



INTEGRATION OF THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH AND REALIA TO ENHANCE ARABIC SPEAKING SKILLS OF MADRASAH ALIYAH STUDENTS



Fitriyatur Rosyidah¹ , Moch. Wahib Dariyadi² , Moh. Khasairi³ , Abd Rauf Tan Sri Hassan⁴ 

*Correspondence :

Email :

fitriyaturrosyidah@gmail.com

Affiliation:

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Malang,
Indonesia

⁴ Universiti Putra Malaysia,
Serdang, Malaysia

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Abstract

Speaking proficiency in Arabic is a fundamental skill for Madrasah Aliyah students, yet many face challenges in developing it effectively. These difficulties are often due to the lack of contextual learning approaches and limited use of relevant teaching media. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a contextual learning approach supported by realia in enhancing the Arabic speaking skills of Grade X students at MAN 3 Jombang. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles, which included stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. A total of 37 students participated in this study. Data were collected through observation, interviews, speaking tests, and documentation, then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods. The findings indicate that the integration of contextual learning and realia media significantly improved students' speaking performance. In the first cycle, students showed improvement in vocabulary and sentence structure. In the second cycle, notable progress was observed in fluency, self-confidence, and the ability to convey ideas orally. The use of realia—such as concrete objects and visual aids—created a more interactive and engaging learning environment that encouraged active participation in Arabic communication. This study suggests that the contextual approach combined with realia is an effective strategy to be applied more broadly in Arabic language instruction at the secondary school level.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills in Arabic are one of the main aspects of foreign language mastery at Madrasah Aliyah. The ability to speak Arabic is an essential skill that must be acquired by students at this level. This skill not only serves as a means of communication but also supports students' understanding of Islamic studies, given that much Islamic literature is written in Arabic. Unfortunately, the reality in the field shows that many students experience difficulties in developing this ability. For example, observations at MAN 3 Jombang indicate that the average score of Grade X students in the oral test is below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), reaching only 60 out of a possible 100.

The low level of achievement is caused by several factors, including learning methods that are less relevant to students' situations and the limited use of adequate instructional media. This fact is supported by the findings of Habibah & Wardhani (2019) which state that although realia media attract students' attention, they are less effective in improving vocabulary retention if they are not linked contextually. Various studies show that speaking ability (*maharah kalam*) among non-native learners of Arabic still faces significant obstacles. Studies such as issues in Arabic Speaking Skills: A Psycho-Sociolinguistic Approach highlight psycho-sociolinguistic factors, differences in sentence structure, and the influence of bilingualism as the main causes of low speaking proficiency (Siregar et al., 2024). Similarly, the study of an Analysis of Speaking Skill Learning Difficulties in Students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program reveals that difficulties in fluency and linguistic accuracy are still found even among students of Arabic language programs. (Sugirma et al., 2024).



This study aims to determine the effectiveness of a contextual approach combined with realia media in improving the Arabic speaking skills of Grade X students at MAN 3 Jombang. The main focus of the study includes improvements in vocabulary, sentence structure, fluency, and speaking confidence. The contextual approach, or Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), has been widely studied as a teaching strategy that can enhance language skills by linking learning materials to students' real-life experiences Rifa'i et al. (2022a). The contextual approach, or Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), is a learning strategy that emphasizes the connection between instructional content and the realities of students' lives.

As explained by Johnson (2014) CTL aims to provide meaningful learning experiences by linking classroom learning processes with real-life situations faced by students. Through active involvement in authentic activities, students not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also develop relevant skills that can be applied in everyday life. The core of CTL is grounded in constructivism, which views knowledge as being built gradually through experience, social interaction, and reflection on the real world Sanjaya (2006).

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach has been widely proven to be effective in improving speaking ability and communication skills. Several studies, such as The Implementation of CTL to Improve Students' Speaking Skill and The Effectiveness of CTL Method to Improve Students' Speaking Skills, show significant improvements in students' confidence and speaking ability (Fauziyah et al., 2024). In the context of Arabic language learning, the study Contextual Teaching Learning for Improving Arabic Language Instruction proves that linking learning materials to real-life contexts has a positive effect on vocabulary mastery as well as writing and speaking skills (Auriel Zaeni et al., 2025a). Theoretically, CTL is grounded in constructivism—the view that learning occurs through direct experience and reflection. The study The Learning of Arabic Speaking Skills from a Constructivist Theory Perspective supports this view and affirms the suitability of CTL for Arabic language learning (Rufaiqoh et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, realia media are instructional aids in the form of real objects or concrete representations that help students understand learning materials directly. According to Sanjaya (2006) Realia provide opportunities for students to experience, observe, and even use the objects presented in the learning process. Real or tangible media serve as effective tools for reducing the level of abstraction in language learning and increasing student engagement. The study Teaching Vocabulary by Using Realia Media demonstrates that the use of real objects strengthens the connection between language learning and everyday life (Aziza, 2024). In addition, the study Impact of the Linguistic Environment on Speaking Skills emphasizes that the environment and authentic media play an important role in the development of speaking skills (Harnika et al., 2024).

In the context of the theme "المرافق العامة في المدرسة", the use of realia such as maps of school facilities, photographs, or concrete learning tools is highly consistent with the principles of CTL in creating meaningful learning experiences. In Arabic language learning, such media may include simple objects such as books, stationery, maps, pictures, or other objects relevant to the lesson theme. The presence of realia has been shown to reduce the abstract nature of language, making it easier for students to understand vocabulary and sentence patterns and to use them in communication Rifa'i et al. (2022a). The combination of CTL and realia media makes Arabic language learning more lively, contextual, and

enjoyable. Students do not merely study grammar in isolation; instead, they practice it in situations closely related to their own experiences. Therefore, the implementation of this strategy is believed to be more effective in improving students' speaking skills at Madrasah Aliyah.

Several studies even indicate that the implementation of CTL enhances students' learning motivation, understanding of sentence structure, and overall communication skills. From a theoretical perspective, the contextual approach emphasizes the principle of meaningful learning, in which students are presented with relevant and real-life situations so that the material is easier to understand and apply. When combined with realia media—such as concrete objects, visual aids, and relevant images—learning becomes more engaging, interactive, and accessible to students (Rifa'i et al,2022b; Auriel Zaeni et al,2025b). Nevertheless, research that specifically examines the effectiveness of CTL supported by realia in improving Arabic speaking skills at the Madrasah Aliyah level remains limited.

The use of instructional media can facilitate students' understanding of learning materials, making the teaching and learning process more effective and efficient, easier to comprehend, more enjoyable, time and energy saving, and capable of producing deeper learning outcomes. Oemar (1994). One alternative that can be used is the utilization of realia media Arsyad & Majid (2010).

The use of realia media in teaching can also increase students' interest in participating in lessons, as realia are tangible media that greatly help them understand what is conveyed by the teacher. In line with James W. Brown's view, there are many advantages to using real objects, including helping students become familiar with the objects being studied and aware of them as part of their surrounding environment. In other words, real objects can have a positive influence on students (Zaitun,2017 ;Zaimatun, 2019) The study of the Use of Realia Media in English Language Learning also emphasizes that real media are able to create more concrete and communicative learning experiences. Previous studies, such as those conducted by (Aziz et al., 2024) and Auriel Zaeni et al. (2025b) state that contextual learning strategies have been proven to create more active and participatory classrooms. However, only a limited number of studies have investigated how realia can be optimally used within this approach to gradually improve students' oral skills through two learning cycles. Based on theoretical reviews and previous findings, the proposed hypothesis is that the combination of a contextual approach and realia media can significantly enhance students' speaking skills. This argument is further supported by research (Harsita et al., 2024) which found that the CTL strategy has a positive impact on Maharah Kalam through a gradual approach that emphasizes students' active involvement in the learning process. Meanwhile, a study conducted by (Jihan & Mufidah, 2024) also shows an improvement in aspects of Arabic communication following the implementation of the contextual approach.

This study offers a new contribution to the development of Arabic language teaching methods in madrasahs, as it specifically integrates two learning elements—the contextual approach and realia media—within a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. By analyzing two learning cycles, the study does not only present the final outcomes but also demonstrate the gradual process of skill improvement, which has rarely been highlighted in similar studies.

The novelty of this study lies in the integrated combination of the contextual approach (Contextual Teaching and Learning/CTL) and realia media to enhance students' speaking

skills (*mahārat al-kalām*) at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Although these two elements have been applied separately in previous studies, their integration specifically for the development of Arabic speaking ability remains rare. The forms of novelty in this study include the following:

1. *Integration of CTL and Realia Media in a Unified Learning Sequence.* This study develops a learning model that integrates CTL principles with the simultaneous use of realia media. CTL provides meaningful contexts closely related to students' lives, while realia media present real objects that help students understand and use the language directly. This combination has not been widely explored in depth within the context of Arabic language learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level. Explicit Focus on Speaking Skills, many previous studies have placed greater emphasis on reading skills or the understanding of language structures. This study is specifically directed toward developing students' speaking ability, which is considered the most complex yet essential active skill in foreign language learning.
2. *Adaptation to the Real-Life Context of Madrasah Aliyah Students.* Another innovation of this study lies in adapting learning materials and instructional methods to the real-life situations of students at MAN 3 Jombang. The approach is designed in accordance with students' social and cultural environments, enabling them to learn in a more relevant and contextualized manner.
3. *A Practical Model with Broad Applicability.* The instructional design developed in this study is not only conceptual but also practical, making it applicable for use by Arabic language teachers in other madrasahs with similar characteristics. This gives the study a high level of practical value.

This study provides a new contribution to communicative, contextual, and experience-based strategies for Arabic language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Therefore, research is needed that not only examines improvements in vocabulary but also encompasses fluency, confidence, and the ability to express ideas verbally. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 3 Jombang, as one of the Islamic educational institutions, faces similar challenges in Arabic language learning, especially in the area of speaking skills.

For that reason, this study aims to implement a contextual approach supported by realia media as a solution to improve the Arabic speaking skills of Grade X students. This research is expected to contribute to the development of Arabic language teaching methods that are more effective and relevant to students' needs.

METHODS

This study employed the PPE (Planning, Production, Evaluation) model combined with a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach. The PPE model is selected to structure the development and implementation of instructional interventions in a clear and systematic manner (O'Neil, 1995), while CAR enables researchers to actively address classroom problems through reflective and systematic actions (Kemmis, 1988). This combination allows for instructional improvement while simultaneously providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the interventions implemented (Arikunto, 2019).

This study was conducted at MAN 3 Jombang, specifically in Class X-14, which was selected based on preliminary observations indicating significant problems in students' Arabic speaking skills. These problems include low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and minimal classroom participation. The selection of this class was also supported by

collaboration with the Arabic language teacher and the school's openness to instructional innovation. The choice of the research setting using a contextual approach is grounded in (Bogdan, 2007) view, which emphasizes that educational research should be conducted in natural settings so that researchers can authentically understand learning processes and classroom dynamics.

This study is classified as applied-reflective research using a qualitative-quantitative descriptive approach (Creswell, 2018 ; Sugiyono, 2020) The data collected include: Primary data: observations, speaking tests, student interviews, and field notes collected directly by the researcher. Secondary data: curriculum documents, syllabi, previous test scores, and visual documentation supporting classroom learning activities..

This mixed-methods approach aligns with the view of (Johnson, 2024) who states that combining qualitative and quantitative data provides researchers with the opportunity to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of educational phenomena.

The primary participants in this study were 37 students of Class X-14 at MAN 3 Jombang, who served as respondents. Additional data were obtained from the Arabic language teacher (as a collaborator) and the principal (as a key informant), whose perspectives contributed to the interpretation and reflection stages. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, meaning subjects were chosen based on criteria of suitability and direct involvement in the learning process (Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015).

This approach allowed the researcher to ensure that the data collected were highly relevant and aligned with the context and objectives of the study (McMillan,2010 ; Sugiyono,2020). The research was conducted in two action cycles, each consisting of three core PPE stages: Planning, Production, and Evaluation (Kemmis, 1988;Arikunto, 2019)

1. Planning: The researcher designed the learning implementation plan by integrating a contextual learning approach with realia-based media. These media included tangible learning aids (e.g., school tools, physical objects, printed images of public places) relevant to the lesson theme. Data collection instruments (observation checklists, speaking test rubrics, interview guides) were also prepared (Bogdan, 2007; Sugiyono, 2020)
2. Production: Learning activities were carried out in the classroom by the researcher in collaboration with the Arabic language teacher. Students participated in interactive speaking exercises using real objects to stimulate communication in Arabic, following contextual learning scenarios designed during the planning stage (Hopkins, 2011).
3. Evaluation: After each cycle, the researcher conducted evaluations through observation, final tests, and interviews. The results were analyzed to assess the development of students' speaking skills, determine the effectiveness of the interventions, and identify whether a second cycle was needed for further improvement (Arikunto, 2019; Kemmis, 1988).

Documentation: Photos, videos, and student work (e.g., worksheets, audio recordings) were collected to support and validate the findings (Moleong, 2021;Hopkins, 2011).

The data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches: Data reduction: The researcher filtered and grouped the data based on key indicators such as speaking performance, participation, and engagement. Data presentation: The reduced data were presented in the form of tables, graphs, and descriptive

summaries. Conclusion drawing: Conclusions were made by comparing test results from both cycles and validating observation data with interview responses (triangulation).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The urgency of this study stems from the pressing need for a more contextual and communicative model of Arabic language learning at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The low level of students' speaking skills indicates that traditional approaches have not produced adequate results. Moreover, this study can serve as a reference for Arabic language teachers in designing instruction that is not only content-centered but also focused on meaningful and sustainable learning experiences for students. In general, the findings of this study are expected to enrich both practical and theoretical references in the development of foreign language teaching methods, particularly Arabic, in religion-based secondary schools. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of a contextual approach supported by realia media in improving the Arabic speaking skills of Grade X students at MAN 3 Jombang.

The findings are presented based on three main focuses: the results of speaking skills tests, observations of classroom activities, and student interviews.

Results of the Speaking Skills Test

The measurements were conducted in two stages: Cycle I and Cycle II. The data were analyzed using the mean score, standard deviation (SD), and a paired t-test.

Table 1. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Speaking Skills Test

Stage	N	Mean (M)	SD
Pre-Cycle	34	60.21	8.57
Cycle I	34	72.14	7.98
Cycle II	34	81.76	6.32

Based on the results of the speaking skills tests conducted in the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, a significant improvement in scores was observed. In the pre-cycle stage, the students' mean score was only 60.21 with a standard deviation of 8.57, indicating that speaking skills were still low and that students' learning outcomes varied considerably. After the implementation of the intervention in Cycle I, the mean score increased to 72.14 with a standard deviation of 7.98. This score approached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 75) and fell into the moderate category. In Cycle II, the students' mean score further increased to 81.76 with a standard deviation of 6.32, exceeding the KKM and reaching the high category. The decrease in the standard deviation from 8.57 in the pre-cycle to 6.32 in Cycle II also indicates that students' learning outcomes became more evenly distributed.

Observation of Classroom Activities

The observed aspects included students' activeness, speaking confidence, vocabulary use, and speaking fluency.

Table 2. Percentage of Observed Aspects

Observed Aspects	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)
Activeness	67%	87%
Speaking Confidence	61%	85%
Vocabulary Use	70%	89%

Based on the observation results, there was a consistent improvement across all aspects of students' speaking skills between Cycle I and Cycle II. Student activeness increased from 67% to 87%, while speaking confidence rose from 61% to 85%. Vocabulary use also improved from 70% to 89%, and speaking fluency increased from 64% to 83%. Overall, the average increase reached approximately 20.5 percentage points, indicating that the implementation of the learning strategy was able to improve both the affective and technical aspects of Arabic speaking skills.

Results of Student Interviews

Interviews were conducted with six selected students as samples. The general findings from the interviews indicate the following: five out of six students felt that the use of realia media helped them better understand the meanings of vocabulary. All respondents stated that the learning process was more enjoyable and not monotonous. Four out of six students reported feeling more confident speaking in front of the class after the second cycle.

In addition, classroom observation results show a clear improvement in students' participation, confidence, and ability to express ideas during Arabic speaking activities. These findings indicate that the method employed supports not only cognitive development but also addresses affective aspects that are essential for communicative competence. The success of this approach can be attributed to the meaningful nature of contextual learning, in which students are actively engaged in scenarios that reflect real-life situations. Realia, as concrete instructional aids, help students visualize and internalize vocabulary and expressions more effectively, resulting in more natural and confident speech (Harsita et al., 2024).

These conditions reduce students' reliance on rote memorization and grammatical translation, which often hinder oral expression. Instead, students become more engaged and communicative, supported by relevant real objects that facilitate deeper understanding and language use. These results are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the effectiveness of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in second language instruction. Rifa'i et al. (2022a) demonstrated that CTL enhances student engagement and comprehension, while Harsita et al. (2024) highlighted the role of realia in improving oral interaction.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of contextual learning with realia-based media significantly improves students' Arabic speaking skills. The mean score increased from 60.21 in the pre-cycle to 72.14 in Cycle I and further rose to 81.76 in Cycle II. These findings indicate that learning linked to real-life contexts, supported by concrete materials, can effectively develop students' speaking proficiency Rifa'i et al. (2022c). This is in line with the views of (Johnson, 2002) and (Nurdiniawati, 2018) who assert that CTL makes learning more relevant to real-life situations. In addition (Sanjaya, 2006) as well as (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) emphasize that the use of concrete media and communicative interaction leads to more effective and evenly distributed learning outcomes among students.

Moreover, the implementation of CTL supported by realia not only succeeded in increasing students' average scores but also reduced disparities in learning outcomes among individuals. Therefore, this strategy is effective in developing better, more meaningful, and more applicable Arabic speaking skills for everyday life.

Data Visualization

To strengthen the analysis, the following graphs present the development of students' speaking skills: A line chart with error bars shows the increase in mean scores from the pre-cycle to Cycle II, with the error bars representing the standard deviation. A bar chart illustrates the comparison of mean scores at each stage more clearly.

Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills

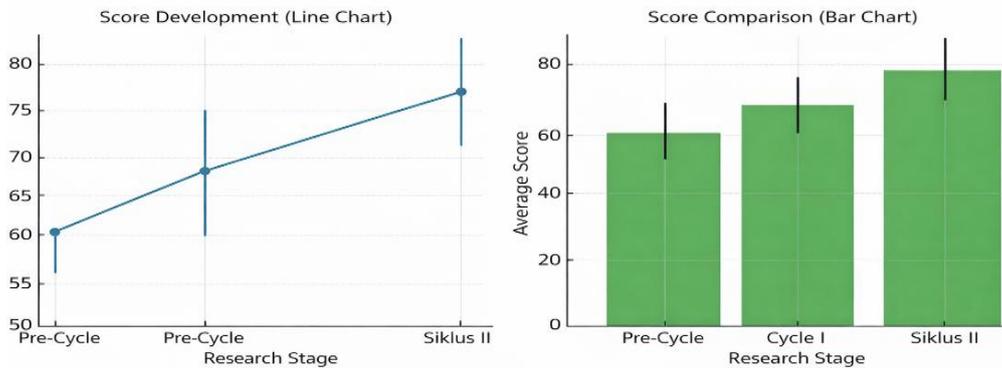


Figure. Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills Across Research Stages (Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II)

Figure 1. Bar Chart Comparing Mean Scores at Each Stage

The following is a combination of two visualizations: A line chart with error bars illustrating the trend of increasing mean scores and standard deviations. A bar chart emphasizing the comparison of mean scores at each research stage. Together, these visualizations reinforce the finding that students' speaking skills consistently improved from the pre-cycle to Cycle II, while also indicating that learning outcomes became more evenly distributed.

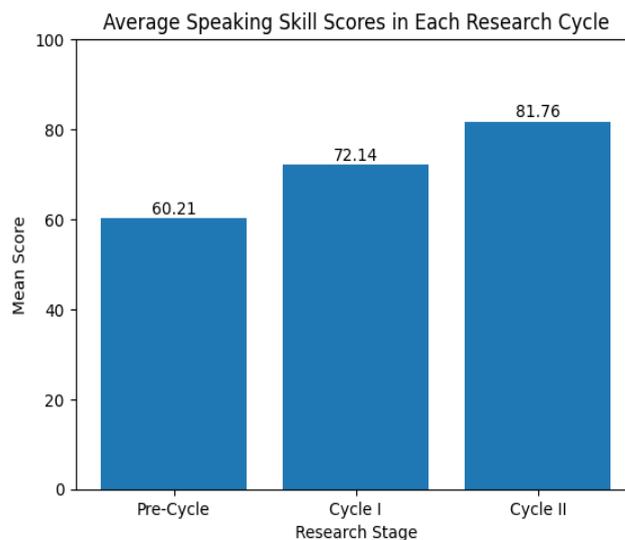


Figure 2. Bar Chart of Students' Speaking Score Improvement

The bar chart illustrates the development of students' average speaking skills from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle II. In the initial condition (pre-cycle), the average score reached only 60.21. After the implementation of instructional actions in Cycle I, the average score increased to 72.14, representing an improvement of approximately 11.93 points (19.81%). The

improvement continued in Cycle II, with the average score rising to 81.76, an increase of 9.62 points (13.34%) compared to Cycle I. Overall, there was a total increase of 21.55 points (35.79%) from the initial condition to the final stage. The largest gain occurred in Cycle I, indicating that the applied instructional strategy had a significant impact from the early stage.

Meanwhile, the increase in Cycle II was relatively smaller, yet it still demonstrates consistent progress. When compared with the minimum mastery criterion (KKM), the final achievement not only met but exceeded the required standard. These results confirm that the instructional actions implemented were effective in improving students' speaking skills. With a final average score above 80, the students' speaking ability can be categorized as good. This also indicates that the application of contextual learning methods supported by realia was able to encourage students to become more active, confident, and directly engaged in language practice.

Table 3. Paired t-Test Results

Stages Compared	t-value	df	p-value (two-tailed)	Description
Pre-Cycle vs Cycle I	9.34	41	0.000	Significant
Cycle I vs Cycle II	7.02	41	0.000	Significant

The results of the paired-samples t-test analysis indicate statistically significant differences in students' speaking skill scores at each stage of the study. In the comparison between the pre-cycle and Cycle I, the obtained value was $t(41) = 9.34$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that the implementation of the intervention in Cycle I led to a significant improvement in students' speaking ability. Furthermore, the comparison between Cycle I and Cycle II also yielded a value of $t(41) = 7.02$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant improvement at this stage as well.

Overall, the statistical tests confirm that the implementation of the instructional strategies in each cycle was effective in promoting the development of students' speaking skills. The magnitude of the obtained t values also indicates that the observed improvements were not only statistically significant but also had a strong impact in actual classroom practice.

Table 4. Effect Size (Cohen's d)

Comparison	Effect Size (d)	Interpretation
Pre-Cycle vs Cycle	1.46	Large
Cycle I vs Cycle II	1.14	Large

Table 4 presents the results of the effect size analysis (Cohen's d) used to assess the magnitude of the impact of the instructional intervention on students' speaking skills. Unlike significance testing, which only indicates whether a difference exists, effect size provides insight into the strength of the practical impact of the treatment implemented. The results show that in the comparison between the pre-cycle and Cycle I, the obtained value of $d = 1.46$ is classified as a large effect. This indicates that the intervention applied in Cycle I had a very strong impact on improving students' speaking ability compared to the initial condition.

Meanwhile, the comparison between Cycle I and Cycle II yielded a value of $d = 1.14$, which is also categorized as a large effect. This means that although the improvement was

not as large as in the first cycle, the intervention in Cycle II still exerted a significant and strong influence on the development of students' speaking skills. Overall, both effect size values demonstrate that the implemented instructional strategies were effective—not only statistically significant, but also practically impactful in enhancing students' speaking ability.

It is therefore recommended that the Arabic language curriculum integrate contextual strategies and the use of realia as standard components of instruction. Teacher training programs should include workshops on the design and utilization of realia-based instructional materials. In addition, schools should support the development of lesson plans and contextual activity modules that progressively foster oral language proficiency. This study has several limitations, including its focus on only one class in a single madrasah, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. The relatively short duration of the intervention (two action cycles) may not fully capture long-term language development. Furthermore, this study did not explore external factors such as individual student motivation, family environment, or socio-economic influences, all of which may also affect language learning outcomes.

The findings of this study not only demonstrate an improvement in students' average speaking skill scores but also reveal significant changes in the affective domain, such as increased self-confidence and greater willingness to speak in front of the class. This is consistent with the concept of self-efficacy in social learning theory, which emphasizes that success in performing a task can strengthen individuals' beliefs in their ability to face subsequent challenges (M. Monk et al., 2023).

Accordingly, students' positive learning experiences through the use of realia-based media become an important factor in building their confidence in communication. In addition, these results support sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction and connections to real-life contexts in language acquisition. When students practice speaking using concrete objects closely related to their daily lives, the process of language internalization occurs more naturally. This condition helps reduce the psychological barriers that often arise when students rely solely on memorization of vocabulary or abstract sentence patterns (van Compernelle & Williams, 2013).

From a methodological perspective, the significant improvement from the pre-cycle to Cycle II demonstrates that cyclical Classroom Action Research (CAR) is an effective method for continuously improving the teaching and learning process. Through reflection after Cycle I, teachers are able to refine their strategies in the subsequent cycle, making instruction more adaptive to students' needs Prihantoro & Hidayat (2019). A practical implication of these findings is the need to integrate realia-based media into the preparation of Arabic lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP*). Teachers can utilize simple objects such as books, stationery, maps, or even school facilities as conversation materials. In this way, learning remains economical yet effective. Moreover, realia can be combined with simple technologies, such as images or interactive videos, to further enrich contextualized learning Arsyad & Majid (2010).

The application of a contextual approach combined with realia-based media on the theme *المدرسة والبيئة بها* (the school and its environment) proved to be highly relevant to students' real-life conditions. In classroom practice, teachers can make use of various concrete objects available at school, such as the whiteboard, desks, chairs, books, stationery, as well as facilities like the library, mosque, garden, and canteen. Through this strategy, students not

only learn vocabulary related to the school environment but also immediately use it in authentic communicative activities.

For example, when introducing vocabulary such as *فصل* (classroom), *مكتبة* (library), *حديقة* (garden), atau *مسجد* (mosque), teachers can direct students to observe, identify, and describe these objects in real contexts. This activity helps students develop the habit of using Arabic practically, as they practice constructing sentences that match the immediate situations around them rather than merely memorizing vocabulary. This aligns with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which link learning materials to students' everyday experiences, thereby making learning more meaningful (Johnson, 2014) ; Sanjaya, 2006). Furthermore, the use of realia makes the language being learned more concrete and easier to understand, as students can see and associate vocabulary with real objects (Arsyad & Majid, 2010 ; Annisa & Safii, 2023).

Observational results also indicate that students were more enthusiastic when practicing speaking by utilizing their own school environment. They showed increased confidence when constructing simple sentences, such as: "هذه مكتبة المدرسة" (This is the school library) or "في المدرسة حديقة جميلة" (There is a beautiful garden at the school). These findings confirm that a contextual approach supported by realia-based media can strengthen vocabulary mastery, enhance speaking confidence, and accustom students to using Arabic in real-life contexts close to their daily experiences Richards & Rodgers (2014).

The increase in average scores surpassing the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) in Cycle II further confirms that a contextual approach supported by realia-based media not only facilitates vocabulary comprehension but also helps develop more applicable communication skills. This is particularly important because the primary goal of Arabic language instruction at the Madrasah Aliyah level is not merely mastery of grammatical rules, but also the ability to use the language communicatively in everyday life (E. B. Johnson, 2014; Richards & Rodgers 2014).

These findings also reinforce constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is constructed through experience and social interaction, particularly when learners are provided with authentic and relevant contexts Aprilliana et al. (2016). The results reflect a broader educational issue: persistent challenges in foreign language speaking proficiency may stem not only from students' abilities but also from the continued use of traditional instructional models. This study underscores the need for a shift toward communicative methodologies that are responsive to context, especially in faith-based secondary education settings, where Arabic functions both as a subject of study and as a functional language.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence that contextualized and experiential learning enhances language acquisition. Practically, it offers a replicable model for Arabic language teachers seeking to improve students' speaking skills. Teachers can make use of easily accessible realia and design learning experiences that are closely connected to students' everyday realities.

The progression from a low category (pre-cycle) to a moderate category (Cycle I) and ultimately to a high category (Cycle II) demonstrates that learning through a contextual approach (Contextual Teaching and Learning/CTL) supported by realia-based media is effective in improving students' speaking skills. Concrete realia help students understand vocabulary and language structures more easily while providing more authentic and

meaningful learning experiences. This strategy also enhances students' motivation and self-confidence in speaking and ensures equal opportunities for all learners to actively practice.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that a contextual approach combined with realia-based media successfully improved the Arabic speaking skills of Grade X students at MAN 3 Jombang. The improvement occurred gradually and encompassed both linguistic and affective aspects, such as increased self-confidence and more active student participation in oral communication.

Students' average speaking scores increased consistently, from 60.21 in the pre-cycle to 72.14 in Cycle I, and reached 81.76 in Cycle II. These gains were evident not only in vocabulary mastery and sentence structure but also in affective domains, including the development of self-confidence, greater willingness to speak in front of the class, and higher levels of engagement in oral communication activities.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strengthen the view that Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) supported by realia-based media provides more meaningful learning experiences. Learning processes grounded in real-life situations enable students to understand and internalize language more easily. This is also consistent with constructivist and sociocultural theories, which emphasize the role of social interaction and contextual relevance in language acquisition.

Practically, this study recommends that Arabic language teachers integrate realia and contextual strategies into their lesson planning in order to create a more communicative and relevant speaking environment.

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Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Fitriyatur Rosyidah was responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and drafting the initial manuscript. Moch. Wahib Dariyadi contributed to the research methodology, in-depth data analysis, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript to strengthen the theoretical and methodological framework. Moh. Khasairi was involved in the development and validation of the research instruments, data processing, and content review of the manuscript. Abd Rauf Tan Sri Hassan contributed through academic supervision, comprehensive evaluation of the study, provision of conceptual input, and final editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data used and generated in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, whether financial or non-financial, related to the conduct and reporting of this research.

AI Use Statement

In the preparation of this manuscript, the authors made limited use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language improvement, including grammar, clarity, and readability. All content has been reviewed,

revised, and verified by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the publication.

Additional Information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to: [fitriyaturrosyidah@gmail.com].

[Fitriyatur Rosyidah] <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0770-3052>

[Moch. Wahib Dariyadi] <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7056-8983>

[Moh. Khasairi] <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5244-7001>

[Abd Rauf Tan Sri Hassan] <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3939-4318>

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