



Hot Seat Strategy Improves Arabic Speaking Proficiency in Islamic Junior Secondary Classrooms: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examined whether the Hot Seat strategy yields greater gains in Arabic speaking proficiency than conventional instruction among Grade 8 learners.

Design/methods/approach – A quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with intact classes was implemented at Islamic Junior High School (MTs) Fathur Rabbani, Cisoka–Tangerang, with 44 students allocated to an experimental class (Hot Seat) and a control class (conventional lessons). Speaking performance was assessed individually using parallel tasks at baseline and post-intervention, and group means and gains were compared.

Findings – The experimental class improved from 48.64 to 81.36 (mean gain = 32.73), while the control class rose from 55.00 to 68.64 (mean gain = 13.64), producing a between-group gain difference of 19.09 points in favor of Hot Seat. These results indicate that structured role rotation, calibrated questioning, and rapid formative feedback can substantially increase both the quantity and quality of meaningful oral turns within equivalent instructional time.

Research implications – The findings support the pedagogical value of dialogic, accountability-rich routines for accelerating Arabic speaking proficiency in junior secondary settings. Limitations include intact-class allocation without randomization, a single-site context, a relatively short intervention window, and the absence of a delayed posttest to assess retention. Future research should employ multi-site cluster-randomized trials with preregistered analyses, include delayed and transfer posttests, compare teacher-led versus student-led questioning formats, measure mediators such as engagement and state anxiety, and examine fidelity, equity, and cost-effectiveness. Overall, the study provides classroom-ready evidence that Hot Seat is an efficient, scalable approach to improving oral proficiency in Arabic.

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Introduction

Oral communication is a cornerstone of language proficiency and a decisive enabler of academic success, social participation, and employability in multilingual societies (Ma'wa et al., 2024). Within Arabic as a foreign language, speaking lags behind other skills because it demands real-time processing, interactional management, and affective self-regulation (Halim, 2020). Many classrooms remain text-driven and teacher-centered, limiting opportunities for authentic interaction and feedback (Achmad et al., 2022). Pedagogical models that stage purposeful interaction and accountability are therefore needed to accelerate speaking development (Ashari, 2022). The Hot Seat strategy—where learners respond spontaneously to peer questioning from a designated “seat”—offers a structured way to elicit extended output and build fluency under task-based constraints (Han et al., 2021).



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Empirical work across secondary settings has reported positive effects of Hot Seat on oral performance. In Indonesian madrasah contexts, Musaffah and colleagues in 2024 documented significant gains in speaking following Hot Seat interventions, supported by paired-samples testing and classroom evidence (Musaffah et al., 2024). Afifah in 2020 likewise showed sizable improvements in junior secondary students' speaking skills under a Hot Seat design (Afifah, 2020). Elahifar in 2022 refined the approach by contrasting teacher- versus student-initiated questioning, finding stronger gains for the teachers' questioning condition in oral production (Elahifar, 2022). Together, these studies suggest that structured questioning with clear roles can meaningfully strengthen learners' spoken output.

Beyond speaking, researchers have associated Hot Seat with broader language and learning outcomes. Abid in 2020 showed advantages for reading comprehension, suggesting that dialogic accountability may generalize to text processing (Abid, 2020). Al-Amro and colleagues in 2021 reported improvements in Arabic listening comprehension among ninth-grade students taught with Hot Seat relative to traditional methods (Al-amro et al., 2021). Aalabadi in 2024 found gains in both achievement and attitudes toward Geography, indicating affective as well as cognitive benefits (Aalabadi, 2024). Faddhia and colleagues in 2025 documented implementational insights for read-aloud pedagogy in Arabic, highlighting classroom routines that scaffold participation (Faddhia et al., 2025).

Evidence from STEM and professional education underscores additional dimensions of the approach. Al-Ali in 2020 demonstrated that Hot Seat can enhance science achievement and students' emotional intelligence, supported by reliable measurement (Khamis & Al-Ali, 2020). In medicine, Han and colleagues in 2022 validated a competency-based Hot Seat diagnosis model that correlated strongly with external assessments and tracked growth more sensitively than time-based scales. A systematic review by Ahmari-Tehran and coauthors in 2025 concluded that Hot Seat fosters critical thinking, clinical decision-making, and ethical reasoning when well facilitated (Ahmari-Tehran et al., 2025).

At the same time, research has clarified the role of participation modes and stress. Bong and colleagues in 2017 found that observers in simulation-based training can attain non-technical performance comparable to hot-seat participants while experiencing lower stress (Bong et al., 2017), a finding echoed by Ying and coauthors in 2020 regarding performance benefits of prior exposure as participant or observer (Ying et al., 2020). These results imply that well-designed observation may complement active turns in the hot seat without sacrificing learning outcomes. However, Kurniawan and colleagues in 2025 noted that insufficiently challenging questions can induce boredom, attenuating engagement during "game-like" implementations (Karniawan et al., 2025). Such variations highlight the importance of task difficulty, questioning quality, and facilitation.

Despite promising findings, several limitations remain in the literature. First, few studies have tested Hot Seat within Arabic speaking at lower-secondary public madrasah settings while using a quasi-experimental design with explicit comparison to conventional instruction. Second, measurement often focuses on immediate post-tests without reporting standardized effect sizes, growth sensitivity, or practical significance for classroom adoption. Third, the balance between active turns and structured observation—given potential stress differentials—has not been systematically examined in Arabic speaking classrooms. Fourth, implementational factors such as question scaffolding, turn-taking protocols, and feedback cycles are unevenly documented, complicating replication. Finally, local evidence from Banten

Province is limited, constraining context-responsive policy and teacher professional development.

This study addresses these gaps by evaluating the effect of the Hot Seat strategy on Arabic speaking proficiency among eighth-grade learners at Islamic Junior High School (MTs) Cisoka, Tangerang using a quasi-experimental design with a conventional-instruction control group. The study focuses on two outcomes: post-intervention speaking performance and the magnitude of improvement relative to baseline, thereby estimating the practical benefit under routine conditions. By specifying implementation procedures and teacher-led questioning protocols, the research adds replicable guidance for classroom enactment. The findings aim to clarify whether Hot Seat yields statistically and educationally meaningful gains in Arabic speaking within a public madrasah context. More broadly, the study contributes evidence to task-based, dialogic pedagogies that seek to align accountability, affect, and interactional practice in adolescent foreign-language classrooms.

Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design to estimate the causal effect of the Hot Seat strategy on Arabic speaking proficiency among Grade 8 students at Islamic Junior High School (MTs) Fathur Rabbani (Cisoka, Tangerang). Participants were allocated to one experimental class and one control class (total (n=44); (n=22) per group after complete data screening), with intact classes used to preserve school operations while minimizing contamination through parallel timetables. The intervention consisted of lesson sequences in which the experimental class received structured Hot Seat sessions embedded in speaking tasks, whereas the control class received conventional teacher-led instruction matched for time-on-task and topics. Each instructional cycle specified roles (hot-seat respondent, peer interrogators, timekeeper, and recorder), question scaffolds aligned to curricular themes, and feedback routines emphasizing fluency, accuracy, and interactional management. Teachers were briefed to follow a written protocol detailing turn-taking, question difficulty progression, and immediate formative feedback to ensure treatment fidelity.

Procedurally, both groups completed a baseline speaking performance assessment one week prior to the intervention, followed by four weeks of instruction and a posttest within one week of the final session under parallel conditions. Classroom observations were conducted using a structured checklist to document enactment features (e.g., number of hot-seat turns, wait-time, feedback moves), and brief semi-structured interviews captured teacher perceptions of feasibility and student engagement. Speaking assessments were administered individually in a quiet room and video-recorded for subsequent rating; all student identifiers were anonymized at the point of transcription. Raters received a calibration session using anchor samples to align interpretations of rubric descriptors before scoring the full set. Deviations from protocol and any session cancellations were logged contemporaneously to support treatment-on-the-treated and intention-to-treat sensitivity checks.

The principal measurement tool was a performance-based speaking test mapped to task functions practiced during instruction (narration, description, and interactional repair), with analytic rubric domains for fluency, accuracy, range/complexity, and interactional responsiveness. Observation and interview guides were developed from prior classroom process research and adapted to Arabic as a foreign language, then piloted in one non-study class to refine item clarity and timing. Scoring was completed by two trained raters blind to group assignment and timepoint,

with videos randomized to reduce order and carryover effects. Data were captured in standardized forms and entered into a secure database with double-entry verification of numeric fields. All instruments and protocols were reviewed by two content experts for alignment with curricular objectives and age-appropriate task demands, constituting a content validity check.

Analytically, descriptive statistics summarized pre/post means and gains for each group, and paired-samples (t) tests evaluated within-group change under two-tailed ($\alpha=0.05$). Between-group effects were estimated via Welch's (t) test on gain scores to accommodate potential variance heterogeneity, with Hedges' (g) reported as an unbiased standardized effect size; complementary paired-design effect sizes (Cohen's (d_z)) were reported for within-group changes. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals were computed for mean gains and group differences to quantify precision, and assumptions were checked using Shapiro–Wilk tests and visual diagnostics (Q–Q plots, residual histograms). Inter-rater reliability for the speaking scores was estimated using a two-way random-effects intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC[2,k]) on a stratified 20% subsample spanning score ranges. All analyses were conducted in SPSS (v20) and cross-validated on a reproducible script in a secondary environment to confirm numeric stability of test statistics and intervals.

Results

The study was conducted at Islamic Junior High School (MTs) Fathur Rabbani in Cisoka–Tangerang using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with two intact classes: an experimental class that received instruction through the Hot Seat strategy and a control class that received conventional instruction. Each class comprised 22 students ($N = 44$). The comparative student achievement scores for the two classes are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Comparison of individual students' scores (pretest, posttest, and gain) in the experimental and control classes

Experimental Group (N)	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Control Group (N)	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
N1	40	70	30	N1	50	60	10
N2	50	80	30	N2	50	60	10
N3	50	70	20	N3	40	55	15
N4	60	80	20	N4	50	65	15
N5	40	70	30	N5	40	50	10
N6	50	70	20	N6	60	70	10
N7	50	85	35	N7	60	75	15
N8	30	60	30	N8	50	60	10
N9	50	80	30	N9	50	60	10
N10	50	90	40	N10	70	80	10
N11	60	100	40	N11	60	75	15
N12	30	65	35	N12	40	60	20
N13	60	90	30	N13	80	85	5
N14	50	80	30	N14	60	65	5
N15	50	80	30	N15	50	70	20
N16	50	100	50	N16	70	80	10
N17	60	80	20	N17	80	85	5
N18	40	90	50	N18	50	70	20
N19	60	80	20	N19	50	80	30
N20	40	80	40	N20	40	65	25
N21	50	100	50	N21	60	70	10
N22	50	90	40	N22	50	70	20

Total	1070	1790	720	Total	1.210	1.510	300
Mean	48.64	81.36	32.73	Mean	55,00	68,64	13,64

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Per-Student Data Checks

In the experimental class ($n = 22$), all students completed the speaking pretest and posttest. Based on the per-student score list, the total increased from 1,070 (mean = 48.64) on the pretest to 1,790 (mean = 81.36) on the posttest. (Note: the initial manuscript reported a pretest total of 1,080 with a mean of 49.09; per the name-by-name recap, the consistent total is 1,070. If necessary, we can reconcile to 1,080 by correcting the erroneous entry.) In the control class ($n = 22$), the total rose from 1,210 (mean = 55.00) to 1,510 (mean = 68.63), in line with the per-row aggregation.

3.2. Between-Group Comparison: Overview

Relative to the control, the experimental class recorded a mean gain of +32.73 points—nearly two and a half times the control class (+13.64). The +19.09-point difference in average gain indicates a substantive advantage for Hot Seat instruction over conventional teaching in this context. Practically, students in the experimental class not only exhibited larger score growth, but a greater number also reached high performance levels (90–100) on the posttest. The broad and even improvement—without any regressions—further supports the inference that role structuring and scaffolded questioning fostered high speaking-turn frequency and immediate feedback.

3.4. Pedagogical Implications of Per-Student Patterns

The per-student narratives indicate that rotating Hot Seat roles (respondent–questioner–note-taker–timekeeper), calibrating question difficulty, and providing immediate formative feedback enhanced fluency, accuracy, and interaction management. Students with the largest gains typically started from mid-range baselines and accelerated when confronted with graduated challenges that elicited spontaneous production supported by self-repair strategies and varied speech-act responses. Students with moderate gains could be targeted with follow-on interventions—richer question prompts and extended practice emphasizing rapid lexical access, formulaic collocations, and more elaborate role simulations. In the control class, the relatively homogeneous increase suggests that exposure to materials and routine practice had effects, though not with the interactional intensity needed to produce large spikes.

Overall, the per-student data show widespread and consistent gains in the experimental class, with peak improvements reaching +50 and many posttest scores in the 90–100 range, whereas the control class exhibited moderate increases that seldom reached the upper bound. This divergence aligns with the assumption that Hot Seat increases the frequency of meaningful speaking turns, manages performance pressure, and accelerates feedback cycles, thereby enabling greater score growth over the same period. Consequently, the per-student recap corroborates the aggregate statistical findings: Hot Seat is more effective than conventional instruction for improving Arabic speaking proficiency at the Islamic Junior High School (MTs) level.

Discussion

This study examined whether the Hot Seat strategy yields superior gains in Arabic speaking proficiency for Grade 8 learners relative to conventional instruction. The research question was grounded in persistent classroom challenges around eliciting real-time oral production, interactional management, and regulation of speaking

anxiety in foreign language settings. Task-based, dialogic designs that structure accountability and feedback are theorized to accelerate fluency and accuracy by increasing pushed output and meaningful opportunities for repair (Mufanti et al., 2024). Within this pedagogical frame, Hot Seat formalizes rapid, role-based questioning to mobilize participation and sustain focus on communicative adequacy (Abid, 2020). We discuss our findings in light of this literature and consider explanatory mechanisms, limitations, and implications.

The principal results show robust advantages for Hot Seat over conventional lessons. The experimental class improved from a mean of 48.64 at pretest to 81.36 at posttest, while the control class rose from 55.00 to 68.64, producing average gains of 32.73 and 13.64 points, respectively. The between-group difference in gains was 19.09 points in favor of Hot Seat and statistically significant with a very large standardized effect, indicating practical as well as statistical importance. Notably, many experimental students surpassed the 90–100 band at posttest, whereas such peaks were rare in the control cohort. These patterns suggest that Hot Seat increased both the quantity and the quality of meaningful speaking turns within the same instructional time.

The results converge with prior classroom studies reporting significant improvements in speaking under Hot Seat and related dialogic methods. They are also consistent with findings that teacher-led questioning can amplify oral production gains and that directed observation can, under some conditions, approach the benefits of active participation. Evidence that Hot Seat enhances listening and reading-related outcomes complements the present speaking gains and points to transferable mechanisms of dialogic accountability (Khamis & Al-Ali, 2020). Research from STEM and clinical education likewise supports the sensitivity of Hot Seat to growth and its alignment with competency-based assessment (Ying et al., 2020). Taken together, the present findings extend this body of work into Arabic speaking in junior secondary public settings.

Three mechanisms may explain the magnitude of improvement observed in the experimental class. First, repeated, time-bounded turns likely strengthened retrieval and automatization of formulaic language, enabling smoother, faster production under assessment conditions (Elahifar, 2022). Second, structured role rotation (hot-seat respondent, interrogators, timekeeper, recorder) stabilized participation and increased total opportunities for output and feedback. Third, calibrated questioning and immediate formative responses probably heightened attentional engagement and encouraged strategic self-repair, improving accuracy alongside fluency. The clustering of very high posttest scores suggests that challenge calibration and feedback timing were particularly consequential. These mechanisms align with task-based interaction accounts of adolescent L2 development (Al-amro et al., 2021).

Affective dynamics may also have contributed to the gains. While Hot Seat can elevate arousal, moderate levels of stress can sharpen attention and consolidate learning if psychological safety is ensured (Musaffah et al., 2024). Directed observer roles offer a complementary pathway to benefits with potentially lower stress, suggesting that blended formats could distribute cognitive load without sacrificing outcomes. In this study, protocolized questioning and clear turn-taking rules likely mitigated unproductive anxiety by making expectations transparent and providing rapid corrective cues. Future work should include state anxiety and engagement measures to test these inferences directly (Ahmari-Tehran et al., 2025).

Design and measurement choices strengthened the interpretability of effects but warrant cautious generalization. Intact-class assignment without randomization

leaves open selection and teacher effects, and the intervention window limits claims about durability and transfer to spontaneous conversation (Karniawan et al., 2025). Although parallel timing, protocol checks, and blinded scoring improve internal validity, replication across sites and instructors would enhance external validity. Reporting standardized effect sizes and confidence intervals, as done here, supports practical interpretation, yet delayed posttests are needed to assess retention. Mixed-methods process tracing could clarify how questioning quality, wait-time, and feedback moves mediate learning trajectories (Hania et al., 2022).

The implications for policy and practice are consequential. For teachers, Hot Seat is a low-cost, protocolizable method to expand meaningful oral turns and align assessment with instruction in Arabic speaking. For schools, combining active and observer roles may manage stress and scheduling constraints while maintaining learning efficiency. Professional development should target question scaffolding, facilitation for psychological safety, and rapid formative feedback to ensure equitable participation and sustained challenge. At the system level, integrating competency-oriented, dialogic strategies like Hot Seat can advance communicative proficiency targets and inform resource allocation toward high-yield, scalable practices.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine whether the Hot Seat strategy produces greater improvements in Arabic speaking proficiency than conventional instruction for Grade 8 learners in a junior secondary setting. Using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with intact classes ($n=44$), the experimental group outperformed the control group, rising from a mean of 48.64 to 81.36 versus 55.00 to 68.64, and yielding average gains of 32.73 and 13.64 points, respectively. The between-group difference in gains was 19.09 points in favor of Hot Seat, evidencing a practically meaningful advantage that was also visible in the larger share of learners attaining the 90–100 band at posttest. These results indicate that structured role rotation, calibrated questioning, and rapid formative feedback can expand both the quantity and quality of meaningful oral turns within equivalent instructional time. Accordingly, the study substantiates Hot Seat as an efficacious, classroom-ready approach for accelerating oral proficiency in Arabic at the junior secondary level. The findings carry several implications for research and practice. For pedagogy, Hot Seat offers a low-cost, protocolizable method to align instruction and assessment while increasing opportunities for pushed output and strategic repair; blended formats that combine active and directed-observer roles may help manage stress and scheduling without diluting learning gains. For teacher development, training should target question scaffolding, difficulty calibration, facilitation for psychological safety, and high-frequency feedback cycles to ensure equitable participation and sustained challenge. For policy, integrating competency-oriented, dialogic strategies like Hot Seat can advance communicative proficiency targets and justify resource allocation toward scalable, high-yield practices. Limitations include intact-class allocation without randomization, a single-site intervention, a relatively short treatment window, and the absence of a delayed posttest for retention, all of which temper causal and generalizability claims. Future research should undertake multi-site cluster-randomized trials with preregistered analyses; include delayed and transfer posttests; compare teacher-led versus student-led questioning; measure mediators such as engagement and state anxiety; examine fidelity, equity, and cost-effectiveness; and test hybrid designs that optimize the balance of active and observer roles.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Indah Fajriyati conceived and designed the study, coordinated data collection, performed the primary analyses, and drafted the initial manuscript, study design and instrumentation, ensured methodological rigor and validation, and provided critical revisions to the manuscript. Zaki Ghufron contributed to resources and field coordination, conducted supplementary analyses and visualization, and oversaw project administration and final proofreading. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study, together with the analysis notes, are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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