

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH SPEAKING CONFIDENCE IN A MULTINATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN LEARNERS IN MADINAH

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ABSTRAK

Kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara merupakan elemen krusial yang dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang pendidikan dan faktor lingkungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mensintesis persepsi kepercayaan diri berbicara bahasa Inggris di kalangan pelajar Indonesia dan Malaysia di Yayasan Tahfidz Annor Bakti Madinah (usia 12-25 tahun). Menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui pendekatan naratif tematik, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana dinamika multinasional di Madinah dan perjalanan internasional ke Kuwait serta Turki berfungsi sebagai laboratorium bahasa yang tidak terstruktur. Temuan menunjukkan adanya "kesenjangan kepercayaan diri" di mana pelajar Malaysia diuntungkan oleh status ESL, sementara pelajar Indonesia menghadapi hambatan kosa kata dan kecemasan bahasa (EFL). Namun, kebutuhan praktis di pasar Madinah dan interaksi di Masjid Nabawi mendorong penggunaan "Survival English" yang efektif meningkatkan keberanian bicara. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa disiplin tahfidz tidak menghalangi pemerolehan bahasa, melainkan mendukung integrasi bahasa Inggris sebagai alat komunikasi fungsional.

Kata Kunci: Kepercayaan Diri Berbicara, Pelajar Tahfidz, Lingkungan Multinasional, Madinah, ESL vs EFL.

ABSTRACT

Speaking confidence is a crucial element influenced by educational background and environmental factors. This study aims to synthesize perceptions of English-speaking confidence among Indonesian and Malaysian students at the Tahfidz Annor Bakti Foundation in Madinah (aged 12-25). Using qualitative methods through a thematic narrative approach, this study explores how the multinational dynamics in Madinah and international travel to Kuwait and Turkey serve as unstructured language laboratories. The findings indicate a "confidence gap" where Malaysian students benefit from ESL status, while Indonesian students face vocabulary barriers and language anxiety (EFL). However, practical needs in the Medina market and interactions at the Prophet's Mosque prompted the use of "Survival English," which effectively increased speaking confidence. This study concludes that the discipline of tahfidz does not hinder language acquisition but rather supports the integration of English as a functional communication tool.

Keywords: Speaking Confidence, Tahfidz Students, Multinational Environment, Madinah, ESL vs. EFL

INTRODUCTION

Speaking confidence in a foreign language is far more than just a technical achievement; it is a complex psychological journey that serves as the heart of successful intercultural communication, especially in high-pressure settings like Madinah. For the students at the Annor Bakti Madinah Tahfidz Foundation—an institution founded by the Malaysian philanthropist, Datok—English has shifted from being a mere classroom subject to a vital "survival tool." In this unique educational ecosystem, learners aged 12 to 25 from both

Indonesia and Malaysia live side-by-side, where Malay, Indonesian, and English naturally blend into their daily lives between rigorous Quranic memorization sessions. As noted by (Snyder, 2019), capturing the essence of such lived experiences requires a narrative thematic approach to truly understand how these "unstructured language laboratories" in Madinah shape a student's communicative resilience.

The real-world demand for English becomes most visible when students step into public spaces, such as the local markets (souq) or the areas surrounding the Prophet's Mosque. A

common linguistic hurdle arises when the formal Arabic (Fusha) they learn in class fails to bridge the gap with local vendors—many of whom are expatriates from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh who primarily speak colloquial Arabic (Ammiyah). In these moments of "linguistic deadlock," English emerges as a crucial safety net, allowing students to navigate interactions through what is often called "Survival English." However, the level of confidence in using this tool is deeply influenced by their home country's educational background; Malaysian students, benefiting from an ESL (English as a Second Language) environment, tend to be more spontaneous, while Indonesian students often feel held back by vocabulary gaps and the typical anxieties of an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) framework (Meliyani, Utomo, & Upi, 2022).

Furthermore, the foundation's routine international trips to Kuwait, Jordan, and Turkey act as a "final exam" for their speaking courage. In these foreign lands, where English is often the only common bridge for talking to tour guides or locals, students are forced to push past their fears of making grammar mistakes for the sake of being understood. This study synthesizes these various perceptions to show how real-world necessity and international exposure can effectively level the playing field for both Indonesian and Malaysian learners. Ultimately, these experiences suggest that the strict discipline of Quranic memorization (Tahfidz) doesn't get in the way of learning a language; instead, it provides a strong cognitive foundation that helps students embrace English as a practical, functional tool in today's global society.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design with a narrative thematic approach, consistent with the framework described by (Snyder, 2019). The data were synthesized from the instructional context of the Annur Bakti Madinah Foundation. . As the researcher also served as a basic public speaking instructor at the foundation, the analysis benefits from direct observation of the students' communicative progress. This unique position allowed for a deep understanding of the students' daily struggles and their psychological shifts when facing native speakers. The synthesis process involved:

* Instructional Analysis: Comparing the impact of ESL (Malaysia) and EFL (Indonesia) backgrounds.

* Contextual Synthesis: Examining real-world language use in public spaces such as Masjid Nabawi and the Madinah souq.

* Experiential Mapping: Analyzing the impact of international trips to countries like Kuwait, Jordan, and Turkey on students' speaking resilience.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Pedagogical Foundations and Linguistic Identity

Confidence in speaking is deeply rooted in a learner's prior instructional exposure. Malaysian students, coming from an ESL background, often perceive English as a familiar tool, which lowers their affective filter (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015). Conversely, Indonesian students often perceive English through the lens of EFL "test-taking," leading to higher anxiety regarding grammatical perfection (Anandari, 2015). In the context of the foundation, Indonesian students were initially observed to be more hesitant, often pausing to mentally translate or check their grammar before speaking, whereas Malaysian students were more spontaneous.

Theme 2: "Survival English" as a Practical Rescue in the Market

A critical finding is the pragmatic shift from Arabic to English in the Madinah marketplace. Participants noted that many shopkeepers in the souq or malls are expatriates who do not use formal Fusha Arabic. When students find themselves "stuck" linguistically, English becomes the functional rescue. This "Survival English" focuses on intelligibility—being understood—rather than perfect accuracy. Successfully completing a transaction in English (like ordering food or bargaining for clothes) provides a significant psychological boost. It transforms the students' perception of English from a difficult school subject into a "life-saving tool" that works in the real world".

Theme 3: The Mosque as a Hub for Multinational Encounter

The study circles (halaqah) at Masjid Nabawi provide an authentic multinational encounter. Interactions with pilgrims from various backgrounds, including native speakers from America, create a high-stakes speaking environment. While Malaysian students show more "grit," they also report feeling intimidated by

dominant speakers. For Indonesian students, these encounters highlight their vocabulary gaps, yet the "casual" nature of these interactions slowly builds their communicative resilience over time.

Theme 4: Digital Media and Informal Learning (Movies & Videos)

Despite the rigorous Quranic schedule, the students' confidence is supplemented by informal learning. Students report updating their vocabulary through digital media, such as movies and short videos. The discipline required for Quranic memorization (Tahfidz) actually supports this process. The high level of cognitive focus and memory retention developed through Tahfidz helps them retain new English phrases and idiomatic expressions more effectively than average learners.

Theme 5: Experiential Learning through International Travel

The quarterly trips to countries like Kuwait and Turkey serve as a real-world "laboratory." In these countries, English is often the only bridge for tourists. Being forced to interact with tour guides and locals in a non-Arabic speaking environment acts as a major turning point. Students reported a sense of "international mastery" after successfully navigating these trips. The travel program initiated by the foundation is perhaps the most significant factor in leveling the confidence gap between Indonesian and Malaysian learners.

CRITICAL SYNTHESIS

The synthesis of these themes suggests that speaking confidence is not a static trait but a dynamic one that responds to environmental needs. While the Malaysian students have a systemic advantage initially, the multinational life in Madinah and the intense international travel schedule provide enough "forced output" for Indonesian students to catch up. This aligns with the theory that authentic exposure is more effective for building confidence than classroom-based instruction alone.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review demonstrates that speaking confidence is a product of both prior education and current environmental demands. For Indonesian and Malaysian students in Madinah, the multinational environment acts as a catalyst that overrides initial linguistic fears. While the Malaysian ESL background provides an early advantage, the "survival necessity" in Madinah and

international exposure in Kuwait and Turkey effectively level the playing field, allowing all learners to develop a robust sense of speaking confidence.

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