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The Effect of Discord-Based Learning with Islamic Historical Texts on Students' Speaking Confidence

Qothrunnada Nabiilah[1], Berliana Atika Permatasari[2], Afiatus Sholeha[3], Maslihatul Bisriyah[4]

Correspondence:
maslihatulbisriyah@uin-malang.ac.id

Afiliation:
Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia[1]
230107110064@student.uin-malang.ac.id

Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia[2]
230107110056@student.uin-malang.ac.id

Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia[3]
230107110020@student.uin-malang.ac.id

Department of English Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia[4]
maslihatulbisriyah@uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract
This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design to explore the efficacy of using Islamic historical texts in Discord-mediated learning as a means of improving the speaking confidence of Indonesian high school learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A total of 56 students were divided into two intact classes of 28 students each: the experimental group was taught through Discord-mediated learning, supplemented by authentic Islamic historical stories, while the control group was taught in the traditional face-to-face manner with the use of textbooks. Speaking performance was measured before and after the treatment using an analytical rubric assessing pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy (grammar), fluency, and comprehensibility, serving as an indirect indicator of students' speaking confidence. The results showed that the experimental group's mean score increased from 14.07 to 17.75, and the experimental class showed significantly higher gains than the control group, indicating a corresponding increase in speaking confidence and suggesting that the combination of cultural relevance and online learning tools has a substantial impact on the development of EFL speaking skills. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of using culturally rich texts within modern communication channels as a means of increasing motivation, building speaking confidence, and improving oral skills in language classroom settings.

Keywords:
Discord-based learning; educational technology; Islamic historical texts; speaking confidence

A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning English because it enables EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to communicate effectively. This is supported by Naibaho (2022) speaking is a very important skill in learning English, enabling effective communication in an international context. Despite its importance, the challenge lies in how speaking can be taught in an effective and engaging manner. In reality, many EFL students still lack confidence in speaking English. As mentioned by Novela & Hastini (2023), the lack of confidence among EFL students in speaking English is largely influenced by several factor, namely the fear of making mistakes, as well as anxiety and self-doubt.

If this issue is not addressed with innovative and motivating instructional strategies, students will have limited opportunities to practice, which will ultimately hinder the development of their speaking skills. With the rapid development of technology, there are now various methods that can be used to support speaking instruction. Educational technology, when implemented appropriately, can facilitate language development as well as character building (Mohamed & Abushouk, 2029). One potential platform is Discord, a flexible online application that supports collaboration, speaking practice, and interactive learning. Previous research on Discord has mostly highlighted its pedagogical benefits, such as improving speaking skills (Ramadhan & Albaekani, 2021).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify several related but distinct constructs used throughout this study. Speaking skills refer to a learner's general linguistic ability to produce spoken language, encompassing pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy (grammar), fluency, and comprehensibility, whereas speaking performance refers to the observable output of that ability in a specific task or assessment (Brown, 2004). Speaking confidence, the primary construct of interest in this study, refers to learners' self-perceived readiness and comfort in using the target language orally, which is conceptually distinct from directly observed linguistic performance (Novela & Hastini, 2023). Closely related to it is foreign language anxiety, the negative affective response that inhibits speaking performance and undermines confidence, and that has been shown to affect EFL achievement both directly and indirectly through reduced engagement (Wu & Kang, 2023). These constructs are treated here as interrelated but conceptually separate; how performance-based data are used to infer confidence is clarified further in the Methods section.

Beyond these linguistic and affective dimensions, the cultural content of speaking materials also deserves attention. Learning a foreign language cannot be separated from understanding the cultural elements behind it, and in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia this exposure may create identity challenges for learners. Ghufron et al. (2024) report that Indonesian students encounter significant intercultural difficulties, including linguistic barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom. The influence of foreign values, especially Western popular culture, often shapes students' lifestyles, preferences, and worldviews, sometimes without their awareness, raising concerns about the potential erosion of Islamic identity among young Muslim learners. In line with this concern, Rahmatika & Izzah (2024) assert that English education in Indonesia should not contradict Islamic values. Integrating Islamic perspectives into English learning therefore becomes necessary to ensure that language education strengthens rather than weakens students' character and identity.

Prior studies have proposed various approaches to integrating Islamic values into EFL classrooms, but each leaves an important aspect unaddressed. Al Farabi et al. (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of Islamic and Western secular educational values, arguing conceptually for the philosophical compatibility of value-based education, yet did not test this integration through an empirical classroom intervention. Alfian et al. (2021) examined how an integrated Islamic school implemented Islamic values in English teaching and reported positive lessons learned, but relied on a single institutional case without a comparison group or a technology-mediated component. Similarly, Rietveld & van Hout (2017) discussed the integration of Islamic perspectives into EFL teaching at a conceptual level, without incorporating a digital learning platform or measuring its effect on a specific speaking-related outcome. On the technology side, Rahmat (2024) explored Discord in a blended learning context to enhance speaking skills and student engagement, but did not address value-based instruction or the integration of Islamic content.

Taken together, these studies reflect a broader pattern in which research on Islamic value integration in ELT has largely remained separate from research on technology use in language learning. This constitutes a clear gap: few studies have examined how a single digital platform can simultaneously enhance speaking-related outcomes and strengthen Islamic character. The present study addresses this gap by combining a quasi-experimental design, a specific digital platform (Discord), and a measurable speaking-related outcome (speaking confidence, operationalized through rater-assessed performance), thereby empirically testing what previous studies have only proposed conceptually or observed descriptively. Its purpose is to provide a supportive space in which learners can build their speaking confidence before practicing in real-life situations, and in doing so to offer an innovative, value-based learning model. Accordingly, this research seeks to answer the following question: *What is the effect of integrating Islamic historical texts through Discord on EFL students' speaking confidence?*

B. METHODS

This research employed a quasi-experimental research design with a pretest and post-test control group design to investigate the effect of incorporating Islamic texts into speaking classes using the platform of Discord. This research design was selected because of the need to compare two groups which were subjected to different treatments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A quasi-experimental rather than a true experimental design was adopted because students were already grouped into intact classes at the research site, making random assignment of individual students impractical; instead, the two groups were matched based on equivalent English proficiency levels prior to treatment to minimize pre-existing differences between them. The participants comprised 56 students who learned English as a foreign language and were divided into two groups. These were the experimental group (n=28 students) and the control group (n=28 students), both being chosen for their equivalent English language skills. The first group was taught the speaking skills via Discord by means of studying Islamic history texts.

Data were collected through speaking tests administered at the pre-test and post-test stages. Students were asked to retell short Islamic history texts for approximately two to four minutes. Their performance was evaluated using an analytical speaking rubric that assesses pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy (grammar), fluency, and comprehensibility on a scale of 1–5. This rubric was adapted based on the principles proposed by Brown (2004), who emphasized the importance of evaluating multiple components of oral performance rather than focusing solely on accuracy. It should be noted that speaking confidence in this study was not measured through a direct self-report instrument (e.g., a Likert-scale questionnaire on perceived confidence), but was instead inferred from observable improvements in rater-assessed speaking performance. This approach assumes that gains in rubric-assessed performance—particularly in fluency and spontaneity—reflect increased confidence, consistent with prior findings that speaking performance and self-perceived confidence tend to be positively associated (Novela & Hastini, 2023). However, this remains an indirect measure of the affective construct of confidence, and this operationalization is treated as a limitation of the present study.

All the material for the experimental class was sent through Discord and utilized for performing the following actions: reading, listening discussion, retelling, and recording. The texts that were used in both tests were chosen from stories of the Prophet Muhammad and selected according to the same difficulty to provide reliability and consistency of the tests. The experiment lasted for five classes. During the first class, pre-tests were taken by both classes. During the next three classes, the experimental group was taught through the use of Discord, where students performed

reading of stories, discussion of the linguistic and moral aspects, and practice of retelling through the audio channel. The control class, on the other hand, continued with textbook activities for speaking with no technology use. Finally, during the last class, post-tests were taken by both groups with the same task and different texts of the same difficulty level. Data analysis involved the use of SPSS. The normality of the data for the pre-test and post-test was assessed through the Shapiro-Wilk test, while the homogeneity of variances was assessed using the Levene's test. To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group, a Paired Samples t-test was conducted for normally distributed data. If the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used as a non-parametric alternative (Rietveld & van Hout, 2017). From the results obtained from these two tests, either an Independent Samples t-test or Mann-Whitney U test was conducted in order to establish if there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups at 0.05 level of significance. This statistical procedure followed the guidelines recommended by Gravetter & Wallnau (2021) to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The findings of the research conducted indicated the existence of a statistically significant enhancement of the speaking confidence of the students following participation in the learning process through Discord coupled with the utilization of Islamic historical literature. Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the pre-test and post-test data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which showed that the data were normally distributed (p = [isi nilai p Shapiro-Wilk] > 0.05). The homogeneity of variances was confirmed using Levene's test (p = [isi nilai p Levene] > 0.05), indicating that parametric testing was appropriate. According to the paired-sample t-test, there was an increase in the mean score from 14.07 to 17.75 for the experimental group from the pre-test to post-test levels (p < 0.05). Furthermore, the independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, t([isi df]) = [isi nilai t], p = [isi nilai p exact], with a mean difference of 5.25 (95% CI [isi batas bawah, batas atas])

The findings of the research conducted indicated the existence of a statistically significant enhancement of the speaking confidence of the students following participation in the learning process through Discord coupled with the utilization of Islamic historical literature. Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the pre-test and post-test data in both groups was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which showed that all distributions were normally distributed (all p > .05). The homogeneity of variances was confirmed using Levene's test, F (1, 54) = 0.059, p = .809, indicating that parametric testing was appropriate. According to the paired-sample t-test, there was a significant increase in the mean score of the experimental group from 14.07 (SD = 2.55) at the pre-test to 17.75 (SD = 2.35) at the post-test level (p < .05). Furthermore, the independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, t (54) = 5.24, p < .001, with a mean difference of 3.39 in favour of the experimental group (95% CI [2.09, 4.69]).

Table 1. Students' Speaking Confidence Scores

Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Description
Pre-test (Experimental)	14.07	28	2.55	Before treatment
Post-test (Experimental)	17.75	28	2.35	After treatment
Pre-test (control)	11.82	28	2.21	Before treatment
Post-test (control)	14.36	28	2.49	After treatment

Source: Research Data (2025)

Our findings show that many students feel more confident when practicing speaking on Discord, especially when using narrative texts taken from the values exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. Discord acts as a preparation tool, allowing students to practice and refine their speaking skills before performing in a face-to-face classroom environment. In this case, Discord can be considered a medium of connection and scaffolding for speaking, providing students with opportunities to feel more prepared and comfortable in expressing themselves verbally during classroom activities. The findings of the current research are consistent with previous studies, as Heinrich et al. (2022) also found that Discord enhances communication and strengthens connections among students and teachers, fostering a sense of community beyond course boundaries.

In addition to boosting students' confidence and oral skills, the use of Discord also provides additional benefits in terms of collaboration. During the treatment sessions, students engaged not only in individual speaking practice but also in group discussions of the linguistic and moral aspects of the historical texts before retelling them, allowing peer feedback and shared interpretation to take place prior to individual assessment. This collaborative process may have contributed to students' confidence gains indirectly, as rehearsing ideas with peers beforehand likely reduced the uncertainty typically associated with unsupported individual speaking tasks. This finding is supported by Arada (2025), who stated that Discord enhances online learning by fostering a sense of community, facilitating peer interaction, and supporting collaborative learning.

The texts used contain stories with Islamic values, students not only improve their language skills but also learn from the examples and moral values contained within them. Siregar et al. (2025) found that technology integration in Islamic education is perceived as effective in enhancing student engagement and comprehension. This aligns with the findings of the present study, which reveal that value-based learning through Discord not only supports language skills but also strengthens spiritual character, especially for madrasah students who are already familiar with Islamic teachings.

These findings show that Discord can be used as an additional platform to provide speaking practice outside of class, while also preparing students before face-to-face activities so that learning becomes more effective and interactive. Features such as voice channels, text chat, and file sharing allow teachers to create varied and interesting speaking activities, as well as direct the use of devices to more productive activities. Discord's integration with other platforms, such as Google Drive, helps students discuss, share materials, and receive immediate feedback. Teachers can also manage dedicated channels, assign tasks, and utilize automation bots to make learning more structured and efficient. In addition, teachers can support the formation of a supportive learning community on the Discord app, so that students feel more connected, confident, and

motivated to develop their speaking skills.

Although the improvement in speaking confidence was statistically confirmed, the specific contribution of the Islamic historical content, as distinct from the effect of the Discord platform itself, was not measured separately in this study. This is consistent with the view that affective variables such as confidence and motivation function as an internal filter that facilitates language acquisition, but are difficult to isolate as a single measurable indicator (Mubarok & Nurindah, 2023). In this study, the Islamic historical texts served as instructional content that enriched student engagement during speaking practice on Discord, in line with recent findings on the integration of Islamic values derived from Islamic civilization history into English language teaching, which similarly emphasize conceptual relevance over isolated, quantifiable effects (Saifudin & Rohimah, 2025). Therefore, the observed increase in speaking confidence should be interpreted as the combined effect of structured speaking practice and exposure to culturally and religiously meaningful content, even though the individual contribution of each component cannot be statistically separated in this design. This limitation opens an opportunity for future research to examine the impact of Islamic historical values more specifically, for instance through a qualitative or mixed-methods approach.

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that using Discord is more effective in boosting students' confidence in speaking English than learning without using the app. Interactive activities on Discord can optimize students' ability to speak confidently. Based on these findings, integrating Discord with Islamic values is highly recommended in Islamic schools. English teachers are advised to utilize this application outside of class hours as an additional practice tool so that students are better prepared and more confident before practicing in class. However, this study is limited in scope because it focused on a small group of students in a single Islamic school context, and speaking confidence was inferred indirectly from rater-assessed performance scores rather than measured through a validated self report confidence instrument. In addition, the specific contribution of the Islamic historical content could not be statistically separated from the effect of the Discord platform itself. Future studies should consider incorporating a direct self-report or interview-based measure of speaking confidence, alongside a research design capable of isolating the effect of value-based content, to strengthen construct validity. Future research should involve a larger, more diverse sample, and incorporate mixed methods, incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches, to gain a deeper understanding of how Discord impacts students' speaking performance and confidence levels. In addition, further research comparing Discord with other platforms in the context of improving speaking skills is important to determine the advantages and limitations of each medium. A more in-depth study is also needed to enrich our understanding of the benefits of using Discord on students' confidence in learning English.

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