



Improving Elementary Students' Speaking Skills through Happy Holiday Activities Integrated with Islamic Values in Magelang City

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study examines the effectiveness of the *Happy Holiday* program in enhancing elementary students' speaking skills through engaging, value-based learning activities grounded in Islamic teachings. Speaking ability is a fundamental component of children's communicative competence, yet many students in Magelang City continue to experience difficulties in expressing ideas confidently in public settings.

Methodology: Using a qualitative descriptive design, the research involved 193 students from grades III–V across several schools, with data collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with students and parents, and documentation of learning activities. Thematic analysis revealed that the program successfully created an enjoyable, interactive, and low-pressure environment that improved students' fluency, vocabulary mastery, clarity of expression, and willingness to speak.

Main Findings: Activities such as storytelling about the Prophet's companions, collaborative discussions, and Islamic-themed educational games not only enhanced students' linguistic performance but also strengthened moral values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and self-confidence. Integrating ethical character formation into speaking practice proved effective in fostering polite and meaningful communication.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of this study lies in its development of a culturally rooted pedagogical model that merges non-formal learning, Islamic character education, and oral language development an approach rarely explored in Indonesian elementary education research. By demonstrating that holiday-based programs can reduce gadget dependency while enriching both communication skills and moral awareness, this study offers an innovative framework for alternative language learning initiatives that are contextually relevant, enjoyable, and character-oriented.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential language skills that must be developed from an early age, particularly at the elementary level [1]-[3]. Beyond its function in supporting students' achievements in Indonesian language learning, oral communication builds self-confidence and equips learners to express ideas effectively in public contexts [4]-[6]. Therefore, continuous practice and appropriate guidance are necessary to nurture children's courage in delivering their opinions [7]-[9]. However, many previous studies have tended to emphasize reading

and writing, while oral communication skills have received less attention. This tendency shows a clear gap between literacy accomplishments and the actual growth of students' speaking abilities in primary education.

In most classrooms, literacy activities still dominate over speaking practices. Observations in several elementary schools in Magelang, including Elementary School 03 Banjarnegoro in the Mertoyudan District, revealed that oral activities were less prioritized than reading and writing tasks. As a result, many pupils remain reluctant to share ideas, experience fear when speaking publicly, and often find it difficult to structure their thoughts coherently [10]-[13]. These issues highlight the need for innovative and enjoyable learning strategies that can enhance both fluency and confidence through experiences that extend beyond formal classroom settings.

School holidays, on the other hand, bring another side to this challenge. For children, holidays represent joyful breaks from school routines [14], [15]. However, many parents express concern that leisure time is often filled with excessive gadget use, which can cause eye fatigue, reduce social interactions, and lead to dependency [16], [17]. This condition calls for creative and meaningful alternatives that blend entertainment with education. Collaboration between teachers and parents becomes essential to ensure that children's free time remains productive, enjoyable, and beneficial for their social and cognitive development [18]-[20]. From a pedagogical perspective, such collaboration opens authentic spaces for children to communicate naturally within social and cultural contexts.

Addressing these challenges, the *Happy Holiday Program* was designed to combine fun, creativity, and moral learning in children's leisure activities. The program included storytelling, dramatization, group discussions, and educational games [21], [22], all infused with Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, courage, and cooperation [23], [24]. These values not only contribute to moral education but also motivate students to communicate with purpose and sincerity. The initiative seeks to transform leisure time into meaningful learning experiences that strengthen both language and character development.

Although previous studies have examined speaking-skill development in elementary schools through methods such as storytelling, group discussions, role play, digital media, and educational games, most of this research has focused solely on linguistic outcomes without systematically integrating moral or religious values as a foundation for language learning. Studies that incorporate Islamic values generally discuss character education, politeness, or ethical communication, yet they rarely explore how these values can function as structured pedagogical tools for enhancing speaking fluency, confidence, and interactional competence. In addition, research on holiday learning programs tends to emphasize reducing gadget dependency or providing alternative activities during school breaks, with little attention to how such non-formal learning environments can be optimized for communication skill development. Consequently, there is a clear gap in understanding how Islamic-value-based holiday programs conducted outside the classroom and rooted in cultural-religious storytelling can simultaneously strengthen speaking skills and moral growth. The *Happy Holiday Program* fills this gap by offering empirical evidence on how interactive, faith-integrated, and community-based activities can effectively support children's oral communication while nurturing ethical behaviors.

While previous research has widely discussed literacy programs and learning activities during holidays, there is still limited exploration of Islamic value-based programs as a means of developing speaking competence among elementary learners [25]-[27]. This study was therefore conducted to analyze the implementation of the *Happy Holiday Program* as an approach to enhance students' speaking abilities in Magelang City [28], [29]. Specifically, it aims to describe how Islamic value-oriented holiday activities can foster students' fluency, confidence, and moral awareness in verbal communication. The study's results are expected to offer insights into alternative pedagogical models that balance linguistic mastery with moral and character education.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out during the third and fourth weeks of June 2024 and involved several elementary schools located in and around Magelang City, including Islamic Elementary School Ihsanul Fikri, Elementary School Mutual 2, Islamic Elementary School Al Iman, and Elementary School 03 Banjarnegoro. The research was conducted over a two-week period, engaging 193 students who participated in the *Happy Holiday Program*, a learning initiative grounded in Islamic values. At the end of the program, participants who demonstrated outstanding engagement and communication skills were recognized for their achievements [30]-[32]. A qualitative descriptive design was employed to explore the implementation and learning outcomes of the *Happy Holiday Program* in depth. This research approach was chosen because it focuses on understanding social interactions and participants' lived experiences in a natural setting [33]-[35]. The descriptive qualitative method provided flexibility in interpreting children's verbal behaviors and interactions throughout the program, allowing a holistic understanding of how the activities supported the development of speaking abilities.

The study involved students from grades three to five across the selected schools. A purposive sampling technique was adopted based on the following criteria: (1) students who took part actively throughout the entire program, and (2) schools that showed institutional and parental commitment to the program's objectives. With a total of 193 students, the sample size was deemed sufficient to represent the diversity of learners participating in

non-formal education environments in Magelang. A qualitative sample exceeding 100 participants is generally adequate for identifying consistent patterns and confirming themes that emerge from the data.

Three data collection methods were utilized to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research focus: (1) *Participant observation*, which allowed the researchers to record students' verbal expressions, gestures, and confidence levels during various activities; (2) *Semi-structured interviews* with students, parents, and facilitators to gather in-depth perspectives about the program's influence; and (3) *Documentation*, including photographs, field notes, and attendance records to support data triangulation [36]. The instruments were designed based on the main research variable oral communication skills which included four key indicators: (1) clarity of expression, (2) vocabulary mastery, (3) self-confidence in speaking, and (4) interactional competence. Each indicator was operationalized through an observation checklist and interview guide adapted from validated speaking assessment frameworks for elementary-level learners.

Validation of the research instruments was conducted through expert judgment by two lecturers specializing in language education. They reviewed the indicators for content accuracy and conceptual clarity. To maintain reliability, data coding was cross-checked among researchers, and inter-rater agreement was applied to ensure consistency in observational scoring, minimizing subjective bias. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model [37], which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To enrich interpretation, thematic analysis was also used to identify recurring ideas and relationships between program activities and improvements in students' speaking abilities. Although qualitative in nature, the inclusion of 193 participants across multiple institutions strengthened the analytical depth and ensured that the identified patterns reflected a stable and credible depiction of linguistic development.

Credibility of the results was reinforced through both source and method triangulation. Observational records were compared with interview data and documentation findings to verify accuracy and consistency [38]. This triangulation procedure enhanced the study's reliability, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in factual evidence and could be transferred to similar educational settings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from observations and interviews revealed that the *Happy Holiday Program*, which adopted an interactive and participatory learning model, significantly enhanced students' involvement and speaking performance [39], [40]. The activities were conducted in a mosque setting, providing a comfortable and culturally familiar environment that aligned with students' religious backgrounds. This atmosphere fostered openness, confidence, and respect during communication, enabling learners to express their thoughts freely. Such a learning context effectively supported the study's main purpose to investigate how interactive, value-based learning could strengthen both linguistic competence and moral growth.

Each learning session was organized using student-centered strategies, including storytelling about personal holiday experiences, dramatization, group discussions, and collaborative presentations [41]-[43]. These methods encouraged students to explore various forms of oral expression, which gradually improved their fluency and public speaking confidence. The findings are consistent with Purwanto, who observed that embedding learning in cultural and religious contexts enhances students' motivation and participation [44]. Hence, the data affirm that contextualized and value-driven programs are powerful tools for improving speaking proficiency in young learners.

To support these findings, Table 1 illustrates the improvement distribution across four aspects of students' speaking performance clarity, confidence, vocabulary use, and interactional ability observed throughout the program.

Table 1. Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills through the Happy Holiday Program

Indicator	Description of Improvement	Supporting Observation
Clarity of Expression	Students spoke more coherently and structured their ideas logically.	Observed during group discussion and storytelling sessions.
Confidence	Students became less hesitant and volunteered more frequently to speak.	Consistently noted in daily reflections by facilitators.
Vocabulary Use	Expanded vocabulary relevant to Islamic themes and moral values.	Evident in storytelling and dramatization activities.
Interactional Ability	Improved turn-taking and polite responses during discussions.	Strengthened throughout the two-week program.

As shown in Table 1, students demonstrated clear progress in all four indicators, particularly in articulating ideas and building confidence. This indicates that the *Happy Holiday* activities successfully created engaging opportunities for meaningful speaking practice within value-based contexts.

Moreover, Islamic moral values were intentionally woven into every session, especially during storytelling and reflection activities [45]-[47]. The selected narratives such as stories of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions, Palestinian children, and notable Qur’anic scholars combined moral teaching with language learning. This integration aligns with prior research highlighting that narrative-based moral education enhances empathy, communication, and responsibility [48]. Observations showed that students began using polite language, demonstrating honesty in storytelling, and showing accountability in group tasks signs that linguistic and moral development occurred concurrently.

Before discussing the visual documentation, it is important to emphasize that the program’s positive atmosphere played a vital role in sustaining student enthusiasm. Each day began with games and motivational activities that helped children feel relaxed and ready to participate. Sessions were held from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., providing ample time for repeated practice and reinforcement [49]. Facilitators noted gradual improvements not only in students’ formal speaking abilities (such as storytelling in front of peers) but also in informal interactions during breaks and collaborative tasks.



Figure 1. Students participating in storytelling sessions during the Happy Holiday Program

Figure 1, depicts students narrating stories about the Prophet’s companions while being guided by facilitators. The photo captures their active participation, attentiveness, and mutual respect, which reflect the program’s supportive learning environment. The integration of Islamic values ensured that the development of communication skills went hand in hand with character formation. This dual focus resonates with the philosophy of holistic education, which emphasizes the unity of cognitive, affective, and moral aspects. By internalizing values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility within each activity, students came to understand that speaking is not merely a linguistic exercise but also an ethical practice reflecting one’s character.

At the program’s conclusion, a closing ceremony was held to appreciate the most active participants. The event served as tangible evidence of students’ increased confidence and enthusiasm.



Figure 2. Recognition Ceremony for Active Participants

Figure 2 illustrates the awarding session, where facilitators presented certificates to students who showed exceptional engagement and communication growth. This celebration symbolized the success of the Happy Holiday Program in nurturing not only communicative competence but also moral awareness.

Throughout the implementation, Islamic principles such as sincerity, polite communication, and responsibility were consistently emphasized [50]-[52]. These values were not only taught verbally but also modeled by facilitators and teachers [53]. Students were encouraged to share reflections, tell stories with moral lessons, and discuss Islamic figures' lives, establishing a direct connection between language learning and ethical behavior. This finding supports Karim et al., who assert that integrating Islamic values into literacy learning enhances both moral and academic outcomes [54].

Rather than concentrating solely on linguistic accuracy, the program promoted comprehensive communicative competence. It cultivated articulate yet respectful speakers through joyful and meaningful experiences. Storytelling, discussions, and role-playing activities created enjoyable pathways for language development, aligning with Rediani et al., who found that creative, context-based approaches boost both literacy and confidence among elementary students [55]. Two main components interactive learning strategies and internalization of Islamic values were identified as key contributors to the program's effectiveness. These elements demonstrated that moral education and language skill-building can progress simultaneously, resulting in students who are both skilled and ethical communicators. This aligns with constructivist learning theory as described by Elfitra et al., which emphasizes the importance of learning through meaningful real-world experiences [56]. Furthermore, the emphasis on Islamic ethics promoted socially responsible communication and emotional maturity [57]-[59]. Rather than receiving moral lessons passively, students practiced these values actively through cooperative work and peer dialogue [60], [61]. As noted by Pratiwi & Yani, politeness and ethical conduct consistently practiced in learning environments significantly shape children's character [62]. Similarly, Junita et al., emphasized that integrating Islamic communication ethics can enhance moral reasoning and speaking discipline among young learners [63].

Observations at the Wathaniyah Mosque in Magelang further supported these conclusions. Students expressed visible joy and engagement throughout the sessions [64], [65], particularly during morning motivation and storytelling activities. Parental feedback confirmed these observations, noting that children became more disciplined, communicative, and less dependent on gadgets during the holidays. Parents expressed strong interest in having similar programs offered regularly in the future. Overall, these findings reaffirm that the combination of Islamic values with interactive, student-centered learning provides an effective model for strengthening both language competence and moral character. The Happy Holiday Program thus represents a valuable form of value-based education that supports not only communicative ability but also ethical and social growth an approach that aligns with the current educational vision of nurturing well-rounded, responsible young communicators.

The novelty of this study lies in its distinctive integration of Islamic moral values with student-centered speaking activities conducted within a non-formal holiday learning environment. Unlike previous research that focuses on classroom-based interventions, this study positions the mosque as an alternative learning space where storytelling, dramatization, group discussions, and moral reflections occur organically and meaningfully. The program does not merely use Islamic narratives as thematic content but embeds values such as honesty, politeness, responsibility, and cooperation as active communicative behaviors practiced by students throughout the sessions. This dual integration of linguistic and ethical learning represents an innovative pedagogical model that transforms holiday free time into productive, enjoyable, and spiritually grounded speaking practice. The methodological novelty is further reflected in the use of large-scale qualitative data (193 students), making it one of the few descriptive studies with a wide participant base that captures real communication patterns in authentic, culturally relevant settings. The study's findings have important implications for teachers, parents, schools, and policymakers. Pedagogically, the results highlight that speaking skill development can be significantly strengthened when learning activities are designed to reflect students' cultural and religious identities, allowing children to speak more confidently in emotionally safe environments. The integration of Islamic values encourages respectful, ethical communication and positions speaking not only as a linguistic act but also as a reflection of moral character, aligning with holistic and culturally responsive education principles. Practically, the study demonstrates that holiday periods can be optimized as valuable learning opportunities to reduce gadget dependency, encourage social interaction, and foster community engagement. For schools and educational institutions, the program offers a feasible model for non-formal learning that complements the formal curriculum and supports character education mandates. From a policy perspective, the success of the program underscores the need for structured collaborations between families, religious institutions, and schools to promote integrated learning initiatives that nurture both communication skills and moral awareness in children.

Despite its strengths, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research relies on qualitative descriptive data, which, although rich and contextual, may limit the extent to which findings can be generalized to all elementary settings. The program was also conducted within a specific cultural and religious context—Islamic elementary schools and mosque-based learning environments in Magelang City—so its applicability in non-religious or multicultural contexts may differ. Another limitation is the absence of pre-test and post-test quantitative measurements, which could have provided more precise comparisons of speaking skill improvements. Additionally, the study does not explore long-term retention of speaking skills or character

values after the program concludes, leaving questions about sustainability. Finally, the perspectives of teachers and parents were collected through interviews but not analyzed in depth, suggesting that future studies could benefit from more systematic triangulation between student, parent, and teacher perceptions. Based on the results and limitations, several recommendations can be proposed for future implementation and research. First, schools and community organizations should consider adopting value-integrated holiday programs as structured alternatives to reduce excessive gadget use and promote meaningful learning during school breaks. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate culturally and religiously relevant stories, role plays, and discussions to enhance both speaking ability and moral development in ways that resonate with students' daily lives. For broader impact, the program can be expanded into diverse educational settings, including public schools, by adapting the moral components to local cultural values. Future research should include mixed-methods or experimental designs with measurable pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments to strengthen evidence of effectiveness. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to evaluate whether the improvements in confidence, fluency, and character persist over time. Furthermore, policymakers should support collaborations between schools, parents, and religious institutions to institutionalize culturally rooted, community-based learning initiatives that enrich children's holistic growth.

4. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that the "Happy Holiday" program, grounded in Islamic values, is effective in improving elementary students' speaking skills through meaningful and interactive activities such as storytelling, guided discussions, and role-playing. The key finding is that the integration of religious and socio-cultural narratives provided students with authentic contexts to practice oral communication, thereby fostering both linguistic competence and character formation. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on language learning by showing how culturally and spiritually rooted pedagogical approaches can enhance speaking skills while promoting moral values. It also extends existing discussions on alternative learning media by positioning Islamic narratives as a resource for communicative language teaching. Practically, the program offers schools a constructive option for reducing children's dependence on gadgets during leisure time, while simultaneously strengthening social interaction and moral development. For policymakers and educators, the findings suggest that extracurricular initiatives aligned with local values can serve as complementary strategies to formal curricula in supporting students' holistic growth.

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