

Formation of Students' Soft Skills Through the Three-Language Speech Activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasaan

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the efficacy of a trilingual speech activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasaan in developing students' soft skills, framing the activity as an integrated pedagogical model. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through direct observation, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation. The data were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis reveals that the trilingual speech activity serves as a multifaceted platform for holistic soft skill development. The structured process—comprising preparation, practice, evaluation, and intensive mentoring, and reinforced by a reward system—proves effective in cultivating a suite of competencies. These include communication skills, self-confidence, presentation skills, creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the study identifies a unique symbiotic outcome: the simultaneous enhancement of linguistic proficiency in three languages and the strengthening of religious identity, multicultural awareness, and global perspectives. The trilingual speech model is a potent pedagogical strategy for soft skill integration in madrasah education. For future implementation, this study recommends the development of more innovative training methods and the provision of dedicated facilities, such as a speech practice room, to optimize outcomes. Subsequent research could quantitatively compare speech proficiency across the three languages to generalize the findings more broadly.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Trilingual Speech, Communication, Self-Confidence, Madrasah Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st-century global economy and society are characterized by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and interconnectedness. In this complex landscape, success is increasingly dependent not only on technical knowledge (hard skills) but, crucially, on a set of transversal competencies known as soft skills. The World Economic Forum (2020) has consistently highlighted those skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration are among the most demanded by employers worldwide and are essential for individuals to thrive in a dynamic future of work. This global recognition has prompted a fundamental shift in educational paradigms, moving from a sole focus on academic content mastery towards a more holistic approach that integrates soft skill development as a core component of the learning process.

This global imperative resonates strongly within national and local educational contexts. In Indonesia, findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate room for growth in areas intrinsically linked to soft skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Similarly, a national Character Survey by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) suggested that many students could benefit from further development in communication and leadership abilities. These

findings underscore the urgent need for educational institutions to design and implement effective strategies to cultivate these vital competencies.

The relevance of soft skills is profoundly amplified in Islamic education, which inherently aims to shape character and noble morals (akhlak karimah). For students at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level—adolescents aged 12-15 years who are undergoing significant cognitive, emotional, and social development—this period is a critical window for instilling communication proficiency, self-confidence, and sound social judgment. The Islamic tradition itself emphasizes the importance of effective and ethical communication. As stated in the Quran, Surah Al-Ahzab (33:70):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

Meaning: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice." (Al-Ahzab/33:70) (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020)

In Tafsir Al-Jalalayn, it is explained (O you who believe! Fear Allah, all of you, and speak a straightforward word) meaning a word that is not untruthful (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuthi, 2018). It is also explained in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 83, which states:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

Meaning: "...and speak good to people..." (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020)

In Tafsir Al-Jalalayn, it is explained (and speak to people) words (that are good), for instance, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, speaking truthfully about Muhammad, and being courteous to fellow human beings. According to one qira'at (recitation), 'husna' is read with a ha' preceded by a vowel and a sin with a sukūn (a diacritic indicating the absence of a vowel), which is a masdar (verbal noun) used as an adjective to express an intensification of the meaning, i.e., 'extremely good'.

These two verses indicate that effective, polite, and wise communication is part of Islamic teachings and is simultaneously the core of soft skill development. One effective approach to developing students' soft skills is through hands-on practical activities that provide real-world experience, such as speech activities. Speech training not only hones public speaking skills but also trains systematic thinking, emotional management, argument construction, and confidence building (Rafilda, 2024). When the speech activity is conducted using three languages—Indonesian, Arabic, and English—the benefits become more comprehensive, as students not only develop soft skills but also strengthen their language proficiency.

The importance of soft skill development in education is supported by various international data and research. The 21st-century education framework emphasizes that the skills students must possess are not limited to academic knowledge but also encompass four main pillars known as 21st-century skills: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity (Hendriani et al., 2020). These four skills form the foundation for students to succeed in their future lives and careers.

At the national level, a study conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) in the 2022 Character Survey revealed that the majority of Indonesian students still lack communication and leadership skills (Standar, 2022). This data is reinforced by the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which showed that Indonesian students scored relatively low in critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are integral components of soft skills.

Several previous studies have also proven the effectiveness of speech activities in developing students' soft skills. Mansur (2019), in his research, demonstrated that speech training effectively increased the self-confidence of Islamic boarding school students (santri).

These benefits included enhanced self-confidence in their abilities, independence, courage, optimism, and a sense of responsibility. Similarly, Maulani et al. (2022) found in their research that regular speech activities at school were able to boost students' self-confidence and ability to express opinions. Students who actively participated in speech activities showed improvement in courage to speak in public, ability to structure arguments, and self-confidence in social interactions. Furthermore, the results of a study by Susilawati et al. (2024) stated that the muhadharah (public speaking/oratory) program proved relevant and effective as a means to train and improve students' public speaking skills. This was evident from the improvement in language skills and the increased courage of students to perform in public, especially among those who previously had less structured language abilities.

While the importance of soft skills is widely acknowledged, and several studies have examined the effectiveness of speech activities in developing them, there are, in fact, several gaps in the literature that need to be addressed.

First, most previous studies have focused on monolingual (one language) or at most bilingual (two languages) speech activities. For instance, the study by Mansur (2019) only examined Indonesian-language speeches, and Susilawati et al. (2024) focused on Arabic-language oratory. There is a scarcity of research that specifically discusses trilingual speech activities in the context of soft skill development. Consequently, the impact of multilingual learning on soft skill development has not been thoroughly explored.

Second, previous research has predominantly examined a single aspect of soft skills, such as self-confidence (Mansur, 2019; Noor, Safitri, Darwis, & Ananiah, 2022) or communication skills (Maulani et al., 2022). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that holistically analyze the various types of soft skills formed simultaneously through multilingual speech activities, including communication, self-confidence, creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

Third, the context of Islamic education in madrasahs, which possesses a distinct characteristic of integrating religious values with soft skill development, has not been a major focus of research. While Widah (2018) did examine religious character through muhadharah activities, it did not specifically analyze how the use of Arabic as the language of the Quran contributes to strengthening religious identity while simultaneously developing soft skills within a multilingual learning context.

Fourth, the majority of previous studies used quantitative or semi-quantitative approaches that measure a program's impact statistically but fall short in exploring the learning processes and dynamics involved in soft skill formation. In-depth qualitative research that delves into how students experience the transformative process from being novices to becoming proficient in trilingual public speaking, as well as the adaptation strategies they employ to overcome foreign language challenges, is still very limited.

Fifth, existing research on multilingual speech tends to focus on linguistic aspects and language mastery (Lestari, et al., 2025; Vania & Rizal, 2024) but has not explicitly linked how the ability to switch between languages (code-switching) in a speech context contributes to the development of cognitive flexibility and adaptability as part of soft skills.

These gaps create theoretical and practical voids regarding how multilingual speech learning, particularly in the context of Islamic education, comprehensively influences various dimensions of student soft skills. Therefore, this study is designed to fill these gaps by conducting an in-depth and holistic examination of how the trilingual speech activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasaan contributes to the formation of various student soft skills. It also aims to explore the learning process, the challenges faced, student adaptation strategies, and its impact on character development from an Islamic education perspective. This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on multilingual learning and soft skill development, as well as offer practical implications for developing similar programs in other madrasahs.

The Concept of Soft Skills

Definition and Characteristics of Soft Skills

From an Islamic perspective, soft skills are not merely worldly competencies but also hold devotional value as they are intertwined with the ethics of communication, leadership, and social responsibility. Leadership, as a crucial aspect of soft skills, is emphasized in a Prophetic hadith found in Sahih al-Bukhari:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

Meaning: "Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Bukhari, 1956)

This hadith establishes that leadership skill in Islam is not just the ability to lead but also an awareness of one's trust and moral accountability. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stressed the importance of guarding one's speech, as stated in Sahih Muslim:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكَلِّمْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ

Meaning: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Muslim, 2010)

Thus, the development of soft skills in madrasahs—whether in communication, leadership, or cooperation—aligns with Islamic values that prioritize noble character and social responsibility.

Soft skills are non-technical abilities related to how an individual interacts with others, manages themselves, and handles everyday life situations. According to Suardipa, Widiara, & Indrawati (2021), soft skills are life skills and competencies, relevant for oneself, in groups, in society, and with the Creator. Unlike hard skills, which are technical and can be measured objectively, soft skills are more subjective and pertain to an individual's interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities. These skills cannot be learned instantly but require a continuous development process through experience and practice. Soft skills have become increasingly important in the era of globalization because the world of work demands not only technical expertise but also the ability to communicate, collaborate, and adapt to change.

The main characteristics of soft skills include their non-quantifiable nature, unlike hard skills; however, they can be observed through a person's behavior and attitude in interaction. Susanto & Prawitasari (2023) state that soft skills are characterized as being universal, transferable across different situations, and developed through life experiences. These abilities are also dynamic, meaning they can continuously evolve and be refined throughout an individual's life. Furthermore, soft skills are interconnected and mutually supportive in forming a well-rounded personality. The development of soft skills requires self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, and a commitment to continuous learning and growth.

In the context of education, soft skills can be classified into several categories based on their developmental focus. According to research by Delfira (2024), soft skills can be divided into three main categories: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and universal skills. Intrapersonal skills relate to the ability to manage oneself, such as time management, self-motivation, and character development. Interpersonal skills include the ability to communicate, socialize, and cooperate with others. Universal skills encompass critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability to change.

The fundamental difference between soft skills and hard skills lies in their nature and how they are developed. Hard skills are specific technical abilities, measurable objectively, and typically acquired through formal education or specialized training. Meanwhile, according to Hakim (2020), soft skills are more subjective, difficult to measure quantitatively, and develop through experience, social interaction, and self-reflection. Hard skills tend to be static and can become obsolete with technological advancements, whereas soft skills are dynamic and remain relevant throughout time. In the modern workplace, a combination of

both hard and soft skills is key to success; however, soft skills are increasingly viewed as the differentiating factor that determines a person's career advancement.

Types of Soft Skills

According to Saptoto, Asri, and Palupi (2024), several key types of soft skills need to be developed to support personal and professional growth. These include communication skills, which involve conveying information effectively both orally and in writing, as well as active listening. Leadership skills are essential for guiding, motivating, and inspiring others toward shared goals. Teamwork and collaboration emphasize the ability to work cooperatively, respect differences, and contribute meaningfully within a group. Problem-solving skills involve identifying issues, analyzing situations, and finding effective solutions, while critical thinking refers to the capacity to objectively analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make sound judgments. Equally important is emotional intelligence, which entails understanding and managing one's own emotions and recognizing those of others. Adaptability and flexibility enable individuals to adjust to changing circumstances and dynamic environments, whereas time management focuses on using time efficiently to maximize productivity. Furthermore, creativity and innovation encourage the generation of new ideas and creative approaches to overcome challenges. Finally, networking involves building and maintaining professional relationships that foster mutual growth and opportunity.

Learning Theory and Soft Skill Development

Vygotsky's constructivist theory contributes significantly to understanding the process of soft skill development through social interaction and collaborative learning. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains that students can achieve higher levels of learning with the assistance of more competent individuals, whether teachers or peers. In soft skill development, the ZPD is relevant because abilities such as communication, collaboration, and leadership can be cultivated through structured social interaction. Scaffolding, or the gradual support provided by a teacher or mentor, helps students develop their soft skills step-by-step until they can perform them independently. This theory emphasizes the importance of a supportive learning environment and the active role of students in the soft skill learning process (Dewi & Fauziati, 2021).

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory provides a framework for understanding how soft skills can be developed through direct experience. Kolb's experiential learning cycle consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In soft skill development, students need to experience real situations that challenge their interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities, then reflect on those experiences to understand their strengths and weaknesses (Erni, 2024). This reflective process allows students to develop a conceptual understanding of effective soft skills, which can then be tested and applied in new situations. This approach emphasizes the importance of active and reflective learning in soft skill development.

Speech Activity as a Learning Medium

The Concept and Benefits of Speech

A speech is a structured form of oral communication delivered by a speaker to an audience with a specific purpose, such as to inform, persuade, or entertain. According to Anistia (2023), a speech is a speaking skill aimed at conveying ideas, opinions, or information to others orally, using appropriate structure and language style. Speech activity has a clear structure comprising an introduction, body, and conclusion, which allows the speaker to deliver the message systematically and effectively. In an educational context, a speech serves not only as a communication tool but also as a learning medium that can develop various aspects of student ability. Speech activity demands thorough preparation, a deep understanding of the topic, and effective delivery skills.

The benefits of speech for self-development are diverse and encompass various soft skills essential for life. Speech activities can boost students' self-confidence as they must perform in front of an audience and present their ideas confidently. According to Pradita &

Jayanti (2021), speech can also develop critical thinking skills because students must analyze a topic, construct logical arguments, and anticipate audience questions or responses. Verbal and non-verbal communication skills are also honed through continuous speech practice. Speeches help students develop time management skills as they must deliver their message within a set time limit. Furthermore, speech activities can enhance research and information organization skills, as students must search for, select, and structure their speech material effectively.

As a learning medium, speech also offers high flexibility as it can be integrated with various subjects and adapted to different learning themes. Speech activities can be a means for students to express their understanding of learned material in a more engaging and interactive format. In the context of soft skill development, speech is a highly effective medium because it integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects into a single learning activity. Through speech, students learn to organize their thoughts, manage emotions, and coordinate body movements to support effective message delivery. This aligns with the opinion of Wibowo (2023), who states that an effective learning medium is one that can integrate various aspects of learning and provide a meaningful learning experience for students.

Multilingual Speech

Multilingual speech is the activity of public speaking using more than one language, which provides additional challenges and benefits for developing students' soft skills. The concept of multilingual learning in speeches involves the alternating or integrated use of a mother tongue, a national language, and a foreign language within a single speaking engagement. According to Vania & Rizal (2024), multilingual learning not only develops language proficiency but also enhances cognitive flexibility, creativity, and divergent thinking abilities. In trilingual speeches (Indonesian, Arabic, and English), students face the challenge of mastering different language structures, understanding diverse cultures, and delivering a coherent message in different languages. This activity requires more intensive preparation and high adaptability from students.

The advantages of multilingual learning in speech activities are highly significant for the development of student soft skills, particularly in the aspects of communication and adaptability. Students who are accustomed to delivering speeches in various languages will develop cross-cultural communication skills, which are essential in the era of globalization. According to Lestari et al. (2025), multilingual learning can enhance metalinguistic awareness—the ability to consciously understand and manipulate language structures. This ability contributes to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students must overcome complex linguistic challenges. Furthermore, multilingual speech can also boost students' confidence in communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. The ability to switch between different languages within a single communicative context also develops mental flexibility and multitasking abilities useful in various life situations.

The implementation of trilingual speeches (Indonesian, Arabic, and English) in madrasahs has its own uniqueness, as it integrates religious, national, and international aspects into a single learning activity. Indonesian, as the national language, serves as the foundation for expressing national identity and understanding local values. Arabic, as the language of the Quran and Islamic heritage, provides a spiritual and cultural dimension that strengthens students' religious identity. English, as an international language, opens access to global knowledge and broadens students' perspectives on the world.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. This approach was selected to gain a rich, detailed, and in-depth understanding of the process and dynamics of developing students' soft skills through the unique case of the trilingual speech activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasan.

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasan, a private Islamic junior secondary school (madrasah tsanawiyah) that integrates religious and general education within its curriculum. The study involved 15 students (comprising 9 female and 6 male students from grades VII to IX) and 3 supervising teachers as research participants. The students were selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of active participation in the trilingual speech program for at least one semester. The teachers were selected based on their role as program supervisors with a minimum of two years of experience in guiding the speech activities, ensuring they could provide profound insights into the program's development and implementation.

Data were collected over a three-month period using three primary techniques to ensure comprehensive data triangulation: (1) Structured Observation: Direct observation was carried out during weekly speech training sessions and special events, such as the touring sermon program. An observation sheet was used as a guide, focusing on aspects of student participation, communication skills, self-confidence, presentation techniques, teacher-student interaction, and the overall learning process. (2) In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 3 teachers and the 15 students. The teacher interview guide explored topics such as program objectives, implementation strategies, mentoring methods, observed student development, and challenges faced. The student interview guide focused on their motivations, learning experiences, perceived improvements in soft skills, difficulties encountered, and adaptation strategies. (3) Documentation: This technique was used to gather supporting archival data. A documentation checklist was utilized to collect and analyze various records, including student speech scripts in all three languages, photos and videos of speech performances and practice sessions, and program schedules.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of data analysis by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. (a) Data Reduction: The raw data from transcripts, field notes, and documents were summarized, focused, and organized. This involved coding the data to identify initial themes related to soft skill development, learning processes, and challenges. (b) Data Display: The reduced data were organized into thematic matrices and narrative descriptions. This step allowed for a clear, compressed assembly of information, making it easier to see the relationships between the trilingual speech activities and the emergence of various soft skills, such as communication, self-confidence, and critical thinking. (c) Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Throughout the analysis, initial conclusions were drawn and continually verified. This was done by checking the consistency of findings across different data sources (triangulation), revisiting the raw data, and discussing interpretations among the researchers to ensure the conclusions were well-grounded and meaningful.

The validity and reliability of the research findings were ensured through several strategies. Triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from different sources (teachers and students), methods (observation, interviews, and documentation), and data collection times. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by confirming the summary of interview results and preliminary interpretations with the informants to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data representation and to maintain alignment between the researchers' conclusions and the participants' perspectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Trilingual Speech Activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasan

This study reveals that the trilingual speech activity at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasan has been running for five years with a unique and structured concept. The program utilizes three languages: Indonesian as the national language, Arabic as the language of the Quran, and English as the international language. Based on interviews with the supervising teachers, the speech activities are scheduled every Saturday, while Monday to Friday is dedicated to tahfiz (Quran memorization) activities.

The program structure has two main components: regular practice sessions at school and a touring sermon program during Ramadan. A supervising teacher explained:

"The initial purpose of this speech activity was, first, to introduce the madrasah school, and second, to instill in the children that they must be able to convey religious teachings in society."

(F)

The touring sermon program is the culmination of this activity, where students go directly into the community to deliver sermons during Tarawih prayers.

Student preparation is conducted in a gradual and structured manner. The first stage is identifying interested students. Next, students are directed to watch instructional speech videos to foster interest and provide an overview of good delivery techniques. The following stage involves assigning speech themes that students must develop, either through their own composition or internet references, with mandatory requirements. A supervising teacher stated:

"The preparation method: first, we invite children who are genuinely interested, but we still keep the door wide open for those who want to try. Then, we recommend they first watch videos on how to give speeches to build interest. After that, we give them several titles to find the content for their speech, whether they write it themselves or source it from the internet. The speech content must include an introduction, words of praise, and most importantly, evidence from the Quran and hadith. Mental preparation is the most difficult because not all children are confident speaking in public." (F)

Student enthusiasm for this activity varies. Interview results show that students' initial motivations differ, as revealed by Alifhia who was interested because she likes English, Nafila who was motivated to earn extra credit, and Ema who wanted to learn more Arabic and English. Despite this, all interviewed students showed commitment to continue participating in this activity.

The role of the supervising teachers is crucial to the program's success. The teachers act not only as technical instructors but also as motivators and counselors. They provide intensive guidance, ranging from material composition and delivery techniques to mental strengthening for the students. A reward system in the form of pocket money and one month of tuition fee exemption for students who perform well serves as an effective motivational strategy.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the trilingual speech program at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasaan demonstrates success due to its structured and unique concept, which combines school-based training with direct practice in the community. This success aligns with the findings of Siswanto & Faldana (2014), who state that community service activities in the form of speeches provide knowledge, intellectual exercise, and emotional exercise that result in communicative actions with positive impacts for the community, especially for students, teachers, and administrators.

The intensive role of the supervising teachers and the effective reward system successfully motivated students, thus achieving the program's goals of enhancing speech proficiency and instilling religious values well. This is consistent with research by Susilawati et al. (2024), which states that giving rewards to students has an influence of more than 21% in increasing learning motivation, with the remainder influenced by other factors. Furthermore, findings by Noor et al. (2022) state that giving rewards significantly influences student self-confidence at MTs. This finding is also consistent with research by Maulida (2020), which states that regular speech activities in schools can increase students' self-confidence and ability to express opinions. A well-structured program supported by an appropriate reward system can enhance student participation and learning quality.

Types of Soft Skills Formed Through the Trilingual Speech Activity

Based on observation and interview results, several key types of soft skills were developed through the trilingual speech activity. The following is a detailed explanation:

Communication Skills

First, communication skills emerged as the most prominent soft skill. This ability includes clarity of articulation, appropriate use of intonation, fluency in speaking, and the ability to convey messages effectively.

Based on the research findings, students' communication skills showed excellent results. This proves that the trilingual speech activity is effective in improving students' clarity of articulation, fluency, and ability to convey messages effectively. This aligns with the research by Masnunah et al. (2025), which states that training delivered through lectures and practical activities has the potential to enhance participants' communication skills and self-confidence.

Self-Confidence

Second, self-confidence showed significant improvement. A supervising teacher stated: "At first, they were still shy; some even completely refused to come to the front because of embarrassment and lack of confidence. After participating in the speech training, they were able to overcome all their fears and apprehension about performing in front of people." (F)

Based on the research findings, speech training significantly increased students' self-confidence. This is reinforced by Manda et al. (2023), who state that speech training has great potential for boosting students' self-confidence and soft skills, as well as for developing their potential in public speaking.

Presentation Skills

Third, presentation skills developed through practicing how to structure a speech systematically. Students learned to create engaging openings, deliver content logically, and provide memorable conclusions.

Based on the research findings, students' presentation skills improved significantly. This was evident from their mastery of a systematic speech structure, from the introduction to the conclusion. These results are consistent with Sri Wulan, Elsa Pratiwi, Mesran (2020), who state that public speaking training, including speech, influences the improvement of students' presentation skills in front of the class.

Creativity and Innovation

Fourth, creativity and innovation were reflected in the students' use of body gestures, variations in delivery, and improvisational skills. Alviansyah displayed the most prominent aptitude in this aspect, demonstrating his ability to incorporate engaging variations into his speech delivery.

Critical Thinking Skills

Fifth, students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities were developed through the process of constructing arguments and anticipating audience questions. This required them to analyze topics, formulate logical reasoning, and prepare supporting evidence. Research findings confirmed a significant improvement in these skills, demonstrated by their more structured arguments and relevant use of evidence. A teacher, Teacher F, provided a concrete example: 'They didn't just state religious doctrines; we challenged them to explain the relevance to modern teenagers' daily lives. For instance, connecting the prohibition of backbiting in Surah Al-Hujurat to its impact on social media.' This shows that students moved beyond memorization to genuine analysis and application of concepts. These findings align with the research of Asari (2021) and Pradita & Jayanti (2021), who state that speech activities significantly sharpen critical thinking by demanding in-depth analysis, logical construction, and audience anticipation.

Emotional Intelligence and Confidence

Sixth, students developed aspects of emotional intelligence and confidence, particularly in managing nervousness and building a connection with the audience. To counter stage fright, teachers employed a unique strategy where students were taught to build self-assurance by "considering themselves the foremost experts on their topic." Beyond managing anxiety, students showed progress in building empathy and emotional rapport. A student, Alviansyah, shared his experience: 'I tried to make eye contact with a few people in the audience and smile. It made me feel like I was talking to friends, and they became more responsive.' This experience illustrates a progression from intrapersonal skills (managing oneself) to interpersonal skills (connecting with others), which is a core component of emotional intelligence.

The Process of Student Soft Skill Formation in Multilingual Speech Practice

The process of forming soft skills through the trilingual speech activity follows a structured and continuous learning cycle. The preparation stage begins with the development of research skills, where students must search for and select speech material from various sources, including literature and the internet. Students are required to include evidence from the Quran and hadith, which demands they conduct in-depth research on the religious aspects of the topic being discussed.

The practice and mentoring process is conducted intensively through an organized system. A supervising teacher explained:

"The preparation method starts by inviting children who are genuinely interested, then recommending they first watch videos on how to give speeches to build interest." (F)

Following this, students receive direct guidance for technique improvement, as expressed by a student:

"The teachers help by correcting the words in our speech and providing better suggestions to improve the quality of our performance." (EA)

The mechanism of evaluation and self-reflection is a crucial component of the learning process. This aligns with Sa'diyah et al. (2021), who state that a teacher's creativity, mastery of material, and teaching methods significantly influence student understanding. Therefore, teachers need to enhance their competencies through various training sessions. It is essential for teachers to continuously broaden their knowledge, particularly regarding current teaching methods, to teach more effectively. The assessment system used covers five main aspects: communication, self-confidence, presentation skills, creativity, and mastery of content. Teachers provide immediate feedback after each performance, consisting of both constructive criticism and positive appreciation.

The role of social interaction and collaborative learning is reflected in Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Ashoumi & Yusuf, 2024). One student revealed:

"There was an upperclassman who instructed and encouraged me to join." (A)

This indicates the role of peer mentoring in the learning process. Teachers also implement an ability-based grouping system. A supervising teacher stated:

"There are two supervisors, so we split the groups. One teaches those who are somewhat slower at memorizing, and I handle the more advanced group." (F)

The application of Kolb's Experiential Learning cycle is clearly visible in this process. Students gain a concrete experience when performing directly in front of an audience. Afterwards, they engage in reflective observation by reassessing their own and their peers' performances. Subsequently, students build new understanding (abstract conceptualization) about more effective speech techniques. Finally, they try to apply new approaches (active experimentation) in their subsequent performances. According to the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), experiential learning is an approach that emphasizes the direct involvement of students. This method aims to enhance knowledge and develop skills through motivation and self-reflection (Idris, 2018).

The process of overcoming foreign language difficulties is a specific aspect of multilingual learning. Teachers implement special strategies:

"For Arabic, which uses Hijaiyah script, some children have difficulty reading, so we write it in Latin script to make it easier. We also look for vocabulary that is simple and frequently heard so it's not too difficult to memorize." (F)

Students developed personal strategies, as one student described:

"Repeating the memorization at home and practicing with my parents." (AK)

This finding aligns with Wijaya & Wiza (2024), who state that Islamic Education (PAI) teachers successfully enhanced students' public speaking skills by implementing structured and regular extracurricular activities. The primary focus of the training was on verbal aspects, such as word choice and intonation, and on reducing the use of filler words to build confidence. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with research by Dewi & Fauziati (2021), which emphasizes the importance of Vygotsky's constructivist learning in developing abilities through social interaction and the scaffolding provided by teachers or mentors to help students gradually develop their skills.

Additionally, these findings demonstrate that structured practice, intensive guidance, and repeated live performances in front of an audience foster progress in students' public speaking and self-confidence. This result is consistent with a study on speech workshops for high school students, which showed marked improvement in delivery clarity, eye contact, and overall presentation after task-based training and direct practice. Such training proved effective in cultivating measurable communication skills. This reinforces the part of our findings regarding the role of guided practice, practical feedback, and the cycle of performance, reflection, and improvement (Abellana & Lovido, 2025).

The findings reveal that the trilingual context itself functions as a unique catalyst for soft skills development. The challenge of mastering and switching between three different language systems (code-switching)—Indonesian, Arabic, and English—directly trains cognitive flexibility and adaptability. Students not only learn to speak but learn to think within different cultural and linguistic frameworks, then adjust their communication style according to the language being used. For instance, the use of Arabic, which is laden with values of politeness and respect (such as phrases of praise and blessings), hones emotional intelligence and cultural awareness. Meanwhile, the demand to construct logical speeches in English trains rigorous structural and analytical thinking. Thus, this trilingual activity functions as a complex simulation that forces students to develop mental resilience, adaptive capacity, and cross-cultural sensitivity—all of which are core 21st-century soft skills—more intensively compared to monolingual speech activities.

The Impact of the Trilingual Speech Activity on Student Character Development

The most significant impacts of this activity were the increase in self-confidence and public speaking ability. A supervising teacher stated:

"What stands out the most is that their public speaking is better compared to children who do not participate. They have been trained to speak in public, so wherever they are, they will be more active and braver in speaking." (F)

Student interview data supports this finding, as expressed by a student:

"Now I am no longer nervous because I am used to participating in speech activities. I feel more confident when performing in front of a crowd." (AR)

The development of multicultural awareness and tolerance occurred through the use of three languages representing three distinct cultures. Students learned to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity by using Indonesian, which reflects national values; Arabic, which embodies Islamic heritage; and English, which opens global perspectives. This is reflected in the students' improved ability to discern who they are speaking to and to understand the appropriate manner of speaking for different social contexts.

The strengthening of religious identity through Arabic became a specific aspect of character formation. The use of Arabic was not merely a communication tool but a medium for understanding and conveying Islamic values. The assessment system paid special attention to the accuracy in pronouncing religious evidence (dalil) and the method of delivering it correctly and properly, in accordance with the points of articulation (makhraj al-huruf) and rules of recitation (tajwid). This demonstrates the school's commitment to shaping students' religious character.

The formation of a global outlook through English opened students' access to international knowledge and perspectives. Although English posed the greatest challenge for some students, as one student expressed:

"The most difficult is English because I find it hard to pronounce English words correctly." (FA)

Nevertheless, students still showed improvement in mastering this language.

The integration of Islamic values into soft skill development is a unique characteristic of this program. Every speech material is required to contain evidence from the Quran and hadith, which not only enhances students' ability to reference sacred texts but also strengthens their understanding of Islamic teachings. The touring sermon program serves as a real-world application of this integration of Islamic values, where students do not just learn to speak but also learn to engage in religious propagation (dakwah).

Changes in student behavior in daily life were evident in aspects of communication and social interaction. A supervising teacher observed that:

"Certainly, there has been a change, although not 100%. Changes in how they structure their language, their manner of speaking, and their ability to distinguish who they are speaking to."
(F)

Students became more aware of the importance of proper grammar and politeness in communication. These results support the research of Rafilda (2024), which found that public speaking activities can build self-confidence and develop students' communication skills, as well as the research of Anistia (2023), which emphasizes the importance of speeches in developing speaking skills and building student character.

Furthermore, the results of this study are also consistent with the findings of Widah (2018), which highlight the role of muhadharah extracurricular activities in shaping students' religious character, such as discipline, responsibility, independence, and self-confidence. The multilingual speech activity examined in this study shows a similar pattern, where students not only develop communication skills but also strengthen religious values through the mandatory inclusion of Quranic verses and hadith in their speech scripts.

These research findings are also aligned with the results of a study by Iqdam (2025), which affirms that a multilingual speech program not only strengthens communication skills but also plays a vital role in reinforcing Islamic character education, such as a sense of responsibility, politeness, and student independence.

Consistently, these findings align with the research of Mansur (2019) and Maulani et al. (2022), which confirms that speech practice effectively builds self-confidence. However, this study reveals a unique aspect and a novel contribution. While previous studies, such as Susilawati et al. (2024) and Widah (2018), focused on strengthening religious character through Arabic speech (muhadharah), and research by Lestari et al. (2025) explored the linguistic aspects of multilingualism, this study successfully bridges and expands both areas. We demonstrate that the integration of three languages – Indonesian, Arabic, and English – within a single, cohesive activity not only reinforces religious identity (as found in monolingual/bilingual contexts) but simultaneously fosters global awareness and cognitive flexibility. This is a distinctive value-added aspect of the trilingual approach, which has not been extensively revealed in previous literature, thereby addressing the gap identified in the introduction.

Supporting Factors and Challenges in Developing Soft Skills Through the Trilingual Speech Activity

Internal factors supporting the program's success included student motivation, foundational language skills, and family support. Student motivation varied, ranging from an interest in a specific language, as expressed by Aliffhia, to a desire to improve academic grades, as seen with Nafila. Students' foundational language abilities also influenced their success level, with those who had a strong educational background in English or Arabic tending to adapt more easily.

Family support was a crucial factor for sustaining student participation. Most students received full support from their parents, as one student stated:

"My family fully supports this activity." (AK)

However, there were also cases of uneven parental support, such as Alviansyah's experience of receiving support from his mother but less from his father for the Arabic speech activities.

External factors encompassed school support, learning facilities, and the madrasah environment. School support was evident through the dedicated time allocation every Saturday, the provision of dedicated supervisors, and a motivating reward system. The conducive madrasah environment, complemented by the Tahfiz Al-Quran program on other days, created a religious learning atmosphere that supported the trilingual speech program.

Mastering three languages simultaneously was the main challenge faced by students. A supervising teacher explained:

"All three of these languages are difficult. Indonesian is difficult because sometimes [students] don't know how to express themselves and use punctuation correctly, plus they must use formal language according to KBBI [the standard Indonesian dictionary]." (F)

Arabic posed the greatest challenge as most students came from public elementary schools that did not teach Arabic, while English was difficult due to issues with accent and pronunciation.

Strategies to overcome students' difficulties with foreign languages were implemented through various adaptive approaches. For Arabic, teachers used a Latin transliteration system to assist students struggling with the Hijaiyah script. For English, the focus was on familiar and frequently heard vocabulary. Additionally, teachers employed audio-based memorization methods for students who learned more easily through listening.

Other technical challenges included limited practice time, varying individual abilities, and student concentration difficulties. Teachers addressed these through a weekly target system and a method of "compulsion to foster their awareness." Differences in individual ability were managed by dividing students into groups based on skill level and providing two supervisors with different focuses.

Ongoing efforts to optimize the program covered several developmental aspects. Supervising teachers suggested adding more supervisors for the speech extracurricular, allocating specific time for more effective practice, and providing a dedicated practice room to minimize student distractions. Students also offered suggestions, such as balancing the portion allocated to each language more evenly and lengthening the speech material to make it more engaging.

Factor	Support	Challenge	Strategy
Internal	High student motivation	Differences in language ability	Ability-based grouping system
External	Strong school support	Limited facilities	Optimization of space and time
Technical	Structured program	Mastery of three languages	Transliteration and audio learning
Social	Parental support	Variation in family support	Intensive communication with parents

This finding aligns with research by Hendriani et al. (2020), which emphasizes the importance of 21st-century skills encompassing critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, as well as research by Lestari et al. (2025), which indicates that multilingual learning can enhance students' metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the trilingual speech program at MTs Al-Jihad Kerasaan serves as a robust and effective pedagogical model for the holistic development of student soft skills. The program systematically cultivates a suite of competencies—including advanced communication, self-confidence, critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and emotional intelligence—through a structured cycle of experiential learning that integrates preparation, intensive mentoring, practice, and reflective evaluation. The primary theoretical contribution of this research lies in its demonstration of how a multilingual learning context acts as a significant amplifier for soft skill acquisition. It provides empirical evidence that the cognitive demands of managing three linguistic systems (Indonesian, Arabic, and English) do not merely build language proficiency but directly foster higher-order soft skills such as cognitive flexibility, metacognitive awareness, and cross-cultural adaptability. This bridges a critical gap in the literature, which has often treated multilingual education and soft skill development as separate domains. For educational practice, this study offers two key implications: (1) For Educators and Curriculum Developers: The success of this program underscores the viability of integrating structured, practical multilingual activities into the core curriculum of Islamic

educational institutions. Teachers are positioned not merely as knowledge transmitters but as essential mentors and facilitators whose scaffolding and motivational strategies (including a well-designed reward system) are crucial for student transformation. (2) For Institutional Policy: The findings advocate for schools and madrasahs to invest in creating supportive ecosystems for such programs. This includes allocating dedicated time and space, training teacher-mentors, and formally recognizing soft skill development as a measurable educational outcome alongside academic achievement. The model presents a viable blueprint for other institutions seeking to equip students with the competencies needed to thrive as confident global citizens with a strong, rooted religious identity.

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