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Arabic Language Debates to Enhance Speaking Competence at Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract:

This study aims to describe the characteristics, supporting factors, inhibitory factors and its implications in improving students' speaking competence at the Al Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding. The research is conducted using a qualitative approach through data collection methods that include interviews, observations, and discussion groups. The study subjects consist of active students who participate in debate activities and mentors or related teachers. Data were analyzed using NVivo software to perform coding and thematic analysis, which allows for the identification of main themes and sub-themes related to the implementation of the debate program. The research results show that the characteristics of the debate program include the use of Standard Arabic, the active role of mentors, and the structuring of ethically stimulating debate discussions. Supporting factors include teacher support, adequate facilities, and motivation from fellow students. On the other hand, inhibitory factors encompass limitations in preparation time, disturbances from the surrounding environment, and obstacles related to the complexity of the language. The analysis using NVivo reinforces the findings that active student involvement in debate not only enhances speaking skills but also strengthens confidence and ethical conduct during discussions. The implications of this program include the enhancement of communication, effective oral communication skills, and the formation of character-responsive students who engage in ethical speaking.

Keywords: Arabic language; debate; speaking competence

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Debat Bahasa Arab untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berbicara di Pesantren

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Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan karakteristik, faktor pendukung, faktor penghambat serta implikasinya dalam meningkatkan kompetensi berbicara siswa di Pondok Pesantren Al Amien Prenduan. Penelitian dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui metode pengumpulan data yang meliputi wawancara, observasi, dan kelompok diskusi. Subjek studi terdiri dari siswa aktif yang mengikuti kegiatan debat dan mentor atau guru terkait. Data dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak NVivo untuk melakukan pengkodean dan analisis tematik, yang memungkinkan identifikasi tema utama dan sub-tema yang terkait dengan pelaksanaan program debat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik program debat meliputi penggunaan bahasa Arab Standar, peran aktif mentor, dan penataan diskusi debat yang merangsang secara etis. Faktor pendukung antara lain dukungan guru, fasilitas yang memadai, dan motivasi dari sesama siswa. Di sisi lain, faktor penghambatan mencakup keterbatasan waktu persiapan, gangguan dari lingkungan sekitar, dan hambatan yang terkait dengan kompleksitas bahasa. Analisis menggunakan NVivo memperkuat temuan bahwa keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam debat tidak hanya meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara tetapi juga memperkuat kepercayaan diri dan perilaku etis selama diskusi. Implikasi dari program ini meliputi peningkatan komunikasi, keterampilan komunikasi lisan yang efektif, dan pembentukan siswa yang responsif karakter yang terlibat dalam berbicara etis.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Arab; debat; keterampilan berbicara

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INTRODUCTION

The Debate is one of the supporting activities that helps students speak Arabic. In addition to improving the ability to speak in Arabic (Besong 2016; Sanonguthai 2011; Tianame, Usman, and Muslem 2019). Students will also obtain skills to think critically, solve problems, respond quickly, and use Arabic in general effectively (Hidayanti and Maturedy 2023; Sari and Hasibuan 2022). Victory in competitive debate in the Arabic language shows significant achievements and provides a real contribution to improving students speaking skills. In addition, students who are actively involved in activity debate tend to be capable of conveying their views with good and correct arguments, as well as responding to questions with more belief (Zurriyati, 2020). Consistent and active involvement of students in Arabic debate activities is necessary to maximize the development of their speaking competence.

Speaking competence is widely recognized as a cornerstone of second language acquisition, including Arabic. It involves the ability to articulate ideas, arguments, and emotions clearly and effectively (Zurriyati, 2020; Nasution, 2020). More than linguistic mastery, speaking competence encompasses fluency, confidence, and adaptability to diverse communicative contexts. In Arabic learning, this competence is especially crucial because it enables learners to engage with both religious texts and contemporary discourse, thereby bridging linguistic and cultural dimensions. The development of speaking skills requires sustained and meaningful practice, which typically occurs in two phases: preparation and interaction (Andrian & Yul, 2023; Munir & Maslihah, 2021). During the preparatory phase, students refine basic abilities such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. The interactive phase, in contrast, emphasizes authentic communication, where learners negotiate meaning, respond spontaneously, and receive feedback. Teachers play a central role in creating supportive environments that encourage practice without the fear of constant correction. This aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasiz es that language learning is mediated by social interaction, particularly when learners engage in collaborative tasks within their *zone of proximal development* (ZPD).

Indicators of Arabic speaking ability include accurate pronunciation in accordance with *makhraj* and the characteristics of letters, fluency without excessive pauses, appropriate lexical choice, grammatical precision, and sensitivity to social and cultural norms (Bahruddin & Sahid, 2020). These dimensions highlight that Arabic competence is not merely technical but also social and cultural, requiring learners to adapt their speech to varying formal and informal contexts. Arabic holds a distinctive role as the language of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as an international medium spoken in more than 20 countries by over 200 million people (Sanah & Hamid, 2020; Fuente, 2022). Its use in formal domains, including academic debates, underscores its dual identity as both a sacred and global language. Employing

Modern Standard Arabic in debate therefore reflects respect for its heritage while simultaneously strengthening students' proficiency in formal communication.

Debate itself has a long history, dating back to Aristotle and Protagoras in Greece and the Chou Dynasty in China (Firmansyah, 2019; Onen, 2016). In modern education, it is more than a competitive exercise: debate fosters oral communication, critical reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving (Zahra, 2019). For language learners, debate provides a platform to practice authentic discourse, requiring them to argue persuasively, listen actively, and negotiate meaning. This reflects Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition is facilitated through interactional modifications such as clarification requests, comprehension checks, and reformulations. In debate, these processes are evident whenever students adjust their speech to ensure mutual understanding, thereby transforming communication into a learning mechanism. However, many studies on Arabic debate have treated it primarily as a competition, with limited attention to its pedagogical potential (Muttaqien & Faedurrohman, 2022). Without sustained training, student participation often becomes episodic and superficial. This study addresses that gap by exploring Arabic debate as a structured educational practice integrated into the curriculum of an Islamic boarding school.

Specifically, this research investigates three questions: (1) What are the characteristics of Arabic debate as implemented in Islamic boarding schools? (2) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence its practice? and (3) How does participation in debates contribute to the development of speaking competence? By employing Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Long's Interaction Hypothesis as analytical lenses, the study examines debate not only as a linguistic activity but also as a pedagogical space for building critical thinking, ethical communication, and character. This framing positions Arabic debate as both a medium for second language acquisition and a transformative educational practice rooted in social interaction.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a postpositivistic paradigm with a qualitative approach (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2018). This study focuses on Arabic debate activities at Al Amien Islamic Boarding School, Prenduan, Madura. The institution was chosen because it consistently integrates debates, both structured and unstructured, as a key part of its curriculum. The research explores the implications of these debates in enhancing students' speaking competence in Arabic. The chosen research design aims to deeply explore the practice of debates at the Islamic boarding school, including the dynamics among participants and their impact on speaking abilities. A qualitative design is appropriate as it enables an in-depth and contextual examination of students' experiences in debates (Jhon W. Creswell, 2017). The work process involves stages of observation, debate implementation,

interviews with students and teachers, and analysis of related documents, such as debate notes and student performance evaluations.

Participant

The study collects data from 15 students participating in debates, program supervisors, and related documents. These selected students demonstrate significant progress in Arabic speaking through their debate experiences. The authors purposefully chose informants to represent participants who have direct exposure to the program

Data Collection and Instrument

Data collection was carried out with three main techniques: interview in-depth, observation direct, and analysis documents. Interview deep done with students and teachers as mentor to understand role debate in enhancing skills speaking, the challenges faced, and results achieved. 15 respondents taken by researchers; this is what is included from students as debate training participants and teachers as supervisors. Observation done during activity debate in progress for catch interaction between students, implementation rule debate, and the dynamics that emerge. The analysis document covers study-to-rule debate, note evaluation, as well as transcript debate students. This technique is used to get comprehensive understanding and triangulation of data to increase validity.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, we utilized NVivo to ensure that our data was well-organized and reliable. This process involved identifying and addressing inconsistencies, such as irrelevant responses or patterns of minimal engagement from participants during qualitative data collection. Additionally, the analysis included coding participant inputs, examining themes, and removing non-substantive data to maintain the validity of the results.

The data analysis in this study was conducted using NVivo software through several systematic stages. First, data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation was imported into the NVivo application. The next step was data coding, where the researchers organized the data according to major themes such as speaking skills, the debate process, and the impact of debates on critical thinking. After coding, query functions were applied to identify recurring patterns, while matrix coding was used to explore relationships between themes, for example, the connection between debate duration and improvements in speaking skills. Visualization tools, including node charts and word clouds, were utilized to illustrate the thematic relationships and highlight frequently occurring terms. In the final stage, the results were interpreted to show that debates contributed significantly to enhancing students' self-confidence and speaking competence, supported by adequate facilities that sustained the debate process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics Debate Applied in Islamic Boarding School Institutions

Debates in Islamic boarding schools have very structured forms and rules with direct supervision from teachers as supervisors who act as moderators. The debate is carried out formally and in groups, with the aim of developing students' speaking and critical thinking skills (Astari, Yunaz, & Faturrahman, 2022). Debates in Islamic boarding schools do not only focus on the ability to argue, but also involve ethical and moral values in communicating. Three primary strategies are employed to develop arguments, including:

1. Debate at the Islamic boarding school has highly structured forms and rules with supervision direct from the teacher as acting mentor and moderator. Implementation debate done formally and in groups, with the objective of developing ability to talk and think critical students (Astari et al., 2022). Debate at the Islamic boarding school No only focus on ability to argue, but also involve values, ethics, and morals in communicating. There are three main methods applied in building arguments, namely: Strengthening Argument The arguments presented must be explained clearly so that the meaning is clear and can be understood well. Usually, things are done with disclosing the main sentence that becomes based on the arguments presented.
2. Delivery of Explanation
   After presenting their argument, the main speaker must provide an in-depth explanation of why their opinion is more credible than the opponent's argument. This explanation should align with the group's objectives stated at the beginning of the debate.
3. Use of Data and Facts
   The use of relevant data and facts is crucial to strengthening arguments. Supporting facts and data make opinions more convincing and harder to refute. Topics debated in Islamic boarding schools generally revolve around issues related to Islam. Arabic is the primary language used in these debates, training students to speak in Arabic with proper pronunciation.

Interruption is an important part of the debate, conducted only after permission is granted. This teaches debaters to think quickly and critically while listening carefully to their opponent's arguments. Interruption provides an opportunity to respond directly and precisely, honing the ability to remain focused on the arguments presented (Pratama, 2024). The evaluation conducted after the debate aims to provide feedback for participants, enabling them to learn from experience and improve their speaking and arguing skills in the future (Wade, 2016). Debates at Al-Amien Islamic Boarding School are not only academic exercises

but also part of a broader education that aims to deepen Islamic understanding, develop speaking skills, and enhance critical thinking. In debate activities, students are encouraged to construct arguments supported by strong evidence. Teachers, as mentors, play a key role in establishing strict rules, such as using Arabic, limiting time, and setting turn-taking, all designed to create a conducive educational debate environment. In addition to speaking, students are trained to listen attentively, take notes, highlight key points from opposing arguments, and provide relevant and polite responses. Emphasis on ethics and politeness in debates has proven to help students control emotions and present strong arguments without making personal attacks (Besong, 2016). These strict rules also create a conducive atmosphere, ensuring differences of opinion remain within the bounds of healthy discussion. Research findings indicate that the guidance and evaluation provided by teachers as mentors motivate students to argue politely and factually, contributing to moral education and intellectual development in Islamic boarding schools.

In general, the characteristics of structured debates in Islamic boarding schools have a positive impact on the development of students' personalities and social skills. The use of Arabic in debates not only enhances language skills but also strengthens students' self-confidence when speaking in front of the public (Shapson, 1988). In addition, students are trained to focus on delivering strong arguments without resorting to personal attacks, which fosters respect and promotes healthy and ethical communication. This debate program plays an important role in shaping students who are not only skilled in arguing but also exhibit politeness, respect for differences, and adherence to ethical communication (AlMaghlouth, Arvanitis, Cointet, & Hanafi, 2015).

The findings indicate that debates at Al-Amien Islamic Boarding School are conducted in a highly structured manner, supervised directly by teachers who serve as mentors and moderators. Debates are formal, group-based, and designed not only to enhance students' ability to argue but also to instill values of ethics and politeness in communication (Astari et al., 2022). This reflects Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, where teacher scaffolding provides structured guidance that allows students to develop linguistic and social skills within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Students are pushed to perform beyond their independent abilities by adhering to strict rules—such as speaking in Standard Arabic, respecting turn-taking, and maintaining ethical dialogue—while still receiving support from teachers and peers. From the perspective of Long's Interaction Hypothesis, structured interruptions and rebuttals create opportunities for negotiation of meaning. When students clarify, respond, or reformulate their statements, they modify both input and output, leading to measurable improvement in fluency and accuracy. Thus, the structured nature of debates supports not only discipline and ethics but also second language acquisition through interaction.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Implementation debate

Based on the results of interviews with all respondents regarding the supporting and inhibiting factors in debate activities at the Islamic boarding school, it was found that success in debates is heavily influenced by several important aspects. Key supporting factors include teacher support, the availability of facilities, and the role of friends and peers. These factors enable students to focus more effectively on arguing and debating. Clear guidance from teachers instills confidence when presenting arguments, while peers play a role in providing constructive criticism that enhances the quality of arguments (Wati & Maula, 2021).

Support from teachers in the form of guidance and effective education is one of the key factors for successful debates. This guidance helps students understand methods and develop logical and ethical arguments. Additionally, friends and peers provide motivation and encouragement through active participation, group practice, and constructive criticism. The availability of facilities, such as a comfortable and quiet room, also supports the smooth conduct of debate activities, allowing students to focus and concentrate better.

However, several inhibiting factors must be addressed, such as limited preparation time due to the dense schedule of other activities at the Islamic boarding school and disturbances from a noisy environment. These obstacles highlight the importance of adequate preparation time, a conducive environment, and good physical fitness in supporting the success of debate activities. Respondents' experiences indicate that peer influence is highly significant. Support from peers, whether in the form of constructive criticism or group practice, helps boost students' confidence in presenting arguments. Respondents also emphasized the importance of guidance from teachers, who provide clear directions for structuring arguments, ensuring that debate activities remain productive and focused. These findings align with previous studies, which suggest that adequate facilities and sufficient time allocation are crucial factors for successful training (Aflisia and Harahap 2019; Wahyuni, Ritonga, and Afrianti 2023). Therefore, the challenge that needs to be addressed is providing sufficient time and a conducive environment to enable students to participate optimally in debate activities.

The results may be interpreted in light of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Marginson & Dang, 2017). From a sociocultural perspective, teacher support and peer collaboration act as scaffolding that allows students to construct knowledge collectively and gain confidence when presenting arguments. Facilities such as quiet classrooms also provide the necessary environment for learners to operate effectively within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Conversely, inhibiting factors like limited preparation time and noisy surroundings restrict opportunities for guided interaction, thereby limiting the scaffolding process (Silalahi, 2019). From the interactionist perspective, debates become effective only when students are given sufficient time and space to engage in negotiation of meaning. Inadequate preparation or environmental disturbances

reduce the frequency and quality of these interactions, ultimately hindering progress in fluency and accuracy. Thus, the presence of supporting factors enhances both the quality of interaction and the scaffolding available, while inhibiting factors constrain the opportunities for meaningful language development. These insights emphasize that debate pedagogy requires not only teacher involvement but also adequate institutional support to ensure optimal outcomes in Arabic speaking competence.

Implications of Debates for Students in Enhancing Speaking Skills

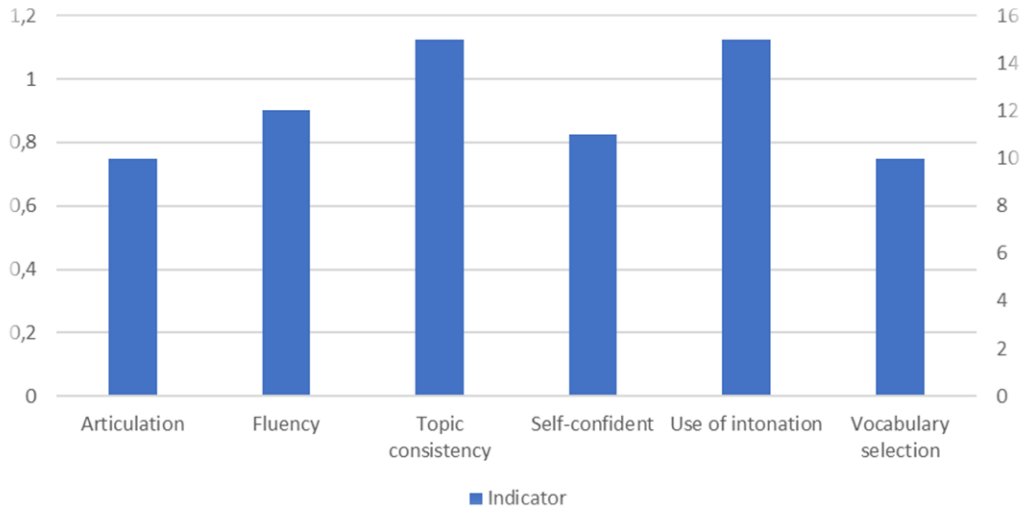
The improvement of clarity and fluency in speaking Arabic is explored through six main aspects: language clarity, articulation, speaking fluency, self-confidence, topic consistency, and the use of intonation (Hidayanti & Maturedy, 2023). This research focuses on the importance of oral communication in a foreign language as a means of cultural expression and a reflection of self-confidence in communication. Interview results with respondents reveal that their experiences in speaking Arabic reflect varying levels of mastery in each aspect. For instance, while some respondents face difficulties in articulating certain letters, such as 'ع' and 'خ,' they acknowledge an improvement in word selection after undergoing various exercises. Additionally, several respondents noted their ability to maintain topic consistency and adjust intonation according to the conversational context. However, some respondents admitted that maintaining topic consistency was a personal challenge, as nervousness often tempted them to shift topics. With practice, particularly speaking in front of peers, they learned to focus on a single topic without losing their train of thought. On the other hand, certain respondents successfully improved their intonation skills after recognizing its importance in maintaining message clarity and making conversations more engaging and dynamic. Based on this data, it can be concluded that mastery of Arabic is not solely determined by linguistic abilities but is also significantly influenced by consistent practice, self-confidence, and a supportive environment (Rapanta and Badran 2016; Rapanta and Badran 2016) These factors synergistically enhance students' oral communication skills.

Table 1. Indicator skill speak

No	Respondents	Indicator Skills Speak					
		1 Articulation	2 Smoothness	3 Consistency Topics	4 believe self	5 Use intonation	6 Word selection
1	Respondent 1	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
2	Respondent 2	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
3	Respondent 3	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Respondent 4	×	✓	×	✓	×	×
5	Respondent 5	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
6	Respondent 6	✓	×	×	×	×	✓
7	Respondent 7	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Respondent 8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
9	Respondent 9	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Respondent 10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Respondent 11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
12	Respondent 12	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Respondent 13	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
14	Respondent 14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
15	Respondent 15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ : Did not experience difficulty
x : experiencing difficulty

Figure 1. Respondents did not experiences difficulties



In this research, an assessment was conducted on 15 respondents to identify the extent to which they experienced difficulties with six communication indicators: articulation, fluency, topic consistency, confidence, intonation usage, and word choice. The results show that the majority of respondents did not experience

difficulties with the indicators of fluency and intonation usage, with most obtaining a checkmark (✓) for these aspects. However, some respondents reported specific challenges. Respondent 4 showed notable improvement, with fluency being the only indicator that posed no difficulty, while the other five indicators presented obstacles. Conversely, Respondents 1 and 5 stood out for their consistent and solid performance, demonstrating minimal or no obstacles across all indicators and reflecting strong masteryof effective communication skills.

Furthermore, the data shows that articulation is one of the areas that often presents challenges, as observed in Respondents 2, 3, 12, and 13. However, they were still able to perform well in other indicators. This differs from Respondent 6, who faced difficulties in four out of six indicators but demonstrated strength in articulation and word choice. These results highlight individual variations in communication abilities, indicating that each indicator presents varying levels of difficulty for different respondents. Overall, the distribution of responses illustrates the general strengths and challenges faced by respondents across the assessed communication aspects. These findings align with research showing that letters not present in a student's native language can pose challenges and become obstacles in communication (Nasution, 2020). Other studies have also emphasized that a supportive speaking environment can reduce anxiety and enhance fluency in speaking (Munir & Maslihah, 2021). Furthermore, experts have noted that proper intonation and consistency in delivering messages can enhance the appeal and clarity of communication (Sayed, Bani Younes, Alkhayyat, Adhamova, & Teferi, 2024). Awareness of the importance of correct pronunciation and self-confidence, gained through consistent practice, is crucial for improving clarity and fluency in speaking Arabic. These factors collectively support the creation of effective oral communication in Arabic.

The improvement of the ability to speak Arabic is influenced by several factors, including the intensity of practice, speaking experience, and a supportive environment. As experts have noted, consistent practice can enhance the ability to maintain topic focus and strengthen fluency in speaking (Zhou & Abd Halim, 2022). Additionally, support from a positive environment has been shown to reduce anxiety and tension, which can hinder fluency when speaking foreign languages. Other studies have also found that practicing in small groups can boost confidence and help participants speak more smoothly (Aziz, 2020). These findings indicate that improvements in clarity and fluency in speaking Arabic are influenced not only by linguistic aspects but also by speaking experience, mental readiness, and self-confidence as a speaker.

Debat as a Means to Enhance Participation and Responsive in Interactive Communication

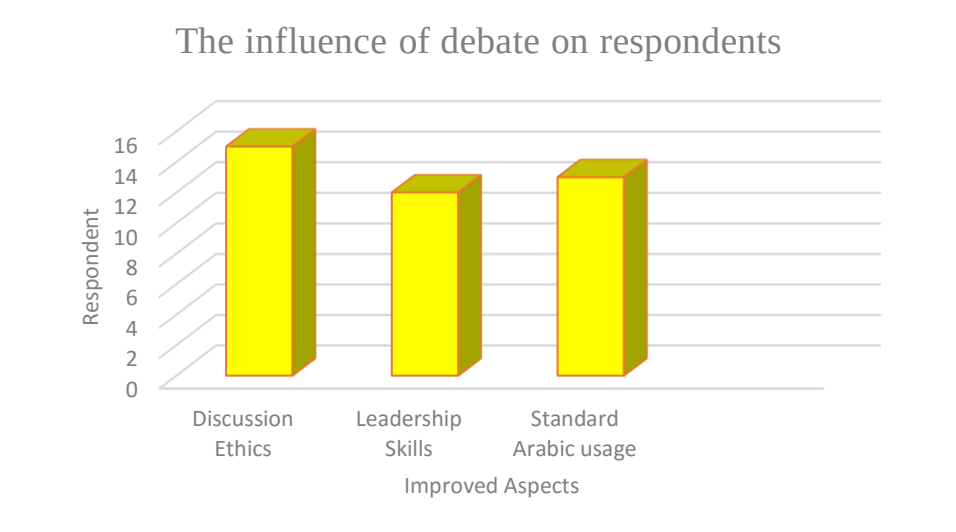
Based on the data obtained, active participation in debates is a key factor influencing participants' responsiveness. This involvement is reflected in the

participants' ability to respond quickly, directly, and precisely to their opponents' arguments. Participants report that they tend to be more active listeners and provide responses without delay. During debates, participants are given the opportunity to respond to arguments, oppose, refute, or add information, which demonstrates their ability to think quickly and adapt to changing situations (Ni'mah et al. 2019; (Wijaya, 2019).

Several respondents indicate that their debate experience helps them become more responsive in catching key points from their main opponents, allowing them to provide timely and relevant responses. Other respondents reveal that through debate practice, they become more skilled at listening attentively and organizing relevant responses. Active participation not only enhances responsiveness but also maintains the quality and focus of discussions, ensuring that conversations remain effective and centered on relevant topics.

Active involvement in debates encompasses various communication skills that require full participation as well as timely responses to arguments. The ability to debate covers several important aspects, such as listening carefully to understand the essence of the opponent's argument, taking notes, identifying key points for effective responses, and responding without lengthy pauses to maintain the flow of discussion. Participants who are engaged and active in debates also demonstrate the ability to analyze and consider various viewpoints within a short time, allowing them to provide more relevant responses. Quick and structured responses help maintain the focus of the discussion and ensure that every argument is addressed appropriately without diverting attention to unrelated topics. A study supports these findings, indicating that optimal involvement in debates can enhance participants' ability to respond to opponents' arguments(Zhou & Abd Halim, 2022). This involvement demonstrates that debates can increase responsiveness, making communication more dynamic and interactive (Rapanta & Badran, 2016).

Figure 2. the influence of debate on respondents



Research results show that debates make a significant contribution in three aspects: discussion ethics, leadership skills, and the use of Standard Arabic. Of the 15 respondents involved, all reported improvements in discussion ethics. This reflects that through debate, participants are capable of enhancing their ethics and attitudes in exchanging opinions, including the ability to listen, appreciate opposing views, and argue politely. This aspect is key to forming an effective and constructive communication environment for healthy discussions. In addition, 12 out of 15 respondents also indicated improvements in leadership skills through their participation in debates. Debate activities help all respondents hone their ability to lead discussions, convey arguments with confidence, and manage group dynamics. The use of Standard Arabic also experienced an increase among 13 respondents, showing that debate activities enhance speaking skills, including grammatical accuracy and proper pronunciation. This underscores the positive impact of debate in developing communication competence and using language professionally. Other studies have mentioned that debate practice can increase empathy, as participants learn to listen to and appreciate arguments from opponents, thereby strengthening ethics in discussions (Firmansyah, 2019). These findings confirm the importance of maintaining the use of Arabic in formal contexts and promoting its usage in official communication. Thus, debate not only enhances speaking and leadership skills but also reinforces values of respect and sensitivity to others' viewpoints.

Data obtained show that debate significantly contributes to the improvement of ethics. It discusses skills in leadership and communication, as well as the use of Standard Arabic in race debate or in learning Arabic through the debate method. This approach reflects respect for the majesty and uniqueness of the Arabic language, which is also the language of holy books and religious guidelines for Muslims around the world. Other studies indicate that debate experience can increase awareness and encourage participants to value different views in reaching constructive understanding (Cinganotto, 2019). Respondents in the study stated that debate makes them more open to accepting criticism because they are accustomed to engaging with diverse arguments based on opponents' logic, facts, and data. This underscores the importance of maintaining Arabic in official contexts and promoting its use in formal communication.

This study shows that the debate program at Al Amien Islamic Boarding School significantly contributes to the improvement of students' speaking competence, particularly in the use of Arabic. This program has special characteristics, including the implementation of Standard Arabic, strict supervision by teachers, and an emphasis on ethical argumentation, all of which encourage students to think critically and argue politely. Supporting factors, such as the active involvement of teachers, adequate facilities, and peer support, have proven to enhance students' motivation and skills. However, the obstacles faced include limitations in preparation time, environmental disturbances, and challenges in using complex

language. Overall, this program helps students become more self-confident communicators who are critical thinkers and ethical individuals.

The debate program at Al Amien Islamic Boarding School serves not only as a means for practicing speaking skills but also as a vessel for character formation, leadership, and ethical communication based on Islamic values. This reflects that debate, in the context of an Islamic boarding school, holds significance beyond the mere transfer of linguistic knowledge; it becomes an educational process that shapes students into ethical, insightful, and well-rounded individuals capable of critical thinking and articulating their opinions (Muttaqien & Faedurrohman, 2022). The importance of using Standard Arabic in debate activities underscores respect for the specificity of the language, which is the language of religion and the science of communication (Zurriyati, 2020). Adherence to linguistic rules demonstrates that mastery of language is not merely a technical skill but also a reflection of the student's commitment to religious values. This connection highlights the competence developed in speaking through debate, emphasizing that it is not separate from the spiritual dimension. Consequently, this fosters a close relationship between language mastery and an understanding of moral values (Davis et al. 2016; Wade 2016).

Support provided by teachers through guidance and strict rules functions as an amplifier of students' character in upholding ethical discussions. This implies that debate skills are not only developed through communication techniques but also through the noble manners and morals maintained during the discussion process. Consequently, teacher involvement extends beyond merely giving directions; they become facilitators of students' transformation into critical thinkers. However, there are still challenges, such as a lack of motivation among students. The limitations of time and environmental disturbances indicate that efforts to improve speaking skills at Islamic boarding schools are still hampered by external factors that require more attention. Suboptimal management, insufficient time, and a lack of a supportive environment can weaken focus and participation among students. Therefore, improving speaking competence cannot be achieved through partial efforts; a comprehensive approach is needed that includes enhancing infrastructure, better time management, and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere (Ninoersy & Akmal, 2020). The debate program at Islamic boarding schools demonstrates that speaking skills not only originate from practice but also from involvement in a social environment, guidance based on values, and the instillation of strong ethics. This finding shows that Islamic boarding schools are capable of providing holistic education, where speaking abilities are integrated with character and moral values, ultimately creating resilient, insightful students who can convey their thoughts respectfully. These findings align with other studies that confirm that engaging in debate increases empathy and listening skills, while ongoing participation strengthens responsiveness to arguments (Shapson, 1988). H However, it differs from other studies that emphasize the importance of a

supportive environment for reducing anxiety in speaking. This research particularly highlights the formation of character and the distinctive Islamic values promoted in Islamic boarding schools (Pradi Khusufi Syamsu, 2022). Thus, the approach taken by Islamic boarding schools in their debate programs adds an additional dimension of emphasis on the integration of linguistic competence and moral coaching.

The findings reveal that students at Al-Amien Islamic Boarding School demonstrate varied levels of mastery in Arabic speaking skills across six aspects: clarity, articulation, fluency, confidence, topic consistency, and intonation. While some respondents reported challenges in articulating sounds unfamiliar in their native language, others showed notable progress in word choice, intonation, and topic maintenance. Overall, debates provided authentic opportunities for students to strengthen fluency, manage nervousness, and improve self-confidence in public speaking. These results highlight that speaking competence is shaped not only by linguistic ability but also by consistent practice, peer support, and a conducive learning environment.

These patterns can be further explained through Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes that negotiation of meaning during debates—through clarification, rebuttals, and interruptions—enables learners to refine both fluency and accuracy. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory also accounts for the teacher's scaffolding and peer collaboration that guide students to operate within their Zone of Proximal Development, thereby promoting both linguistic and social development. Additionally, Freire's concept of critical pedagogy resonates in this context, as debates foster dialogic interaction that cultivates empathy, respect, and leadership, making the learning process transformative rather than merely technical.

Overall, the debate program at Al-Amien demonstrates that structured interaction, guided by teachers and supported by peers, is an effective pedagogical tool for Arabic language learning. Beyond improving linguistic competence, it nurtures ethics, confidence, and leadership skills, aligning language acquisition with character formation. These findings contribute to the broader field of Arabic pedagogy by illustrating that debate functions as a holistic educational practice—integrating communication skills, critical thinking, and moral values—to prepare students as articulate, ethical, and socially responsible communicators.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates how the debate program at Al Amien Islamic Boarding School fosters character development, values leadership, and promotes ethical communication based on Islamic principles while enhancing students' speaking abilities. Key findings indicate that this debate program facilitates the integration of strong moral principles and manners with the ability to speak and understand the complex Arabic language. As a result, students are not only able to communicate effectively but also behave ethically during discussions. One of the most significant conclusions is that, while upholding the high standards and ethics of Islam, discussion activities contribute to students' self-worth, critical thinking skills, and leadership ethos. Furthermore, the role of professors as mentors extends beyond technical argumentation; it becomes crucial to the process of developing students' moral character. This makes discussion an all-encompassing educational process that links language proficiency with the development of moral principles, attitudes, resilience, and the capacity to express opinions respectfully. External obstacles, such as time constraints and disruptive environments, demonstrate that technical aspects like time management and learning environments significantly impact coaching efficacy. Therefore, to enhance their communication abilities, students require a holistic approach that includes a supportive and encouraging environment, value-based mentoring, and the integration of ethics and communication skills into a comprehensive learning process. Globally, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools, this research enhances discourse education centered on communication and values by demonstrating that the development of speaking abilities must work in tandem with the construction of morals and character. However, this research has significant limitations, such as focusing on a single institution's curriculum, which may not accurately reflect dynamics in other settings, and limited observational time that affects in-depth analysis. We anticipate that future research will address contextual variance and explore debate education practices in greater depth.

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