostered a collaborative, communicative, and meaningful learning environment (Rosita et al., 2024).

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of the communicative approach and PjBL has successfully improved students' Arabic-speaking skills at MI Nurul Falah. A comparison of the initial observation results, the pretest, Cycle I, and Cycle II shows a consistent, significant upward trend across all indicators. PjBL not only strengthens linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, and structural accuracy, but also fosters affective aspects such as motivation, courage, and students' confidence in communicating. The results of this study show that communicative PjBL can create a learning experience that is more contextual, meaningful, and relevant to students' lives.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that implementing project-based Arabic language learning at MI Nurul Falah was effective, integrating contextual projects aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach has been proven to significantly improve students' speaking skills, as seen from the increase in average scores from 58.27 (classified as poor) in the pretest I, to 75.36 in posttest Cycle I (classified as satisfactory), and scores 80.51 in the pretest II to 90.62 in posttest Cycle II (classified as very good). In addition, the role of teachers has shifted to that of facilitators who encourage active engagement, motivation, and independent learning among students. Thus, Project-Based Learning can be a relevant and effective model for broader application in Arabic language learning in madrasahs.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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