

Takallam Program of Arabic Course in Enhancing Speaking Proficiency: How Do Students Perceive It?

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Abstract

Formal classroom instruction often proves ineffective in developing students' proficiency in speaking Arabic. Enrolling in external language courses is currently an alternative to enhance Arabic speaking fluency. This study aims to investigate how students perceive the Takallam Program at a language course in improving their Arabic speaking skills. This qualitative case study involved eleven students and alumni from the Al-Azhar Arabic Course Institute in Pare, Kediri, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically using Atlas.ti software. The findings reveal that the Takallam program effectively enhances students' Arabic speaking proficiency through the implementation of the mubasyarah method, reinforcement of mufradat and qawaid, practice of muhadasah and debates, a supportive learning environment, and the application of enjoyable learning strategies by creative instructors.

Keywords: Arabic language, Arabic course, speaking proficiency, Takallam

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian students, as non-native speakers, encounter numerous challenges in learning Arabic, both linguistic and non-linguistic factors (Ekawati et al., 2024; Ritonga et al., 2023). Formal classroom instruction often misses the mark when it comes to fully developing students' Arabic language skills, particularly speaking (Bustam et al., 2021; Haron et al., 2010; Zurqoni et al., 2020). Factors such as limited learning hours, insufficient facilities, lack of environmental support (Zurqoni et al., 2020), outdated teaching methods (Lathifah et al., 2024), insufficient encouragement, and students' anxiety (Esmaili & Rakati, 2022) contribute to the ineffectiveness of formal instruction in enhancing students' Arabic speaking proficiency. In addition, a significant challenge is the limited opportunity for intensive speaking practice. As a result, students are often driven to seek supplementary learning options, such as enrolling in external Arabic language courses.

Arabic language courses present a compelling alternative for individuals seeking a more immersive and practical learning experience, which can substantially improve their Arabic communication skills (Nasution, 2023). These courses are designed to offer a more focused and practical learning experience compared to formal academic settings. Additionally, they provide a supportive environment for intensive practice, incorporating innovative teaching methods (Adawiyah et al., 2022; Zuhdi et al., 2024). Consequently, participants are able to achieve notable advancements in their Arabic language proficiency within a relatively short period. *Kampung Inggris* Pare Kediri in East Java, Indonesia, is a prominent center for foreign language courses and offers a variety of Arabic language programs. Al-Azhar, a well-known Arabic language course provider in Kampung Inggris Pare, offers a variety of programs for Arabic learners, including basic and advanced reading, preparation for Middle Eastern tests, reading *Kitab Kuning*, and the *Takallam* program.

The *Takallam* program is a flagship offering from Al-Azhar that is designed to enhance Arabic speaking skills through intensive practice and interactive learning methods. By offering practical and relevant Arabic language skills tailored to course participants' needs, this program is claimed to provide a distinct learning experience compared to formal educational settings. To gain a deeper understanding of this, it is crucial to explore the perceptions and experiences of course participants (hereafter referred to as students) who are directly involved in the learning process of Al-Azhar. Understanding these aspects provides insights into the effectiveness of the program. Sharing students' perceptions and experiences can also highlight positive aspects or strengths of the course that could serve as a

reference for other educational institutions seeking to adopt similar method.

Studies on the Arabic language, particularly Arabic speaking proficiency, have been extensively documented previously (Abdeldeen & Fu, 2022; Azhar et al., 2022; Bustam et al., 2021; Esmaili & Rakati, 2022; Haron et al., 2010; Khotimah, 2021; Mohamed et al., 2021; Mohammed, 2022). Although some studies have explored various programs or methods for improving Arabic speaking skills, research specifically examining students' perceptions of speaking enhancement programs in language courses remains limited. In a specific context, several studies have already provided insights into how Arabic is taught at Arabic language course institutions in *Kampung Inggris* Pare. For example, Nasution (2023) in his study examined the teaching methods used at Markaz Arabiyah Pare in the *Syarqi Awwal* (beginner level class), while Zuhdi et al., (2024) explored the innovative learning strategies employed at Al-Azhar Pare to improve students' abilities in all four language aspects: *muhadasah* (speaking), *kitabah* (writing), *istima'* (listening), and *qiraah* (reading). Specifically in speaking aspect, Adawiyah et al., (2022) revealed the types of ice-breaking activities used in Arabic learning at *Kampung Inggris* Pare to enhance speaking skills, while Afyuddin et al., (2022) identified the speaking strategies used by students at two Arabic language institutions in *Kampung Inggris* (Al-Azhar and Markaz Arabiyah). Using the Oxford questionnaire, this study found that the direct strategies predominantly used by students at the Arabic course institutions in Pare were cognitive and memory strategies (Afyuddin et al., 2022). However, there has not been an in-depth exploration of the effectiveness of *Takallam* method from the students' perspectives. Gaining insights from students' perspectives and experiences is essential to comprehensively understand how the renowned *Takallam* program enhances students' speaking proficiency.

Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding students' experiences with the Takallam program and its impact on their oral communication skills. Therefore, this study will examine how students perceive the Takallam program at Al-Azhar Pare in enhancing their Arabic speaking proficiency. This case study will provide in-depth insights into students' experiences and the benefits they gain from the course, identify adoptable best practices, and offer recommendations to improve Arabic language education in Indonesia. By focusing on the Takallam program, this research will enrich the literature on Arabic speaking education and contribute to enhancing the quality of Arabic instruction in formal educational settings by laying the groundwork for adopting successful and innovative practices.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Method

This qualitative research employs a case study approach to investigate students' perceptions of the *Takallam* program at the Al-Azhar Arabic language course in Pare, Kediri. The primary objective is to explore their insights regarding the enhancement of their speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*) based on their experiences following the course.

Participants and Procedure

Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews with all informants. The face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured technique allows for a thorough understanding of the students' perspectives and provides rich, qualitative insights into the effectiveness and impact of the *Takallam* program on their speaking proficiency. This study involved eleven participants, who were selected through purposive sampling, targeting students who are currently or have previously participated in the *Takallam* program at Al-Azhar. Each participant provided informed consent, with strict confidentiality measures upheld by the researchers. The participants, aged 14 to 30 years, consist of six males and the remaining females, identified with informant codes ranging from S1 to S11 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Informant details

Code	City/Country of Origin	Gender	Age (years)	Profession	Status in Al-Azhar*
S1	Aceh, Indonesia	M	23	Student	Student
S2	Thailand	M	22	Student	Student
S3	Majalengka, Indonesia	F	23	Student	Student
S4	Jember, Indonesia	F	23	Student	Student
S5	Banyuwangi, Indonesia	M	17	Student	Student
S6	Lampung, Indonesia	M	30	Teacher	Student
S7	Banjar Batu, Indonesia	M	16	Student	Alumni
S8	Magelan, Indonesia	F	14	Student	Alumni
S9	Solo, Indonesia	F	16	Student	Alumni
S10	Bandung, Indonesia	F	18	Student	Alumni
S11	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	M	22	Student	Alumni

* Note: Student is an active course participant during the interview
Alumni is a participant who has completed the *Takallam* program at Al-Azhar

Data collection was carried out through individual in-depth interviews with each informant on August 2023. Each interview began with introductions, an overview of the research objectives, and a request for honest responses based on the participants' experiences. To ensure accuracy, interviews were recorded. Each interview session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The main questions addressed two primary themes: 1) What are the students' perceptions of the *Takallam* Program at Al-Azhar Pare? 2) What impact does the *Takallam* Program have on students' Arabic speaking skills?

Data Analysis

Data were qualitatively analyzed using the thematic analysis approach, leveraging Atlas.ti software (version 23.3.4). This approach is inductive, prioritizing the interpretation of qualitative research findings rather than generalization (Dewantara et al., 2023). McMillan & Schumacher (2010) argued that qualitative analysis involves a systematic process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to elucidate intriguing phenomena. The data analysis process in this study comprised three main stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions (Huberman & Miles, 2019). In the initial step, researchers transcribed recorded interviews into written transcripts to ease the analysis process. Subsequently, researchers extensively reviewed all transcripts multiple times to ensure thorough understanding. In the data reduction stage, researchers sorted and selected relevant data from the collected information in the first stage. During this phase, researchers conducted coding, identified emerging themes and patterns, as well as excluding irrelevant data. The identified significant information was then grouped into several central themes. The second stage was displaying data. The reduced data was presented through descriptions and diagrams (see Figure 1) illustrating the relationships between identified themes or categories. The essence of this analysis was to comprehend students' perceptions of the *Takallam* program at Al-Azhar and its impact on enhancing their speaking proficiency. Further interpretation was conducted on the reduced and displayed data. In the final stage, researchers verified the accuracy of the analysis results, drew conclusions, developed findings, and provided meaning based on the analyzed data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The interviews, analyzed comprehensively with Atlas.ti software, revealed two main themes: participants' perceptions of the *Takallam* program and its' impact on their Arabic speaking skill based on their experiences after participating in the program. Each theme was further identified with several subthemes, as illustrated in the network diagram (see Figure 1).

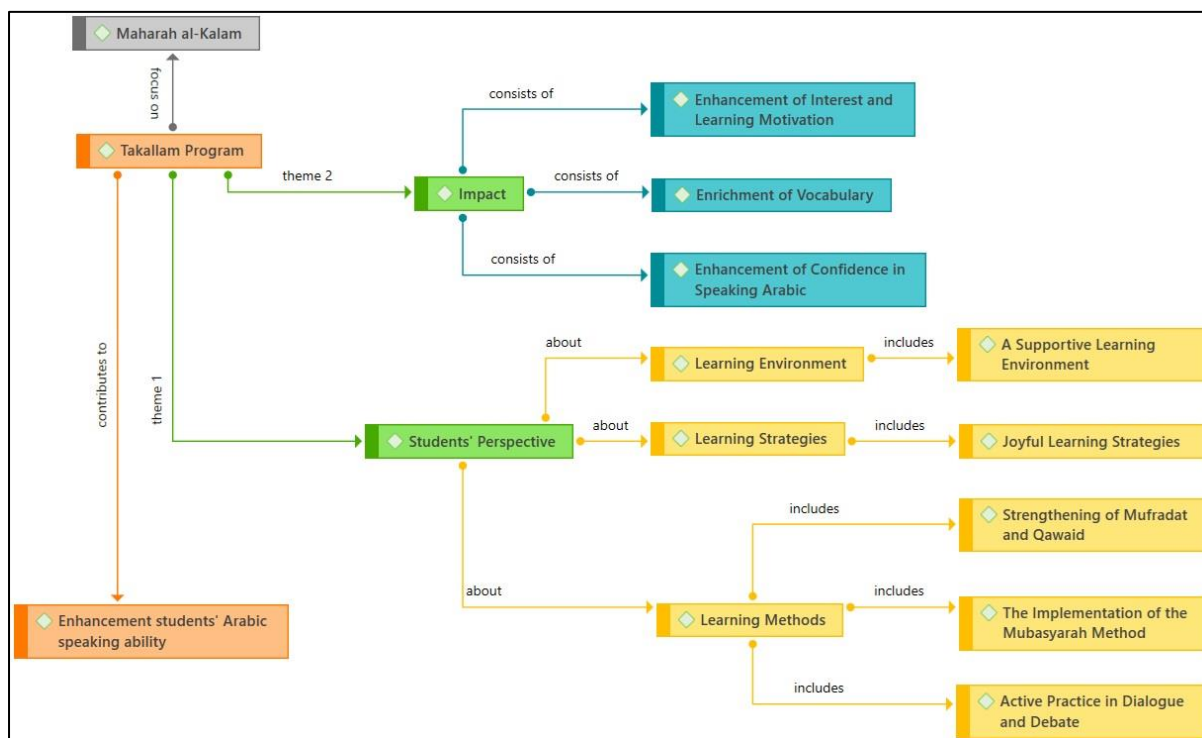


Figure 1. Network of participants' perceptions and experiences of the *takallam* program

Participants' Perceptions of the Takallam Program

Figure 1 indicates that the course participants have a positive perception of the *Takallam* program in five aspects: the implementation of the *mubasyarah* method, the reinforcement of *mufradat* (vocabulary) and *qawaid* (grammar) materials, the practice of *muhadasah* (conversation), discussion, and debate as well as a supportive learning environment and the application of enjoyable learning strategies.

Implementing of the Mubasyarah Method

The *mubasyarah* method, in which all teaching interactions are conducted in Arabic, is one of the key approaches employed in the *Takallam* program. This method received positive feedback from all the students. Informant S1 explained that the instructors used Arabic to explain the material but did so at a manageable pace, allowing students to become accustomed to hearing and communicating in Arabic. Similarly, S2, a student from Thailand, also responded positively to the *mubasyarah* method implemented in the *Takallam* program. According to S2, using Arabic as the language of instruction made students more familiar and comfortable with the Arabic language. S3 further emphasized that instructors consistently used Arabic in every classroom interaction, including repeating vocabulary (*mufradat*), which enabled students to memorize it easily and quickly. S3 noted that using Arabic in every teaching interaction was highly effective in enhancing the speaking abilities of the students.

Active Muhadasah and Debate Practices

One of the key components of the *Takallam* program is the practice of conversation (*muhadasah*) and debate. These active practices have received very positive feedback from students regarding the improvement of their Arabic speaking abilities. This conclusion is based on interviews with several informants, including S4, who remarked:

"The most engaging lessons in the *Takallam* program are the *muhadasah* and debate sessions, especially when we have vocabulary tasks to practice. During Arabic conversations, our peers respond, creating direct dialogue (*hiwar*), which enhances our speaking skills (*maharah kalam*).

Supported by the linguistic environment (biah lughawiyah) in both the classroom and dormitory programs, these activities are extremely beneficial for improving our Arabic speaking abilities."

S4's view was supported by S2, who highlighted that the pro and contra debates were among the most captivating learning methods. These activities not only improved speaking skills but also stimulated argumentative skills, making the class more dynamic. In addition, S6 discussed the challenges of *muhadasah* and debate practices. He highlighted that students are encouraged to actively engage by making statements and asking questions related to the given topics. In class, they practice speaking with vocabulary relevant to discussion/debate themes. S6 found it was so challenging but acknowledged that these difficulties compel students to actively improve their Arabic speaking skills in everyday contexts.

Strengthening Mufradat and Qawaid Materials

The primary focus of the *Takallam* program is to develop proficiency in spoken Arabic. However, this does not mean that the aspects of *qawaid* are neglected. On the contrary, the program includes a robust reinforcement of *nahwu-sharaf* (syntax and morphology), which is essential for constructing grammatically correct sentences during conversations and debates. This view is supported by several informants, including S7, who explained:

"Initially, I found learning Arabic here somewhat confusing due to the new methods. However, the reinforcement of qawaid material greatly supports the construction of simple sentences. This has significantly helped me in the fast-paced learning process. Additionally, qawaid exercises are provided not only in the classroom but also in the dormitory, which greatly aids in improving my Arabic speaking skills."

S8, feeling their Arabic vocabulary was limited, found the daily requirement to memorize two pages of vocabulary, coupled with penalties for non-compliance, to be a strong motivator for disciplined study. They emphasized that mastering both *qawaid* and vocabulary is essential for effective spoken Arabic. S9 supported this view, stating that reinforcing *qawaid* not only helps in constructing correct sentences but also provides a solid foundation for creating effective conversations.

Supportive Learning Environment

One of the aspects highly appreciated by students in the *Takallam* program is the disciplined yet enjoyable learning environment, both in the classroom and the dormitory. According to informant S3, the dormitory rules that mandate daily use of Arabic have significantly influenced their improvement in speaking Arabic. The fines and penalties imposed for not using Arabic have made the learning experience in both the classroom and the dormitory highly supportive of their language development, as illustrated by the following interview with S3:

"In Takallam program, speaking Arabic is strictly enforced, both in class and in the dormitory. In the dormitory, participants are fined if they do not speak Arabic. The fines are IDR 3,000 for each infraction or memorizing vocabulary in front of the dormitory while being given a powder. The aim is to discipline the participants and accustom them to speaking Arabic."

Students also noted that the enjoyable interactions between students and instructors, both in the classroom and dormitory, provide additional motivation to continue learning and improving their Arabic speaking skills. Learning is not limited to the classroom; the dormitory program is also well-structured. According to S1 and S9, there are even outbound activities that make learning more enjoyable. Informant S4 added that the learning experience is not monotonous because it occurs not only in the classroom but also in various locations such as flower gardens, coffee shops, cafés, or on the field.

Another informant, S10, who is about to continue their studies in Arabic literature, reported that the *Takallam* Program at Al-Azhar has been very helpful in enhancing their Arabic speaking skills. This improvement is largely due to the supportive and engaging learning environment, as expressed in the following interview:

"I feel that the learning atmosphere at Al-Azhar is similar to that of a traditional pesantren with strict rules, but it greatly supports my beginner-level conversation skills. Despite the regulations,

the learning environment is very homey and enjoyable, unlike formal classroom settings. The learning environment is lively, serious yet relaxed. Even though I am new to learning Arabic, the disciplined yet enjoyable learning environment has led to significant improvement in my skills."

Enjoyable Learning Strategies

In the *Takallam* program, the learning experience is made more engaging and effective through the use of various creative strategies, including the implementation of games and songs. Informant S2 noted that these methods not only make the learning process more enjoyable but also facilitate the understanding of the material, especially in memorizing vocabulary essential for everyday conversation. S9 added that group singing of vocabulary songs brings a joyful atmosphere to the learning process. This not only enhances interest in mastering Arabic but also provides extra motivation to actively engage in speaking and discussion. S5 reinforced that the learning environment is consistently enjoyable due to the frequent inclusion of games and cheerful songs, which prevents the lessons from becoming monotonous.

The Impact of Takallam Program based on Students' Experiences

Figure 1 also depicts the impact of *Takallam* program in three main subthemes: enhancement of interest and learning motivation, enrichment, enhancement of confidence in speaking Arabic. The three subthemes were further condensed into two main impact points, as follows.

Impact on Vocabulary Acquisition

The *Takallam* program significantly enhances students' Arabic vocabulary acquisition. The program requires students to memorize vocabulary daily, which they must then present to their instructors. This structured system consistently increases students' vocabulary, positively affecting their Arabic language skills. Informant S3 shared the substantial impact of the *Takallam* program in the following interview:

"The impact of the Takallam program on me personally has been remarkable. Having studied here for a long time, I have gained extensive learning experience, especially in daily vocabulary memorization. As a result, I have started to converse in Arabic with my friends, even though there are still some grammatical errors or imperfections."

Another informant, S6, noted that daily vocabulary memorization significantly expanded their vocabulary, which they could immediately apply in discussions and debates, enhancing both understanding and usage in broader contexts. Similarly, S2 found that this practice facilitated daily conversations and strengthened relationships with peers and instructors through regular practice.

Enhancement of Interest, Motivation, and Confidence in Speaking Arabic

The *Takallam* program has had a significant impact on increasing the students' motivation and confidence in speaking Arabic. S1 experienced a significant boost in motivation and interest due to daily vocabulary memorization and encouragement to speak Arabic, even with simple sentences. Similarly, S8, a beginner, benefited greatly from the program. Though still struggling with fluency, she acknowledged progress in speaking and forming sentences. She attributed this improvement to the support and guidance of the instructors, which built her confidence to continue practicing Arabic.

Another informant, S9, also felt the positive impact of the *Takallam* program. She appreciated the engaging learning methods, including daily vocabulary memorization using songs. This approach made learning enjoyable and increased her interest and motivation. S4 also highlighted the positive effects of the *Takallam* program, as shown in the following interview:

"The most significant positive impact I felt was the increased confidence to continue practicing speaking due to the highly supportive learning environment, both in and outside the classroom, including the dormitory. Initially, the debate and mujadalah sessions in the Takallam program made me afraid and embarrassed to speak, but after several stages of learning, I began to feel confident in speaking Arabic. This supportive environment played a crucial role in building my self-confidence."

The opinions of S8, S9, and S4 illustrate that the support from instructors, the enjoyable learning strategies and methods, and the supportive learning environment have positively impacted their interest, motivation, and confidence in speaking Arabic.

Discussion

This section is to interpret and elaborate on the research findings. The analysis reveals that students generally have positive perceptions of the *Takallam* program. These perceptions stem from their experiences and the positive impacts they observed after participating in the program. The *mubasyarah* method, active practice in *muhadasah* and debate, reinforcement of vocabulary and grammar, the implementation of joyful learning strategies, and a supportive learning environment are all positively appreciated aspects by the students.

The *mubasyarah* method, which involves the exclusive use of Arabic in teaching interactions, has received positive feedback from students. This method provides a natural and authentic immersive experience, allowing students to become accustomed to hearing and communicating in Arabic. Chaparro et al., (2022) asserted that frequent teacher demonstrations and speaking practice have been shown to improve second language oral language skills. In specific context, Esmaili & Rakati (2022) claimed that the lack of second language use by Arabic instructors in the class significantly hinders students' ability to develop their language skills. Students in this study noted that consistent use of Arabic in every interaction helps them adapt quickly and improve their speaking proficiency. This finding is consistent with previous studies revealing that the *thariqoh Mubasyarah* successfully improves students' Arabic speaking ability (Hapid, 2023; Khotimah, 2021).

Muhadasah and debate practice play a crucial role in developing speaking skills in the *Takallam* program. Students highly value these activities as they not only provide opportunities for speaking practice but also enhance students' confidence in using Arabic in real-life situations. Mohamed et al., (2021) claimed that debate assist in enhancing student's Arabic proficiency, speacially speech level and fluency. Debate activities, in particular, foster critical thinking, which further improves linguistic skills (Abdulbaki et al., 2018). Despite the challenges of formulating arguments, organizing thoughts, and expressing opinions in Arabic, students stay motivated with the support and guidance of their instructors. This challenging learning approach significantly boosts students' confidence and verbal communication skills.

The *Takallam* program emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to speak first, especially for beginners, even if their sentence structures are not yet perfect. This approach helps them build confidence and actively develop speaking skills. Over time, they can refine and improve their sentence structures and grammatical accuracy. This strategy prevents students from being hindered by the fear of making grammatical mistakes, which can lead to anxiety and reduce their willingness to communicate actively (Maher & King, 2023). By focusing on speaking first, students can develop a strong foundation while gradually improving their language use. This is achieved through the mastery of vocabulary and grammar rules alongside speaking and discussion activities.

While the primary focus of the *Takallam* program is to develop active Arabic speaking skills, it also emphasizes mastering vocabulary and grammar, both of which are identified as essential foundations for productive skills in Arabic, including speaking (Alhawary, 2016; Baharudin & Ismail, 2015). Strengthening these areas allows students to construct sentences accurately and enrich their vocabulary, significantly enhancing their speaking abilities. Daily vocabulary memorization and grammar practice deepen their understanding of Arabic structure, supporting more accurate and structured speaking skills. This reinforcement boosts students' confidence, better preparing them for active practice, such as discussions and debates. Daud & Pisal (2014) claimed that the lack of vocabulary hindered students' fluency in speech during presentations/ discussions/ debates. Furthermore, a strong grasp of Arabic grammar helps students transform memorized vocabulary into complete sentences, thereby enhancing their confidence in speaking (Azhar et al., 2022). Thus, focusing on vocabulary and grammar not only improves linguistic skills but also enhances students'

confidence in using Arabic effectively in real-life situations.

Another notable advantage of the Al-Azhar course is its non-formal yet enjoyable learning environment, where instruction takes place not only in classrooms but also in dormitories or other outdoor settings. In addition, the strict use of Arabic in the dormitory and the positive atmosphere encourage active speaking, creating a supportive environment for language development. Students have highlighted the importance of a conducive atmosphere, stating that the supportive environment significantly enhances their speaking Arabic proficiency. Many previous studies have claimed that a conducive learning environment significantly enhances students' achievement in learning Arabic by fostering intellectual activities, collaborations, and supportive practices (Dubiner, 2019; Shaalan, 2023; Zaid et al., 2019).

Variative and creative learning strategies, such as using songs and games in the *Takallam* program, make learning Arabic more engaging and effective. These methods increase interest, help students understand vocabulary and language structure in a fun way, and boost their confidence to speak actively. Providing motivation, encouragement, and effective teaching methods is essential for overcoming students' oral Arabic language anxiety (Ismail et al., 2023). Anxiety has been proven to hinder language mastery and achievement (Alhasan et al., 2024; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015; Sajedi, 2017; Tüm, 2019), so addressing it is crucial for better outcomes. By fostering a dynamic learning environment, tutors help students feel comfortable speaking and practicing, even for beginners, ultimately enhancing their language skills.

Overall, the *Takallam* program at Al-Azhar has a significant impact on students' Arabic speaking abilities. The routine of daily vocabulary memorization greatly assists students in discussions and everyday conversations. This experience helps students practice new vocabulary in a direct and contextual manner. Reinforcement of grammar rules (*qawaid*) also enables students to construct sentences more accurately during speaking practice, whether in conversations, discussions, or debates. This positively affects students' confidence, motivation, and interest in using Arabic. Creative tutors who apply enjoyable learning strategies, such as singing and games, make the process of learning Arabic more appealing and enjoyable. These methods not only motivate students to keep learning but also help them feel more comfortable and confident when speaking. Support from innovative instructors and a positive learning environment play a key role in building students' confidence. Although students may initially feel less fluent, the enjoyable approach and support provided help them overcome their fear and hesitation, allowing them to speak more confidently and effectively. The *Takallam* program, as a whole, successfully enhances students speaking skills in a structured and enjoyable way, strengthening their confidence in using Arabic.

CONCLUSION

The *Takallam* program at Al-Azhar Pare Kediri effectively enhances students' Arabic speaking skills through a structured and enjoyable approach. This claim is supported by the positive experiences and impacts reported by students after completing the program. The implementation of the *mubasyarah* method, daily vocabulary memorization, and reinforcement of vocabulary and grammar during *muhadasah* (conversation, discussion, and debate) sessions significantly increases students' speaking activity. The disciplined yet enjoyable learning environment, coupled with support from creative tutors, boosts students' motivation and comfort in actively speaking the language. Overall, the *Takallam* program successfully builds students' confidence in actively communicating in Arabic. However, this study has limitations, which solely focus on students' perception of the *Takallam* program in one Arabic course, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or institutions. Therefore, future research should include a wider range of institutions with similar programs. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies could offer a more comprehensive view of the long-term effects of the *Takallam* program on Arabic language skills.

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