

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THE KITAB MUHAWARAH IN ENHANCING ARABIC SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of Kitab Muhawarah in enhancing maharah kalam (speaking proficiency) among Arabic language learners in Malaysia, addressing the existing challenges in Arabic education, particularly the need for more resources focused on conversational skills. The research aims to assess how Kitab Muhawarah, a textbook emphasizing practical dialogues, contributes to students' ability to speak Arabic fluently and confidently. The study utilized a qualitative approach, gathering data through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. A sample of 60 students from Maktab Mahmud Yan participated in the study over three months, during which their progress in speaking proficiency was monitored. The findings reveal significant improvements in students' speaking confidence, fluency, and the application of Arabic vocabulary in real-life contexts. This research highlights the importance of incorporating dialogue-based learning into Arabic language instruction, presenting Kitab Muhawarah as a valuable tool for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use.

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Keywords:

Dialogue-based Learning; Kitab Muhawarah; Speaking Proficiency.

مستخلص البحث

تستكشف هذه الدراسة فعالية كتاب المحاور في تعزيز مهارة الكلام لدى متعلمي اللغة العربية في ماليزيا، مسلطة الضوء على التحديات الحالية في تعليم اللغة العربية، خاصة نقص الموارد التي تركز على المهارات الحوارية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تقييم كيفية مساهمة كتاب المحاور، وهو كتاب دراسي يركز على الحوارات العملية، في تحسين قدرة الطلاب على التحدث باللغة العربية بطلاقة وثقة. اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية نوعية، حيث تم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات المعمقة، وملاحظات الفصول الدراسية، وتحليل الوثائق. وقد شارك في الدراسة عينة مكونة من 60 طالباً من مدرسة مكتب محمود يان على مدى فترة ثلاثة أشهر، تم خلالها متابعة تقدمهم في مهارة الكلام. أظهرت النتائج تحسناً ملحوظاً في ثقة الطلاب في التحدث، وطلاقتهم، وقدرتهم على استخدام المفردات العربية في سياقات الحياة الواقعية. تؤكد هذه الدراسة على أهمية دمج التعلم الحوارية في تدريس اللغة العربية، حيث يُقدّم كتاب المحاور كأداة قيمة لسد الفجوة بين المعرفة النظرية والاستخدام العملي. كما تبرز الدراسة الحاجة إلى موارد أكثر شمولية تهدف إلى تطوير مهارات التحدث، مع ما لذلك من آثار على تعزيز مناهج اللغة العربية في ماليزيا وخارجها.

كلمات أساسية: التعلم القائم على الحوار؛ كتاب المحاور؛ مهارة الكلام؛ الطلاقة في التحدث.

Introduction

The Arabic language, like any other language, is divided into four essential language skills: listening (maharah istima'), speaking (maharah kalam), reading (maharah qir'ah), and writing (maharah kitabah). These skills are interrelated and progressively build upon each other. Speaking skills are pivotal in shaping learners' language proficiency and are often overlooked.¹ In the language learning sequence, mastering listening skills naturally leads to developing speaking skills. The ability to listen effectively enhances comprehension and exposes learners to the structure, sounds, and usage of the language in real-life contexts. Once learners gain a solid foundation in listening, they are better prepared to express themselves verbally, making speaking the next logical step in the learning process.² This must be stated, especially in Arabic, as it is the primary means of communication and interaction.³

Mastery of speaking proficiency improves verbal communication and lays a strong foundation for subsequent reading and writing skills. When students become proficient in speaking, they gain confidence and a deeper understanding of the language structure, facilitating their reading ability. Once maharat qira'ah is established, learners will receive further linguistic exposure that strengthens their knowledge and helps refine their writing abilities. Hence, maharah kitabah benefits significantly from a strong command of speaking and reading skills.⁴ Likewise, speaking proficiency will produce public speaking skills, which are also very important.⁵

Given this natural progression, speaking proficiency is a cornerstone of language acquisition. It gives learners the confidence and communicative competence to engage in more complex language tasks, such as reading and writing. Therefore, the ability to speak Arabic fluently not only reflects a student's

¹ Mark L. Gleason and Leonor F.S. Leandro, "Guiding STEM Graduate Students to Better Speaking Skills," *Trends in Biochemical Sciences* 48, no. 2 (2023): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tibs.2022.10.005>.

² Denensse Anak Johannes et al., "Learning Strategies Used by ESL Pupils in A Sub-Urban Primary School to Develop Listening Skills," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 13, no. 6 (2023): 1732, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i6/17605>; Rosinta Norawati, "An Extensive Listening Strategy to Develop Students' Listening Skill:" (The 3rd Green Development International Conference (GDIC 2020), Jambi, Indonesia, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2991/aer.k.210825.034>; Sri Wahyuni, Mahyudin Ritonga, and Windy Afrianti, "Systematic Review of Learning Method for Teaching Arabic Listening and Speaking Skills," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 1 (2023): 30, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v7i1.321>.

³ Miatin Rachmawati, Fitria Nugrahaeni, and Lailatul Mauludiyah, "Improving Arabic Speaking Skill through Mind Mapping Strategy," *Izdihar: Journal of Arabic Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature* 3, no. 1 (2020): 31–44, <https://doi.org/10.22219/jiz.v3i1.10967>.

⁴ Ayat Nuraini et al., "Student Progress Tracing of Arabic Learning: A Qualitative Investigation of Speaking Skills Formative Evaluation in Islamic Elementary School," *JURNAL AL-IHDA: Media Ilmiah Bahasa Arab* 12, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.58645/alihda.v12i1.520>.

⁵ Pauline Menjot et al., "Interventions That Target or Affect Voice or Speech Production During Public Speaking: A Scoping Review," *Journal of Voice*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2023.06.021>.

verbal proficiency but also builds their self-assurance in mastering other language skills. It serves as the gateway to holistic language mastery, ultimately reinforcing the learner's ability to comprehend and produce the language in written forms.⁶

In the context of Arabic language education in Malaysia, there is a growing recognition of the importance of enhancing speaking proficiency. While students often excel in theoretical knowledge of Arabic grammar and vocabulary, they face challenges applying this knowledge through spoken communication. The Kitab Muhawarah, focusing on practical dialogues and conversational Arabic, presents a promising tool for overcoming these challenges. It offers structured exercises and real-life contexts that encourage active speaking and interaction, thus making it a practical resource for improving speaking skills among students. Oral communication or speaking has a significant role in society. In Malaysia, Arabic is considered an essential and dominant language. It is spoken by 12.1% of the multicultural population of Malaysia.⁷

Ancient and medieval Malaysia has a strong historical relationship with the Arab world. Moreover, Malaysia has religious, economic, and academic relationships with the Arab world. Thus, the people can practice the norms and Arabic way of living, communicate with Arabs, establish businesses, or manage other aspects. Moreover, it is also taught as a second language, so it helps some non-Arabic speakers understand the Quran, Hadith, and other books written in Arabic. Arabs have established and operated several universities, international colleges, and schools so that Arabic teaching materials are used to accommodate international students.⁸

This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of Kitab Muhawarah in enhancing Maharaj kalam by focusing on its use. By doing so, it aims to give Malaysian students the confidence and capability to speak Arabic fluently. This will help them build a solid foundation for mastering the remaining reading and

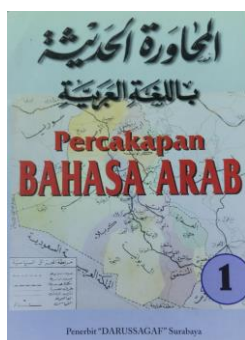
⁶ Muhammad Jundi, Muhammad Dalle, and Safwan Rehan, "Cultivating Unity, Soft Skills, and Arabic Proficiency among Students: A Comprehensive Exploration of Mukhayyam al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah Program," *LISANIA: Journal of Arabic Education and Literature* 8, no. 1 (2024): 58–82, <https://doi.org/10.18326/lisania.v8i1.58-82>; Mahyudin Ritonga et al., "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a Response to Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)* 10, no. 1 (2021): 355, <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v10i1.20747>.

⁷ Muhamad Farid Abdul Latiff and Roshidah Hassan, "An Acoustic Analysis of Penang Malay Monophthongs Among the Jawi Peranakan Community," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 31, no. 3 (2023): 935, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.31.3.02>; Ahlam Ali Salim Halali et al., "Challenges in Academic Speaking for Non-Native Speakers: The Case of Libyan Students Studying in Malaysia," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 30, no. S1 (2022): 43–62, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.S1.03>; Naureen Nazar Soomro and Aslam Pervez Memon, "Ethnic Relations in Multi-Ethnic Malaysia," *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 53, no. 2 (2014): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.46568/jssh.v53i2.78>.

⁸ Ahmed Saad Al Shlowiy, "Language, Religion, and Communication: The Case of Islam and Arabic in the Asia-Pacific," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 32, no. 2 (2022): 198–213, <https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.00040.shl>.

writing language skills, ultimately contributing to their overall proficiency in Arabic.

The Kitab Muhawarah, authored by Al Habib Hasan Baharun in the 1980s, has played a significant role in Arabic language education, particularly in enhancing speaking skills. This textbook focused on real-life dialogues and conversational structures, aiming to equip students with the practical language skills needed for effective verbal communication. Since its inception, the Kitab Muhawarah has been a cornerstone in Arabic teaching methodologies, especially in traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) such as Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah (Dalwa).⁹



Picture 1. Cover of Kitab Al-Muhawarah Al-Haditsah bi Al-Lughah Al-Arabiyyah

Over the decades, Kitab Muhawarah has retained its relevance at Dalwa, and various other pesantren and educational institutions in Indonesia and beyond have also adopted it. Its effectiveness in fostering speaking proficiency has led to widespread use in different countries, including Malaysia. In Malaysian schools and educational institutions focusing on Arabic language instruction, Kitab Muhawarah has become an essential resource for students learning Arabic, enhancing their ability to engage in practical, everyday conversations. What sets Kitab Muhawarah apart from many other Arabic textbooks is its emphasis on interactive dialogues and the natural flow of conversation, providing students with the linguistic tools they need to express themselves confidently in Arabic. By practicing the dialogues, students gain familiarity with common phrases, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structures essential for fluency. This approach improves their verbal communication skills and enhances their listening comprehension, helping them better understand spoken Arabic in various contexts.

Moreover, the longevity and continuous use of the Kitab Muhawarah in multiple institutions highlight its adaptability and effectiveness across different educational settings. Its structured exercises and practical applications make it an ideal resource for beginners and advanced students, fostering gradual but

⁹ Nurhanifansyah, *Biografi Abuya Hasan : Napak Tilas Kehidupan, Seni Dan Strategi Berdakwah Abuya Al Habib Hasan Bin Ahmad Baharun* (Bangil: Hilyah.id, 2022); Nurhanifansyah, *Kumpulan Kisah Abuya Hasan Baharun* (Bangil: Hilyah.id, 2022).

significant improvements in speaking proficiency. In Malaysia, where there is a growing demand for Arabic proficiency, the use of Kitab Muhawarah has proven to be a vital tool in the Arabic curriculum, helping students to overcome the challenges of mastering speaking proficiency and build a strong foundation for overall language proficiency. By focusing on Kitab Muhawarah, this study examines its specific role and effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills among Arabic learners in Malaysia.

In recent years, the international collaboration between Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah and educational institutions in Malaysia has been strengthening, particularly in Arabic language education. Over the past two years, Dalwa has sent approximately 20 students to live and study in Malaysia for two-year periods. In 2024, Universitas Islam Internasional Darullughah Wadda'wah collaborated by sending 29 students to Malaysia as part of an international KKN (Kuliah Kerja Nyata) program. Through this partnership, it has become evident that both sides greatly appreciate the value of such cooperation, with Malaysian students and institutions expressing a deep interest in improving their Arabic language skills, particularly in speaking proficiency.

Despite the enthusiasm for learning Arabic, especially in mastering speaking proficiency, Malaysian students and educators need more suitable teaching materials focused on speaking skills and limited guidance. While the Malaysian curriculum covers various aspects of Arabic language education, there needs to be more resources that specifically target the development of speaking proficiency. This issue is compounded by a need for more teachers who can provide practical guidance in helping students develop their conversational abilities in Arabic.

The local Malaysian students have highly appreciated the presence of Dalwa students, particularly those fluent in Arabic. Their interaction with these proficient Arabic speakers has provided valuable opportunities for Malaysian students to practice their speaking skills in real-life contexts. This informal exposure highlights the importance of integrating more structured speaking programs into the formal Arabic curriculum in Malaysia. Given the existing enthusiasm and demand for improving speaking proficiency, there is a need to explore more effective teaching materials and methods to bridge the speaking proficiency gap.

This study addresses the current problem by examining how the Kitab Muhawarah, a book widely used at Dalwa and other pesantren, can solve the need for more resources to teach speaking skills in Malaysia. By investigating the effectiveness of this book in enhancing speaking proficiency, this research hopes to contribute to developing a more robust Arabic language program in Malaysia, meeting the needs of students eager to improve their ability to speak Arabic fluently. Like other languages, Arabic consists of four essential skills: listening,

speaking, reading, and writing.¹⁰ These skills are interconnected, and developing one can improve others. Among these, speaking proficiency shapes a learner's language proficiency. In language learning, mastering listening naturally leads to speaking proficiency, as comprehending spoken language provides a foundation for verbal expression. This progression from listening to speaking enhances learners' confidence and prepares them for further skills, such as reading and writing.

In Malaysia, the growing recognition of speaking proficiency's importance in Arabic education stems from the observation that while many students excel in grammar and vocabulary, they often need help applying this knowledge in conversational contexts. This gap emphasizes the need for teaching methods that focus on speaking proficiency. The *Kitab Muhawarah*, emphasizing practical dialogues and real-life scenarios, effectively addresses this gap by fostering Speaking proficiency.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of the *Kitab Muhawarah* in enhancing speaking proficiency among Arabic learners in Malaysia. This study explores whether using this book helps students build the confidence and communication skills necessary for mastering speaking proficiency. This study is significant because it addresses a critical gap in Arabic language education in Malaysia—the lack of teaching materials and structured guidance for speaking proficiency. By evaluating *Kitab Muhawarah*'s role in improving Speaking proficiency, the research aims to contribute to more effective language education practices in Malaysia. Additionally, the findings could influence Arabic teaching strategies globally, especially in contexts where speaking proficiency is challenging.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of speaking skills in language acquisition and the challenges students face in developing speaking proficiency. However, few studies have explicitly focused on using structured materials like *Kitab Muhawarah* to enhance speaking abilities. This book, authored by Abuya Al Habib Hasan Baharun in 1981, has been widely used in Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah and various educational institutions, not only in Indonesia but also in Malaysia. Its practical, dialogue-based approach makes it a valuable tool for improving conversational skills, making this research relevant to ongoing discussions in Arabic language education.

Despite the widespread use of *Kitab Muhawarah*, more empirical research is needed on its effectiveness in enhancing *Maharaj kalam*, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study aims to fill that gap by providing evidence of how this book can address the current challenges in teaching Arabic speaking skills.

¹⁰ Nur Hanifansyah and Syarif Muhammad Syaheed Bin Khalid, "Ta'lim Maharah Al-Qira'ah Bi Istikhdam Kita An-Nashaih Ad-Diniyah Li Al-Habib Abdullah Ibn Alwi Al-Haddad," *Lahjatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 3, no. 1 (2023): 14–23, <https://doi.org/10.38073/lahjatuna.v3i1.1423>.

This study hypothesizes that the structured, dialogue-based approach of Kitab Muhawarah significantly improves students' speaking proficiency by providing practical language use in conversational settings. To test this hypothesis, the research will employ qualitative methods, including interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, focusing on the experiences of students and teachers using the Kitab Muhawarah.

There is a pressing need to improve speaking proficiency in Malaysia due to the limited teaching materials and lack of adequate guidance. Malaysian students strongly desire to enhance their speaking abilities, especially in light of increasing international collaborations highlighting the importance of Arabic fluency. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Kitab Muhawarah in enhancing speaking proficiency among Arabic learners in Malaysia, addressing the gaps in resources, and providing students with practical tools for improving their conversational skills. This research has the potential to significantly impact Arabic language education in Malaysia by introducing more effective methods for teaching speaking skills. Moreover, the findings could contribute to the global conversation on innovative approaches to improving speaking proficiency.

This study aims to comprehensively evaluate the role of Kitab Muhawarah in enhancing Arabic language speaking proficiency among learners in Malaysia. The research objectives are fourfold: firstly, to assess the efficacy of Kitab Muhawarah in improving students' Arabic speaking skills; secondly, to analyze the specific features of the book that contribute to the enhancement of verbal communication skills and students' confidence; thirdly, to examine educators' perspectives on integrating and implementing Kitab Muhawarah within the Arabic language curriculum in Malaysian educational institutions; and finally, to identify potential challenges and opportunities in adopting this resource for teaching speaking proficiency in Malaysian Arabic language programs. These objectives encompass vital aspects of the research, including the book's effectiveness, distinctive features, educators' viewpoints, and the practical implications of its implementation. By exploring the topic from these various angles, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Kitab Muhawarah's role in Arabic language education in Malaysia, potentially informing pedagogical practices and curriculum development in the field.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach.¹¹ They focus on a case study to explore the in-depth experiences of students using Kitab Muhawarah to improve their speaking proficiency. The research was conducted at Maktab Mahmud Yan in Malaysia from January to March 2024, involving a sample

¹¹ John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2020).

population of 60 students aged 16 to 18. These students had a basic level of Arabic language proficiency and were actively seeking to improve their speaking abilities. Teachers involved in the teaching process were also interviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the methodology's effectiveness.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, purposive sampling was employed to select participants, and it was chosen for several reasons.¹² First, this method allowed the researchers to focus on students with a foundational knowledge of Arabic and a clear motivation to enhance their speaking skills, ensuring that the data collected would be highly relevant to the study's objectives. Additionally, selecting teachers familiar with the Kitab Muhawarah was essential, as their experience with the textbook directly influenced their ability to guide students in improving their speaking skills. This sampling method ensured that the study included individuals directly engaged in and impacted by the learning process, making the findings more accurate and pertinent. Therefore, purposive sampling was considered the most suitable method to achieve the research aims. Ensuring all students involved had prior exposure to basic Arabic and were motivated to enhance their speaking proficiency. The teachers were chosen based on their role in teaching the students and their familiarity with the Kitab Muhawarah. This sampling method allowed the study to focus on individuals directly impacted by the learning process and the application of the textbook.

Instruments for data collection included Semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to gather insights into their experiences using the Kitab Muhawarah.¹³ Semi-structured interviews were chosen for data collection due to their flexibility and depth.¹⁴ They allowed the researcher to explore anticipated and emerging themes in participants' experiences with the Kitab Muhawarah.¹⁵ This method was particularly suitable because it balanced structured guidance and open-ended questions, enabling participants to express detailed insights regarding their challenges, successes, and personal perceptions of the textbook's effectiveness in improving speaking proficiency.¹⁶ By conducting interviews at the beginning and end of the study, the approach also allowed for a comparative

¹² Steve Campbell et al., "Purposive Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples," *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25, no. 8 (2020): 652, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>.

¹³ Stefano De Paoli, "Performing an Inductive Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews With a Large Language Model: An Exploration and Provocation on the Limits of the Approach," *Social Science Computer Review* 42, no. 4 (2024): 997–1019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393231220483>.

¹⁴ Tania Buys et al., "A Reflexive Lens on Preparing and Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews with Academic Colleagues," *Qualitative Health Research* 32, no. 13 (2022): 2030, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323221130832>.

¹⁵ Charles Kakilla, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews in Qualitative Research: A Critical Essay" (SOCIAL SCIENCES, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202106.0491.v1>.

¹⁶ Omolola A. Adeoye-Olatunde and Nicole L. Olenik, "Research and Scholarly Methods: Semi-structured Interviews," *Jaccp: Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy* 4, no. 10 (2021): 1358, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>.

analysis of shifts in students' and teachers' perspectives, highlighting any developments in their speaking skills or attitudes toward the learning process over time. This in-depth and adaptable method ensured a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Kitab Muhawarah in the study context: the challenges encountered and their perceptions of its effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills. Interviews were conducted at the beginning and end of the study to capture changes in perspectives over time.

Classroom observations were conducted weekly, and how students applied Kitab Muhawarah in natural learning environments was monitored.¹⁷ These observations focused on verbal interactions, student participation, and how the textbook facilitated the development of speaking skills in practical settings.¹⁸ Classroom observations were chosen to provide direct insights into students' real-time use of Kitab Muhawarah in learning environments. This method allowed the researcher to monitor. Weekly observations offered a consistent view of student progress and validated interview data by capturing authentic behaviors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the textbook's impact on practice.

Document analysis involved reviewing teaching notes and examples of student dialogues produced during classroom activities. These documents helped track the progression of the students' speaking proficiency throughout the study.

The data collection was structured as follows: Interviews were conducted during the first and final weeks of the study to assess changes in student and teacher perspectives regarding the use of Kitab Muhawarah. Classroom observations were conducted once per week during the lessons where Kitab Muhawarah was used, ensuring that consistent data on student performance and engagement was gathered. Teaching documents and examples of student dialogues were collected throughout the three months, providing qualitative evidence of how speaking proficiency developed over time.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document analysis were systematically coded to identify recurring themes, such as Progress in speaking proficiency, challenges faced by students and teachers, and perceptions of the effectiveness of the Kitab Muhawarah. These themes were used to evaluate how the Kitab Muhawarah influenced students' speaking skills and overall learning experience. The results were then compiled into a narrative format highlighting student progress, teacher feedback, and critical observations from the research.

¹⁷ Matt O'Leary, *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315630243>.

¹⁸ Leovani Marcial Guimarães and Renato Da Silva Lima, "A Systematic Literature Review of Classroom Observation Protocols and Their Adequacy for Engineering Education in Active Learning Environments," *European Journal of Engineering Education* 46, no. 6 (2021): 908, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2021.1937946>.

Triangulation was applied to ensure validity and reliability by cross-referencing data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of Kitab Muhawarah's impact on speaking proficiency. Additionally, teacher feedback helped validate the findings, ensuring that the observed improvements were consistent with their teaching experiences.¹⁹

While this study provides detailed insights into the effectiveness of Kitab Muhawarah in improving speaking proficiency, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. The study was conducted in a specific educational context with students of a particular age group, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Future research could expand the sample to include different age groups or educational settings to enhance the scope of the results.

Result and Discussion

Arabic is a foreign language taught in formal and informal educational institutions across Indonesia, as in Malaysia.²⁰ Its study spans various levels of education, reflecting the importance placed on learning Arabic for religious, academic, and cultural purposes. This language is integral not only in Islamic schools and pesantrens but also in universities, where students often pursue it to deepen their understanding of Islamic texts and to enhance their linguistic abilities for broader international communication. Similarly, in Malaysia, Arabic holds a significant role in the educational system, particularly in Islamic institutions like Maktab Mahmud and universities, where it is seen as essential for both religious studies and expanding students' global competencies.

The results of this study indicate that the use of Kitab Muhawarah significantly improved students' speaking proficiency among the 60 participants at Maktab Mahmud Yan. Through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, it became evident that students demonstrated a notable increase in confidence, fluency, and the ability to engage in conversational Arabic. Teachers also observed enhanced student participation and a more practical application of vocabulary learned during lessons. The book's emphasis on real-life dialogues and structured exercises contributed to students' ability to express themselves more freely and accurately in spoken Arabic.²¹

¹⁹ John W. Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research* (SAGE Publications, 2021).

²⁰ Cecep Sobar Rochmat et al., "Analysis of Teacher Self-Efficacy on Increasing Student's Learning Motivation in Arabic Speaking Skill," *International Journal of Arabic Language Teaching* 6, no. 02 (2024): 143, <https://doi.org/10.32332/ijalt.v6i02.9351>.

²¹ Najia Abdallaoui Maan, "Improving Arabic Reading Ability and Acquiring ICTs Skills of a Newly-Literate Adult Learner," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 53, no. 1 (2021): 23–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2020.1791521>; Hamzeh Moradi and Jianbo Chen, "Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching: The Case of the Middle East and North Africa," *Southern African*

The Kitab Muhawarah teaching method involves dividing the class into two groups. One group is assigned to ask questions, representing the right side of the dialogue in the Kitab Muhawarah, while the other group responds, representing the left side. Both groups then read the dialogue together. After the collective reading, the teacher translates each part, ensuring students understand the meaning.

As the lessons progress through the chapters, the teacher gradually reduces the amount of translation, focusing only on sections that students may still need to comprehend, as the vocabulary that has been previously learned no longer needs translation. Periodically, the teacher will ask students to recall and explain previously translated content, reinforcing their understanding. The lesson concludes with another collective reading, after which students are assigned to memorize as much of the content as they can as homework.

In the following session, students who have memorized the content come to the front of the class to practice the dialogue as if they are engaging in a real Arabic conversation using the material from Kitab Muhawarah. This method enhances language retention and builds students' confidence in speaking Arabic by simulating real conversational contexts.

Teachers can make a concerted effort to create a dynamic and effective learning environment. By incorporating Kitab Muhawarah into their teaching, educators can enrich the classroom atmosphere with practical dialogues that make the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. Teachers can also inspire students by highlighting the importance of Arabic in daily life, providing motivation, and ensuring that adequate teaching resources are available.²² This approach enhances students' speaking skills and makes learning more meaningful and engaging.

These findings are significant because they highlight the Kitab Muhawarah's effectiveness as a tool for enhancing speaking skills, filling a critical gap in Arabic language education in Malaysia, where there is a shortage of resources focused on Speaking proficiency. The improvement in speaking proficiency among students supports the idea that Kitab Muhawarah, with its dialogue-based approach, not only teaches vocabulary but also enables students to internalize language structures in a way that can be actively used in conversation. This progress in speaking proficiency is significant, as it is a foundation for mastering other

Linguistics and Applied Language Studies 38, no. 4 (2020): 369, <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2020.1835502>.

²² Maswani, N. Lalah Alawiyah, and Safira, "The Frayer Model Effectiveness in The Arabic Vocabulary Development for Students in Madrasah," *An Nabighoh* 26, no. 1 (2024): 17–30, <https://doi.org/10.32332/annabighoh.v26i1.17-30>.

language skills such as reading and writing. The role of speaking proficiency is vital and connected to different language skills.²³

The results align with existing literature on the importance of speaking skills in language acquisition. Similar studies have shown that dialogue-based learning fosters interactive language use, which helps students apply grammatical rules and vocabulary in real-life communication. The Kitab Muhawarah fits well with these findings, encouraging students to engage in conversations that reflect everyday scenarios. The results confirm the hypothesis that a structured, practical approach to teaching speaking skills can significantly improve speaking proficiency, consistent with the theoretical framework of language immersion and interactive learning. However, numerous studies have been conducted globally on the significance of mastering teachers' pedagogical skills.²⁴ These can be linked to muhawarah (conversation) teaching, as effective pedagogy plays a crucial role in enhancing students' speaking abilities in the context of Arabic language learning.

While the findings strongly support the effectiveness of Kitab Muhawarah, it is essential to consider that other factors could have contributed to improving students' speaking skills. For instance, the presence of teachers skilled in guiding students through the dialogues and the students' prior basic knowledge of Arabic might have played a role in the positive outcomes. Additionally, the three-month study period could have benefited from the natural learning progression, where repeated exposure and practice reinforced language skills independently of the specific textbook. In learning the Kitab Muhawarah, all aspects are gradually interconnected, including speaking fluency and coherence, lexicon, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation, which ultimately encourages the willingness to communicate. These aspects must be learned and mastered early, as they are crucial in building practical and profound communication skills in the Arabic language.²⁵

²³ Uril Bahruddin et al., "The Quality Improvement of Interaction Indicators in Arabic Language Learning for Higher Education," *Izdihar : Journal of Arabic Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature* 4, no. 1 (2021): 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.22219/jiz.v4i1.15919>; Bambang Bambang et al., "Planning and Strategies for Maharah Al-Kalam Learning Arabic Language in Madrasah," *WARAQAT : Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2023): 91–100, <https://doi.org/10.51590/waraqat.v8i1.457>; Obay Jambari et al., "The Correlation Between Students' Vocabulary Mastery and Students' Speaking Skill:" (1st Paris Van Java International Seminar on Health, Economics, Social Science and Humanities (PVJ-ISHESSH 2020), Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210304.023>.

²⁴ Umi Hanifah et al., "Accelerating the Digitalisation of Learning Post-COVID-19 Era to Improve the Pedagogical Competence of Pre-Service Arabic Teachers," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2413241>.

²⁵ Masoud Rahimi and Jalil Fathi, "Employing E-Tandem Language Learning Method to Enhance Speaking Skills and Willingness to Communicate: The Case of EFL Learners," *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 37, no. 4 (2024): 924, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2022.2064512>.

According to psycholinguistic theories, a child's speaking ability is shaped by the environment in which they grow through imitation and natural development.²⁶ Therefore, using the Muhawarah book in language learning in Malaysia creates an environment that supports the mastery of fluent Arabic, enabling students to absorb and enhance their speaking skills in Arabic more effectively and naturally.

The study has several implications for Arabic language education, particularly in Malaysia. First, it suggests that Kitab Muhawarah should be more widely adopted in Arabic curricula, especially in schools where students struggle with speaking proficiency. The structured, dialogue-based exercises help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, a critical challenge in many Arabic language programs. Furthermore, this research underscores the importance of integrating speaking proficiency into the curriculum as a foundational skill supporting mastery of other language abilities.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a specific context with students of a particular age group (16-18 years), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or educational settings. Additionally, the study relied on qualitative data, which, while rich in detail, may only capture some quantitative aspects of improvement in speaking proficiency. Lastly, the study duration of three months, while sufficient to observe progress, may have needed to be longer to assess long-term retention of speaking skills.

Table 1. Interview 1 with Malaysian student A (16 years old)

Question	Answer
How was your experience using Kitab Muhawarah to improve your Arabic speaking skills?	"I found Kitab Muhawarah very helpful. This book made it easier for me to speak more fluently in Arabic. Before using this book, I often felt nervous speaking, but now I feel more confident. The dialogues in the book help me understand how words are used in everyday contexts. I also find it easier to understand what others are saying because I frequently hear similar sentence structures in the book."
What was the biggest challenge you faced while using this book?	"The biggest challenge was memorizing much new vocabulary at once. Sometimes, it takes me longer to grasp each dialogue fully, but I get more used to it with practice. The book is convenient, so the more I use it, the easier it becomes to remember."

Table 2. Interview 2 with Malaysian student B (17 years old)

Question	Answer
What is the most significant change you have noticed in your speaking ability after using Kitab Muhawarah?	"The biggest change I've felt is that I can speak without overthinking grammar. Before, I was always worried about making grammatical mistakes. Still, after practicing a lot with the dialogues from this book, I started to feel that speaking comes more naturally and isn't as stiff. I also find it easier to understand others speaking in Arabic."

²⁶ Panji Puspo Negoro, Wan Jamaluddin, and Amiruddin Amiruddin, "Problems in the Formation of Language Environment in Learning Arabic," *International Journal of Arabic Language Teaching* 4, no. 02 (2022): 290, <https://doi.org/10.32332/ijalt.v4i02.5027>.

Is there anything you would like to improve further?	"I still want to get faster at responding in conversations. Sometimes, I still need time to form sentences in my head. But with more practice using Kitab Muhawarah, I'm confident I can become quicker and more fluent in speaking."
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Table 3. Interview 3 with Teacher B (Arabic Language Instructor)

Question	Answer
What is your observation of the student's progress in Speaking proficiency after using Kitab Muhawarah?	"I've noticed significant progress, especially in their confidence when speaking. Previously, many students were passive and would only respond if asked directly, but after using Kitab Muhawarah, they became more active in speaking and participating in class discussions. The students have also started using a broader vocabulary and more complex sentence structures, which I didn't see as often."
Did you encounter any challenges in teaching with Kitab Muhawarah?	"One challenge I noticed is that some students with a lower level of Arabic struggled to keep up with the dialogues in the book. It took them longer to understand the context of the conversations, and sometimes, we had to go over it several times. However, the book is very effective and has sufficient guidance, especially since the material is practical and can be applied directly in conversations."

These interviews show that students gained more confidence in speaking after using Kitab Muhawarah, and teachers observed increased student participation and better vocabulary application in practical conversations. However, some challenges, such as memorizing new vocabulary and the slower progress of students with a lower Arabic level, were acknowledged but could be overcome with consistent practice and guidance.

Future research could expand on this study by including a more diverse sample, such as students from different age groups or educational backgrounds. A longitudinal study could measure the long-term retention of speaking skills gained through Kitab Muhawarah. Additionally, incorporating quantitative measures of speaking proficiency, such as standardized oral exams or fluency tests, could provide a more comprehensive assessment of the book's effectiveness. Further research might also explore how Kitab Muhawarah could be integrated into blended learning environments, combining traditional classroom instruction with online platforms.

Conclusion

This study successfully addresses the critical challenge many students face in applying learned vocabulary and grammar in spoken Arabic conversation, particularly within the context of Arabic language education in Malaysia. By demonstrating the effectiveness of Kitab Muhawarah in integrating speaking fluency, lexicon, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation, this research contributes to enhancing language teaching practices in Malaysia, where Arabic is taught as a second or foreign language.

The findings highlight the potential of Kitab Muhawarah to provide Malaysian students with a structured, practical approach that supports not only the theoretical acquisition of the language but also its real-world application. This is particularly relevant in Malaysia, where language proficiency is essential for academic success and participation in Islamic education programs. By emphasizing the gradual and interconnected nature of language components, this research presents a method that enhances students' readiness and confidence in Arabic communication.

Furthermore, this study opens up new possibilities for further research, particularly in exploring the integration of Kitab Muhawarah in different Malaysian educational settings, such as public schools, religious institutions, or higher education. Future studies could investigate the effectiveness of this approach across diverse student demographics and levels of language proficiency. Additionally, incorporating modern technological tools could improve the pedagogical outcomes in Malaysia's evolving education landscape.

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