

English Presentation, Faith, and Learner Identity: A Narrative Inquiry in an Indonesian Islamic Youth Community

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Draft article history
Submitted: 01-20-2026;
Revised: 08-14-2026;
Accepted: 08-16-2026;

ABSTRACT: English presentation is widely recognized as an essential component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction; yet little is known about how learners from faith-based communities experience and interpret such practices. This study explored how senior high school students from an Islamic youth organization reflected on their experiences of learning and presenting English, and what these reflections revealed about their linguistic development, self-expression, and socio-religious identities. The study was conducted in a mosque-based youth organization in Tangerang City, Banten, Indonesia, involving eleven senior high school students aged sixteen to eighteen from different schools. Using a qualitative design grounded in narrative inquiry, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, written narratives, and non-participant classroom observation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that English presentations functioned as a space for developing voice and confidence, confronting anxiety and modesty expectations, expressing Islamic values through English, and strengthening learning through peer and community support. Theoretically, the study advances identity-oriented perspectives in EFL by showing that English presentation can operate as a socially situated practice through which learners develop linguistic confidence while expressing religious values and constructing a sense of self in relation to their community. Its originality lies in revealing how faith, identity, emotion, and communal relationships jointly shape learners' experiences of English presentation in a mosque-based youth setting, a context rarely examined in EFL research. The findings suggest that EFL pedagogy should create reflective and culturally respectful learning environments that value learners' voices and identities, particularly in faith-based educational settings.

Keywords: English presentation, faith-based education, Islamic youth, narrative inquiry, senior high school.

ABSTRAK: Presentasi dalam bahasa Inggris secara luas diakui sebagai salah satu komponen penting dalam pembelajaran English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Namun, masih sedikit yang diketahui mengenai bagaimana peserta didik dari komunitas berbasis keagamaan mengalami dan memaknai praktik tersebut. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana siswa sekolah menengah atas yang tergabung dalam organisasi kepemudaan Islam merefleksikan pengalaman mereka dalam mempelajari dan melakukan presentasi dalam bahasa Inggris, serta apa yang diungkapkan oleh refleksi tersebut mengenai perkembangan kebahasaan, ekspresi diri, dan identitas sosial-keagamaan mereka. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan pada sebuah organisasi kepemudaan berbasis masjid di Kota Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia, dengan melibatkan sebelas siswa sekolah menengah atas berusia enam belas hingga delapan belas tahun yang berasal dari sekolah yang berbeda. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif yang berlandaskan narrative inquiry, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur secara mendalam, narasi

tertulis, dan observasi kelas nonpartisipatif. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa presentasi dalam bahasa Inggris berfungsi sebagai ruang bagi peserta didik untuk mengembangkan keberanian dalam menyuarakan gagasan dan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, menghadapi kecemasan serta tuntutan nilai kesantunan dan kerendahan hati, mengekspresikan nilai-nilai Islam melalui bahasa Inggris, dan memperkuat proses pembelajaran melalui dukungan teman sebaya dan komunitas. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas perspektif berorientasi identitas dalam pembelajaran EFL dengan menunjukkan bahwa presentasi dalam bahasa Inggris dapat berfungsi sebagai praktik yang terikat secara sosial, yang memungkinkan peserta didik mengembangkan kepercayaan diri dalam berbahasa sekaligus mengekspresikan nilai-nilai keagamaan dan membangun pemahaman tentang diri mereka dalam hubungannya dengan komunitas. Orisinalitas penelitian ini terletak pada pengungkapan bagaimana agama, identitas, emosi, dan relasi komunal secara bersama-sama membentuk pengalaman peserta didik dalam melakukan presentasi bahasa Inggris di lingkungan kepemudaan berbasis masjid, sebuah konteks yang masih jarang dikaji dalam penelitian EFL. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pedagogi EFL perlu menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang reflektif dan menghargai budaya, serta memberikan ruang bagi suara dan identitas peserta didik, khususnya dalam konteks pendidikan berbasis keagamaan.

Kata kunci: *presentasi bahasa Inggris, pendidikan berbasis keagamaan, pemuda Islam, narrative inquiry, siswa sekolah menengah atas.*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak confidently in English is increasingly viewed as an essential component of language education (Cao et al., 2024). Among the four language skills, oral presentation stands out for its capacity to foster fluency, critical thinking, and public communication (Fokuoh & Nkansah, 2025). In English as a foreign language (EFL) context, schools have begun to place greater emphasis on presentation-based tasks to develop learners' speaking proficiency and classroom participation. Despite this growing emphasis, English presentation pedagogy remains strongly associated with measurable aspects of performance such as fluency, accuracy, organization, delivery, and confidence. This orientation creates an important scholarly and pedagogical problem because successful speaking cannot always be explained through linguistic performance alone. Recent work in language education has shown that emotion, culture, identity, and social belonging can influence how learners participate in English speaking activities (De Costa & Uysal, 2025; Yang & Yao, 2025). A central controversy therefore concerns whether presentation should be understood primarily as a technical speaking task or as a socially situated practice through which learners express who they are, what they value, and how they wish to be perceived by others. This issue becomes particularly significant in religious communities, where expectations concerning appropriate conduct, public expression, and moral responsibility may shape how learners experience speaking before an audience.

This concern is especially relevant in Indonesia, where English learning takes place within diverse social and religious environments and where many young people participate in Islamic communities beyond formal schooling. Research on faith and language has begun to recognize that religious affiliation can influence language choice, communication, identity, and educational experience (Bhatt et al., 2025; Selim et al., 2025). At the same time, studies of

English presentation have largely concentrated on speaking proficiency, anxiety, classroom strategies, technological support, and observable performance. These two strands of scholarship have rarely been brought together. As a result, an empirical gap remains in understanding how young learners in Islamic community settings interpret English presentation through their experiences of faith, self-expression, emotion, and social relationships. A related theoretical gap is also evident. Research on oral presentation often explains learning through communicative development or affective factors, while research on language and identity emphasizes the social construction of the learner. Less attention has been given to how these perspectives intersect when religious identity becomes part of an English-speaking experience. Examining this intersection can extend current understandings of presentation from an individual performance activity to a social practice shaped by identity, belief, emotion, and community.

This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by posing the research question: *How do senior high school students from Islamic youth organizations reflect on their experiences of learning and presenting English, and what do these reflections reveal about their linguistic development, self-expression, and socio-religious identities?* The study explores how students interpret their preparation, participation, emotions, self-expression, and religious values while learning to present in English within an Islamic youth community. It makes three contributions. Empirically, it brings attention to senior high school learners in a mosque-based educational setting, a population that remains rarely represented in research on English presentation. Theoretically, it contributes to identity-oriented understandings of EFL learning by showing how linguistic development, emotion, faith, and social relationships can operate together within a single speaking practice. Pedagogically, it provides evidence for designing presentation instruction that recognizes learners as social and cultural persons rather than evaluating them only as language performers. By centering students' accounts of their own experiences, the study also extends research on English presentation beyond questions of effectiveness and performance toward an understanding of how speaking English can become a means of expressing identity, belief, and belonging.

English Presentation, Identity, and Learner Reflection in Faith-Based EFL Contexts

English presentation occupies an important place in EFL instruction because it brings linguistic knowledge, organization of ideas, audience awareness, and public communication into a single speaking activity. Research has associated presentation tasks with the development of oral proficiency and communicative competence because learners must formulate ideas and make them understandable to an audience (Fokuoh & Nkansah, 2025). At the senior high school level, such tasks can also strengthen academic communication by requiring students to organize arguments, select appropriate language, and respond to expectations of purpose and audience (Kang, 2025). Yet these educational benefits coexist with a persistent problem. Presentation places learners in a highly

visible communicative position in which their linguistic competence is publicly displayed and evaluated. Anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and limited confidence can therefore influence how learners experience the task and whether they participate fully (Afrin & Islam, 2025). This tension suggests that English presentation cannot be understood adequately as a speaking technique alone. Its educational meaning also depends on how learners perceive themselves as speakers, how they interpret the audience, and whether the learning environment gives them sufficient social and emotional security to speak.

The social meaning of presentation becomes especially important when learners participate in communities where language use is connected with cultural and religious expectations. Contemporary work on language education recognizes that learners bring identities, emotions, values, and social histories into communicative activity rather than entering the classroom as culturally detached language users (De Costa & Uysal, 2025). This perspective is particularly relevant to faith-based education. Studies in Islamic educational settings indicate that moral responsibility, appropriate conduct, and collective values can shape educational participation and relationships (Bakti et al., 2025; Karwadi et al., 2025). Research from faith-oriented learning environments also suggests that students can experience stronger motivation and a greater sense of security when classroom practices acknowledge the values that matter within their communities (Firstisya et al., 2025; Wallangara & Paparang, 2025). Taken together, these studies challenge approaches that treat religious identity as separate from language learning. They suggest instead that speaking practices can acquire particular meanings when learners evaluate their own conduct through both educational and religious expectations. In English presentation, for example, confidence and public visibility may be interpreted not only in relation to successful performance but also in relation to appropriate self-expression, modest conduct, responsibility to others, and the values learners wish to represent.

This concern also explains the importance of learner reflection in studying English presentation. Performance scores, linguistic measures, and observable delivery can show what students accomplish, but they provide limited access to what speaking in English means to the learners themselves. Reflective inquiry can reveal how students interpret emotions, relationships, values, changes in confidence, and moments of personal significance that may remain invisible in performance assessment. McSorley et al. (2025), for example, demonstrate the value of reflective processes for examining how learners understand themselves and their responsibilities within educational experience. Applied to EFL presentation, reflection shifts attention from asking only whether students perform successfully to asking how they understand participation and what the experience contributes to their developing sense of themselves as English users. This distinction is particularly important in faith-based communities, where the meaning of speaking may emerge from the interaction of linguistic development, personal belief, social expectations, and relationships with other community members. The literature therefore points toward a relational understanding of

English presentation in which linguistic performance, identity, emotion, faith, and social context are analytically connected rather than treated as separate concerns.

Studies on English Presentation in EFL Contexts

Research on English presentation in EFL settings can first be understood through a performance and competence strand. Across different contexts, presentation has been associated with development in vocabulary, grammar, fluency, coherence, organization, and broader speaking proficiency (Al Khresheh, 2024; Nguyen & Ly, 2025; Syahriar & Susanti, 2025). Rather than pointing to a single presentation effect, however, these studies collectively show that oral presentation requires learners to coordinate several dimensions of communicative competence at once. This point is reinforced by research examining actional competence, which shows that presentation involves purposeful communicative functions rather than the production of linguistically correct sentences alone (Afifah et al., 2024). Research on nonverbal communication likewise demonstrates that meaning is communicated through physical delivery as well as spoken language (Sopyanti et al., 2025), while work on silence shows that pauses can serve communicative purposes and need not automatically indicate deficient fluency (Klimczak-Pawlak, 2024). Viewed together, this body of research broadens the concept of successful presentation beyond linguistic accuracy. At the same time, its primary unit of analysis remains what learners visibly produce. Consequently, the literature explains presentation performance more fully than it explains how learners interpret the social and personal significance of becoming visible English speakers.

A second strand concerns the emotional demands of public speaking. Across educational settings, anxiety appears not as an incidental difficulty but as a recurring feature of English presentation. Learners may fear linguistic mistakes, audience judgment, spontaneous questions, pronunciation problems, or losing control of prepared material (Anggraini et al., 2025; Makhoulouf, 2025; Syam et al., 2024). Yet this literature also shows that affective experience is responsive to pedagogical conditions. Preparation, peer feedback, self-regulation, rehearsal, and repeated participation can support confidence and help learners manage public speaking demands (Anggraini et al., 2025). Research on boredom further complicates the assumption that presentation itself is inherently engaging. When presentation becomes repetitive, poorly structured, or disconnected from students' interests, it can contribute to disengagement rather than active participation (Yetkin & Altinkaya, 2024). The important synthesis across these studies is therefore not simply that learners experience anxiety or boredom. It is that emotional responses arise in relation to how presentation is organized, how learners perceive evaluation, and what forms of participation the learning environment makes possible. What remains less clear is whether these emotional responses are also related to learners' cultural values and social identities.

A third theme concerns mediation through pedagogical tools and instructional design. Digital storytelling can provide learners with multimodal resources for planning and delivering presentations and can support positive

affect as well as presentation quality (Ahmad et al., 2025; Chen, 2024). Artificial intelligence applications have similarly been examined as resources for improving speaking performance, strengthening confidence, and reducing anxiety (Zhu et al., 2025). Other forms of educational technology can extend communication beyond conventional classroom interaction and create additional opportunities for participation and motivation (Jeong, 2023). The broader significance of these studies is that presentation ability does not develop through individual effort alone. Learning is mediated by available tools, modes of communication, opportunities for rehearsal, and forms of feedback. This argument is also supported by instructional research showing that presentation activities can become productive components of redesigned classroom structures such as flipped learning (Alolaywi & Alkhalaf, 2024). Thus, technology and instructional design matter not simply because they make presentations more attractive, but because they reorganize the conditions under which learners prepare, interact, receive assistance, and participate.

A fourth theme shifts attention from individual delivery toward interaction. Presentation is sometimes treated as a largely one-directional activity in which one learner speaks, and others listen, yet classroom research indicates that interactional competence is equally important. Repair, clarification, and other pragmatic strategies allow learners to sustain communication when difficulties occur and can support greater confidence in classroom participation (Kulsawang & Ambele, 2025). This interactive dimension is particularly important because presentation commonly includes questions, peer responses, feedback, and negotiation of meaning. It therefore connects individual speaking with participation in a social group. The literature on peer-assisted learning supports this interpretation by showing that peers can contribute to presentation development through feedback, coordination, encouragement, and shared preparation (Pojchanaphong et al., 2025). When considered alongside work on communicative functions, nonverbal expression, and the communicative role of pauses (Afifah et al., 2024; Klimczak-Pawlak, 2024; Sopyanti et al., 2025), these findings suggest that presentation competence is relational. What speakers can accomplish depends partly on how they respond to other people and how the surrounding group responds to them.

Taken together, research on instructional design, peer learning, interaction, and affect demonstrates that the outcomes of English presentation depend strongly on the social and pedagogical conditions surrounding the activity. Peer assistance can strengthen confidence and performance, although participation also requires learners to manage collaboration and shared responsibility (Pojchanaphong et al., 2025). Flipped learning can redistribute preparation and classroom participation in ways that support engagement (Alolaywi & Alkhalaf, 2024), whereas poorly experienced speaking activities may contribute to boredom and withdrawal (Yetkin & Altinkaya, 2024). These findings question any simple assumption that assigning presentations automatically produces communicative development. The task acquires educational value through relationships, interaction patterns, forms of support, and opportunities

for meaningful participation. This point is central to the present study because a mosque-based youth organization provides a social environment in which peers are not merely classmates but members of a community connected by shared activities and values.

The literature therefore reveals a clear pattern as well as an important limitation. Existing research has substantially improved understanding of presentation as linguistic performance, emotional experience, technologically mediated activity, and interactive classroom practice. Studies have explained how learners improve speaking proficiency, experience anxiety, use communicative strategies, respond to digital resources, and benefit from peer support. Far less attention has been given to how these dimensions converge in learners' interpretations of themselves as English speakers. In particular, research rarely asks how religious belief and community membership influence the meaning learners assign to confidence, public visibility, self-expression, peer relationships, and the use of English. This is both an empirical and conceptual gap. Empirically, faith-based youth communities remain marginal in research on English presentation. Conceptually, presentation studies frequently separate language performance, affect, interaction, and social context rather than explaining how they operate together within learners' experience. Addressing this gap requires a framework that conceptualizes English presentation simultaneously as language use, identity work, socially mediated learning, and participation in a community.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Identity, Sociocultural Mediation, and Community Participation

The present study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Norton's theory of identity and investment, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and the concept of Communities of Practice developed by Lave and Wenger and further elaborated by Wenger. These perspectives are brought together because no single lens fully explains the phenomenon examined in this study. Identity theory explains how learners understand themselves and their possibilities for speaking. Sociocultural Theory explains how learning develops through interaction and culturally available forms of mediation. Communities of Practice explain how participation in shared social activity contributes to learning, belonging, and identity. Their integration makes it possible to examine English presentation not simply as an individual speaking performance but as a social practice in which language development, self-expression, belief, interaction, and community membership meet.

Norton's theory provides the primary lens for understanding the relationship between language use and learner identity. Norton Peirce (1995) challenged views of second language learners as individuals whose participation could be explained mainly through stable psychological characteristics. Identity is instead understood as socially constructed, multiple, and capable of changing across contexts and time. Norton (2013) further connects identity with investment, arguing that learners' commitment to language learning is related to the identities they seek, the social relationships in which they participate, and the

forms of symbolic and material value they associate with language use. This perspective is useful for the present study because willingness to present in English cannot be reduced to confidence or motivation alone. Students may also consider what speaking English allows them to express, how others may perceive them, whether particular forms of public expression are consistent with their values, and what kind of English speaker they wish to become. The framework therefore directs attention to moments in which participants claim a voice, restrict their own expression, reinterpret confidence, or connect English with their religious and social identities.

Sociocultural Theory complements this identity perspective by explaining learning as a process that develops through socially organized activity rather than solely within the individual. Vygotsky (1978) argued that higher forms of learning are mediated through interaction, language, cultural tools, and assistance from others. From this perspective, English presentation development is not simply the accumulation of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and presentation techniques. It occurs through preparation with peers, feedback, observation of other speakers, interaction with the facilitator, repeated participation, and the use of cultural resources available within the learning environment. This framework is particularly relevant to the present study because participants learned within an informal mosque-based program where peer encouragement and shared activities formed part of the educational experience. Sociocultural Theory thus helps explain how confidence and speaking practices can develop through mediated participation rather than being treated as purely individual achievements.

The Communities of Practice perspective adds a broader social dimension by conceptualizing learning as increasing participation in shared practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed that learning is situated within social activity and that participation contributes both to the development of competence and to becoming a particular kind of community member. Wenger (1998) subsequently placed practice, meaning, community, and identity at the center of a social theory of learning. This perspective is especially appropriate for a mosque-based Islamic youth organization because the participants belonged to an existing social community rather than a temporary group formed solely for English instruction. Their presentation experiences occurred within relationships already shaped by friendship, shared religious activities, mutual support, and expectations concerning conduct. Peer encouragement, collective preparation, applause, religious expressions, and shared responsibility can therefore be understood as elements of community participation rather than as incidental background features.

Conceptually, the three perspectives operate at interconnected levels in this study. Norton's theory addresses how students interpret who they are and who they can become when speaking English. Sociocultural Theory addresses how their development is mediated through interaction, assistance, language, and culturally meaningful resources. Communities of Practice address how these processes occur through participation in a group with shared practices,

relationships, and values. English presentation is therefore conceptualized as a socially situated identity practice in which learners develop communicative capacity while positioning themselves in relation to an audience, their peers, their faith, and the community to which they belong. This integrated framework guides the interpretation of the four empirical themes in the study: developing voice through presentation, responding to anxiety and expectations of modest conduct, expressing Islamic values through English, and learning through peer and community support. Rather than treating these themes as separate outcomes, the framework allows them to be understood as connected dimensions of language learning through participation, mediation, and identity construction.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in narrative inquiry to explore how senior high school students from Islamic youth organizations reflect on their experiences with English presentations. Narrative inquiry was chosen for its ability to access the personal stories, meanings, and lived experiences of participants (Freitas, 2025; Robertson & Lappeman, 2025), allowing the researcher to understand how students interpret presentation tasks in relation to their identity, emotions, and beliefs. Rather than focusing on performance metrics or observable behaviors, this approach centers on the voices of the learners, inviting them to share how they experienced preparing, delivering, and reflecting on English presentations within their faith-based educational setting. The method enables a deep and context-sensitive exploration of how students construct meaning around public speaking, how they confront personal and cultural challenges, and how they negotiate between language learning and religious values. Through this lens, English presentation is not only seen as a language practice but as a site of identity expression, personal growth, and social interaction.

Narrative inquiry served as the methodological orientation because the study was concerned with how participants interpreted and gave meaning to their experiences rather than with measuring changes in speaking performance. The analysis therefore attended to individual accounts while also examining recurring patterns across participants. Thematic analysis was used within this narrative orientation to identify shared patterns without reducing participants' accounts to isolated statements. This combination allowed the study to preserve the experiential character of participants' stories while identifying broader patterns concerning voice, anxiety, faith, and community support.

Researcher reflexivity was also considered throughout the inquiry because interpretation in qualitative research is influenced by the researcher's assumptions, experiences, and relationship with the research context. The researcher therefore reflected on possible expectations concerning English learning, public speaking, Islamic values, and youth participation when interpreting the data. Reflexive notes were used during data collection and analysis to distinguish participants' expressed meanings from the researcher's

initial assumptions and to record interpretive decisions that required further examination. Particular care was taken not to interpret religious expressions automatically as either constraints or sources of motivation. Instead, their meanings were derived from how participants themselves described and enacted them.

Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted in an Islamic youth organization based in a mosque located in Tangerang City, Banten province, Indonesia. The organization serves as a community platform for junior and senior secondary school students living in the surrounding neighborhood. Its programs are diverse, including sports, religious studies, academic tutoring, and skill development. Among these initiatives, an English presentation workshop was introduced as part of the academic and skill enhancement activities. The workshop was led by a volunteer with a background in English education, and it aimed to support students in building confidence, improving public speaking, and developing English proficiency through structured presentation tasks. The program was conducted informally within the mosque's facilities and was attended by students from various high schools in the area.

The participants selected for this study were eleven senior secondary school students between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. They consisted of seven females and four males, each coming from different high schools within Tangerang City. Their involvement in the workshop and their varied educational backgrounds provided a rich context for exploring the meanings they assigned to English presentation experiences.

Participants were selected purposively because the study required students who had direct experience of the English presentation workshop and were therefore able to reflect on its linguistic, emotional, social, and religious dimensions. The selection criteria included being a senior high school student, being between sixteen and eighteen years old, participating in the English presentation activities organized by the Islamic youth community, and being willing to describe the experience through interviews and written reflection. The purpose of the sampling strategy was not statistical representation but access to information-rich accounts from students who had experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion of students from different schools also provided variation in educational background while maintaining a shared community context.

The adequacy of the eleven-participant sample was considered in relation to the depth and recurrence of the data rather than numerical representativeness. Data collection and preliminary review occurred iteratively. As later interviews and written narratives increasingly reinforced or elaborated patterns already appearing in earlier accounts, including confidence, anxiety, expectations of modest conduct, religious expression, and peer support, the dataset was judged sufficiently rich to address the research question. Saturation was therefore treated as thematic sufficiency rather than as a claim that no additional experience could exist. This interpretation was appropriate to narrative inquiry, where

individual variation remains analytically important even when recurring patterns become apparent across participants.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Before data collection, each participant received a clear explanation of the research purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality. To protect their identities, each participant was assigned a code from P1 to P11. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point without any consequences.

Because the participants were senior high school students, particular attention was given to voluntary participation, privacy, and respectful treatment of personal and religious reflections. Participant codes were used in transcripts, analytical records, and reporting so that individual statements could not be associated with students' names or schools.

Data Collection Methods

To gain a deeper understanding of the students' reflections on their English presentation experiences, this study employed three qualitative data collection methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews, written narratives, and non-participant classroom observation. These methods were chosen to capture the participants' experiences from multiple angles, enabling both verbal and written expressions of meaning, as well as contextual insights from real-time classroom interaction. The combination of these approaches allowed the researcher to access not only what the participants said or wrote about their experiences, but also how they behaved, responded, and interacted during the sessions.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with each of the eleven participants and lasted approximately thirty minutes. These interviews were designed to be semi-structured, providing enough guidance on key themes such as confidence, identity, beliefs, and emotions, while still allowing space for participants to share personal stories and reflections in their own words.

The interview protocol was organized around several areas derived from the research question. These included students' experiences of preparing a presentation, feelings before and during public speaking, perceived changes in English use and confidence, experiences of interacting with the audience, perceptions of self-expression, the possible influence of Islamic values on presentation choices, experiences of peer support, and reflections after completing the task. Questions were open-ended and followed by prompts asking participants to explain specific experiences, feelings, or examples in greater detail. The sequence of questions remained flexible so that participants could develop experiences they considered personally important. Follow-up questions were used when participants introduced issues that were relevant to identity, faith, anxiety, or social relationships but had not been anticipated in the initial question sequence.

The interview setting was kept informal and respectful to encourage honest and open sharing. Each session was audio recorded with permission and later

transcribed for analysis. The richness of the responses offered detailed accounts of how the students made sense of the English presentation tasks in light of their personal, academic, and faith-based backgrounds. In addition to the interviews, participants were asked to submit short written narratives reflecting on their preparation, performance, and feelings before and after the presentations.

The written narratives provided participants with an additional opportunity to express experiences that they might not have discussed fully during face-to-face interviews. The prompts invited them to describe what they did in preparation, how they felt before and during the presentation, what they considered difficult or meaningful, and how they viewed themselves after completing the activity. The narratives were treated as complementary reflective accounts rather than as written versions of the interviews.

These written accounts served as a complementary source of introspective data, often capturing thoughts or emotions that were not expressed during the interviews. To further contextualize the data, non-participant classroom observation was also conducted during the English presentation sessions. The researcher observed the students' presentation delivery, peer interaction, and classroom atmosphere without participating in the activities.

Observation focused on behaviors that could provide contextual support for participants' accounts, including eye contact, posture, visible signs of nervousness, audience response, peer encouragement, religious expressions used during presentations, and interactions before and after students spoke. Observation was not used to infer participants' internal feelings independently. Instead, observed behavior was compared with interview and narrative data to strengthen contextual interpretation.

Field notes were taken during each session to document patterns of behavior, levels of engagement, and moments of visible confidence or discomfort. Together, these three methods contributed to a comprehensive understanding of how the students experienced English presentations within their faith-based community setting.

Data collection and preliminary analysis were conducted iteratively. Emerging issues identified in interviews, narratives, and observations informed subsequent attention to recurring experiences. This process also supported assessment of thematic saturation by allowing the researcher to identify whether later data introduced substantially different patterns or mainly extended patterns already present in the dataset.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2022). Analysis proceeded through six interconnected stages. First, the researcher became familiar with the dataset by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts, written narratives, and observation field notes while recording preliminary analytical observations. Second, initial codes were assigned to segments that captured meaningful aspects of participants' presentation experiences. Coding remained close to participants' language during the initial

stage and included expressions related to nervousness, confidence, being seen by others, fear of appearing boastful, religious expression, peer assistance, audience response, and changes across presentation experiences. Third, related codes were compared and clustered into broader analytical categories. For example, codes concerning being able to speak with meaning, feeling that one's ideas were valuable, and increased confidence were grouped around emerging voice and linguistic ownership. Fourth, these categories were examined across interviews, written narratives, and observation records to construct candidate themes. Fifth, the candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the complete dataset to determine whether each theme was internally coherent and clearly distinguishable from the others. Finally, the themes were defined and named according to the central meaning represented by each pattern. This process produced four themes: finding their voice through presentation, tension and transformation in facing public performance, expressing faith through language, and learning supported by community.

Coding was primarily inductive because the study sought to foreground meanings emerging from participants' accounts. At the same time, interpretation remained informed by the research question concerning linguistic development, self-expression, and socio-religious identity. Theoretical concepts were therefore used to deepen interpretation after patterns had been developed from the data rather than to impose predetermined coding categories at the beginning of analysis. Interview transcripts formed the main source for identifying experiential meanings, while written narratives and observation notes were used to elaborate, compare, and contextualize those meanings.

Special attention was given to reflective expressions and metaphorical language used by the participants, as these provided deeper insights into their inner thoughts and personal interpretations. For instance, when a participant described the stage as "a test of my courage," this metaphor was not only coded for emotional significance but also interpreted as an indicator of how the student linked public speaking with self-evaluation and personal growth. Such expressions revealed how students framed their English presentation experiences within the context of faith, learning, and self-awareness. The use of metaphor served as a powerful lens to explore how meaning was constructed beyond surface-level descriptions.

Table 1. Example of the Coding Process

Initial Codes	Analytic Categories	Final Themes
Memorizing the text, speaking with meaning, feeling seen, having something valuable to say, standing more confidently, increased confidence after presenting	Emerging voice, linguistic ownership, confidence, and self-expression	Finding Their Voice: Presentation as Empowerment and Expression
Nervousness, fear of judgment, discomfort with attention, concern about appearing boastful, difficulty	Public speaking anxiety, expectations of modest conduct,	Tension and Transformation: Overcoming

with eye contact, fidgeting, gradually enjoying the challenge	adaptation, and increased resilience	Anxiety and Balancing Modesty
Using Islamic greetings, referring to the body as an <i>amanah</i> , mentioning Allah, including moral messages, maintaining Islamic identity while speaking English	Religious expression, moral positioning, and integration of faith with English use	Faith on the Stage: Expressing Islamic Values Through English
Receiving grammar help, reminders to smile, prayer from friends, applause, verbal encouragement, practicing together, becoming confident together	Peer assistance, emotional support, shared learning, and community participation	Learning Beyond the Script: Peer Support and Communal Growth

Trustworthiness was addressed through several complementary procedures. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, written narratives, and observation field notes. Rather than requiring identical evidence from every source, triangulation was used to examine convergence, elaboration, and possible differences among what participants said, wrote, and displayed during presentation activities. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants and inviting them to comment on whether the interpretations reasonably represented their experiences. Peer debriefing provided an additional interpretive check through discussion of emerging codes, categories, and themes with academic colleagues. These discussions were used to question assumptions and consider alternative interpretations rather than to seek mechanical agreement on coding.

Dependability and confirmability were supported through an audit trail documenting major stages of analysis. The audit trail included versions of transcripts, initial code lists, developing code definitions, decisions to combine or separate codes, category development, candidate theme structures, changes to theme labels, reflexive notes, and records of peer debriefing. Analytical decisions were linked back to relevant extracts from interviews, narratives, and observation notes so that the development from raw data to themes could be traced. Reflexive notes were reviewed during theme development to identify occasions when the researcher's prior expectations might have shaped interpretation. Together, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, reflexivity, and the audit trail strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the analysis while preserving the interpretive character of qualitative inquiry. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the process through informed consent, confidentiality, participant coding, and respectful representation of students' cultural and religious experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Four major themes emerged from the participants' reflections on their English presentation experiences: (1) finding their voice through presentation, (2) tension and transformation in facing public performance, (3) expressing faith through language, and (4) learning supported by community.

Rather than representing four separate outcomes, the themes formed an interconnected account of how students experienced English presentation. Developing a stronger voice was accompanied by anxiety about public visibility, while religious values influenced what students considered appropriate forms of self-expression. At the same time, peer and community relationships provided social support through which students could manage these tensions. The findings therefore show that linguistic development, emotion, religious identity, and social participation operated together within the presentation experience. Attention was also given to accounts that qualified the dominant patterns. In particular, increased confidence was not experienced uniformly as uncomplicated empowerment. For some participants, becoming a more visible and confident speaker also raised concerns about judgment and appropriate conduct. This contrasting evidence prevents the themes from suggesting a simple progression from anxiety to confidence.

Table 2. Thematic Map of Students' English Presentation Experiences

Central phenomenon	Theme	Central meaning	Relationship with other themes
English presentation as a socially situated language experience	Finding their voice	English became a means of communicating personally meaningful ideas and developing confidence as a speaker	Voice developed through participation but was qualified by concerns about public visibility and modest conduct
English presentation as a socially situated language experience	Tension and transformation	Students experienced anxiety, audience awareness, and concerns about appropriate self-presentation while gradually becoming more comfortable speaking publicly	Anxiety influenced voice, while peer support provided conditions for greater confidence
English presentation as a socially situated language experience	Faith on the stage	Some students incorporated Islamic expressions and moral meanings into their use of English	Faith shaped what students chose to express and how they understood themselves as English speakers

English presentation as a socially situated language experience	Learning beyond the script	Peers contributed linguistic, emotional, and spiritual support before and during presentation activities	Community support connected the other themes by supporting voice, easing anxiety, and validating culturally meaningful expression
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The thematic map shows that community support did not function as an isolated fourth outcome. It intersected with the other three themes by providing a setting in which students could attempt public expression, respond to anxiety, and bring religious meanings into English use. Similarly, confidence was not treated as the opposite of modesty or anxiety. Participants' accounts indicate that these experiences could coexist. A student could become more confident while remaining concerned about how that confidence might be interpreted by others.

Finding Their Voice: Presentation as Empowerment and Expression

For many participants, the experience of presenting in English was described as a moment of personal empowerment. Initially hesitant, several students expressed surprise at their own ability to speak publicly in a foreign language. Over time, they began to view English not just as a subject to study, but as a means of expressing themselves with clarity and confidence. As one participant stated during the interview, *"At first, I was nervous and only memorized my text, but when I finally spoke in front of my friends, I realized I could speak with meaning, not just words"* (P5, interview).

P5's distinction between memorizing words and speaking with meaning indicates a change in how the participant understood the purpose of presentation. Memorization positioned English as material to reproduce correctly, whereas speaking "with meaning" positioned the learner as someone with an idea worth communicating. The significance of this account therefore lies not simply in reduced nervousness. It reflects movement from dependence on a prepared script toward greater personal ownership of spoken English. The participant was beginning to judge successful speaking not only by whether the words were remembered but by whether those words carried an intended message.

Written narratives echoed this sentiment, with one student writing, *"Giving a presentation made me feel seen. I felt like I had something valuable to say, even though I was using another language"* (P3, narrative). The phrase "made me feel seen" adds an interpersonal dimension to the development of confidence. P3 did not describe English merely as a skill that had improved. The presentation provided recognition from an audience and allowed the participant to experience personal ideas as worthy of attention. The phrase "even though I was using another language" is also important because it suggests that English initially carried some distance from the participant's familiar means of expression. Being able to communicate something personally valuable through English reduced that distance and strengthened the student's sense of legitimacy as a speaker.

Observational data also supported this theme, as several students were seen smiling and standing taller after completing their presentations, often receiving spontaneous applause from peers. These observable changes do not independently establish what students felt, but they correspond with the interview and narrative accounts of increasing confidence and recognition. The spontaneous applause is particularly relevant because students' developing voices were acknowledged socially rather than experienced only internally. Confidence thus emerged partly through the relationship between speaker and audience. Students spoke, received recognition, and subsequently appeared more comfortable occupying the position of an English speaker.

This pattern, however, should not be interpreted as universal or uncomplicated empowerment. P2's account in the following theme provides important contrasting evidence. While some participants experienced confidence as an achievement, P2 worried that visible confidence might be interpreted as "showing off." The counter pattern demonstrates that acquiring a stronger speaking voice could simultaneously create a new social concern. The relevant issue was therefore not simply whether students became confident, but how they understood and regulated that confidence in relation to other people.

Tension and Transformation: Overcoming Anxiety and Balancing Modesty

Despite positive growth, participants also reported emotional tension, particularly related to public exposure, stage fright, and the internal expectation to remain modest. Several students expressed discomfort with being the center of attention, especially in mixed-gender settings. One participant admitted, "*I was worried I might be judged - not only for my English but also for standing too confidently as a girl. I didn't want people to think I was showing off*" (P2, interview).

P2's statement reveals two forms of evaluation operating at the same time. The first concerned linguistic performance, since the participant expected her English to be judged. The second concerned social conduct, particularly the possibility that visible confidence might be interpreted negatively. This distinction is analytically important. Her anxiety cannot be explained entirely by fear of making linguistic mistakes. She was also evaluating how much confidence could be displayed without appearing excessively assertive. Presentation therefore required her to manage both linguistic visibility and social visibility.

P2 also serves as a negative case to any interpretation that increased confidence was uniformly experienced as desirable. Her account shows that confidence itself could become a source of uncertainty when it conflicted with her understanding of appropriate self-presentation. Rather than abandoning modest conduct in order to become an effective speaker, she appeared to search for a form of public expression that could accommodate both. This tension makes the process more complex than a straightforward movement from fear toward confidence. However, many students described a process of gradual transformation. Through repeated exposure and peer support, they began to reinterpret the presentation setting not as a place of judgment, but as a space for

personal growth. One male student reflected, *"I felt scared at first, especially during eye contact. But after the second presentation, I started to enjoy it and see it as a challenge I could handle"* (P8, interview).

P8's account shows that change occurred through repeated participation rather than through the immediate disappearance of fear. Eye contact initially intensified the awareness of being watched, but the second presentation altered the meaning of that exposure. What had first been experienced primarily as fear became a manageable challenge. The change was therefore interpretive as well as emotional. The public setting remained demanding, but the participant increasingly saw himself as capable of responding to that demand.

Another participant captured this experience metaphorically by describing the stage as *"a test of my courage."* The metaphor presents the presentation space as more than a location for demonstrating English proficiency. It became a setting in which the learner assessed personal courage. This wording also indicates that anxiety and growth were not mutually exclusive. Fear was part of what made the activity personally significant, because confronting it became evidence of the learner's developing capacity to speak before others.

Observation notes confirmed this development, showing reduced signs of nervous behavior, such as avoiding eye contact or fidgeting, during later sessions. The observations support a temporal pattern in which visible nervous behavior became less prominent during later participation, although they do not suggest that anxiety disappeared entirely. Read together with P2 and P8, the data reveal different pathways through the same experience. P8 emphasized increasing enjoyment and manageability, whereas P2 foregrounded continuing concern about how confidence might be socially interpreted. Transformation was therefore uneven. For some students it involved becoming more comfortable with public exposure, while for others it involved finding an acceptable way to speak confidently without feeling that valued expectations concerning modest conduct had been compromised.

Faith on the Stage: Expressing Islamic Values Through English

The intersection of language learning and religious identity emerged clearly in students' reflections. Several participants shared how they consciously embedded Islamic expressions or moral messages into their English presentations. One student explained, *"Even though the topic was about a healthy lifestyle, I closed my presentation by saying that we should take care of our body because it's an amanah (trustworthiness) from Allah"* (P7, interview).

The importance of P7's account lies in the participant's reinterpretation of an ordinary presentation topic through a religious concept. A presentation about healthy living was connected to *amanah*, allowing the learner to link a common educational topic with a moral responsibility understood through faith. Because this connection was initiated by the student rather than required by the volunteer teacher, it represents a personal choice about what English could be used to communicate. English was not simply the language in which previously

determined content was delivered. It became a resource through which the participant could frame that content according to a personally meaningful value.

Written narratives further revealed this connection, with one participant stating, *"Speaking English doesn't mean I lose my identity. I can still speak about Islam and my values in English"* (P6, narrative). P6's wording directly addresses a perceived relationship between language and identity. The statement "doesn't mean I lose my identity" suggests that using English could, at least conceptually, raise a question about whether another language requires distance from familiar values. The participant rejected that possibility by presenting English and Islamic identity as compatible. The statement therefore does more than demonstrate pride in religion. It shows the learner actively defining what kind of English speaker he or she could be: someone who could use an international language without treating religious identity as something that had to be left outside the speaking activity.

Observations showed that some students opened their presentations with greetings such as *"Assalamu'alaikum"* and concluded with phrases like "thank you for listening, may Allah bless you." These observed choices gave religious identity an audible presence in the presentation event. They also linked familiar forms of community interaction with the use of English. Rather than replacing one communicative repertoire with another, students combined them within the same presentation. This combination suggests that English use was adapted to the social setting rather than separated from it.

Importantly, the pattern was not identical across all participants. The observational record refers to "some students," while the interview data indicate that "several participants" consciously incorporated Islamic meanings. Religious expression should therefore not be treated as a compulsory or universal feature of every presentation. This variation strengthens rather than weakens the theme because it shows that faith functioned as an available resource for self-expression rather than as a prescribed presentation formula. Students could decide whether and how explicitly religious meanings entered their English speaking. The theme therefore concerns the possibility of expressing faith through English, not the assumption that all Muslim learners will do so in the same manner.

Learning Beyond the Script: Peer Support and Communal Growth

The final theme highlights how the learning experience was shaped by peer collaboration and community support. Students frequently cited the importance of encouragement from friends, who helped them rehearse, offered feedback, and reassured them before performing. One participant recalled, *"My friend helped me fix my grammar and reminded me to smile. She even prayed for me before my turn. That gave me strength"* (P10, interview).

P10's account shows that peer support operated simultaneously at linguistic, performative, emotional, and spiritual levels. Correcting grammar addressed language accuracy, while reminding the participant to smile concerned presentation delivery. Prayer provided a different form of support by connecting encouragement with the religious character of the community. These forms of

assistance were not experienced as separate interventions. They were combined within an ordinary interaction between friends. The phrase “gave me strength” indicates that the value of assistance was not limited to correcting errors. Support also changed how prepared the participant felt to face the audience.

Classroom observation further revealed moments of shared learning, as students listened attentively to one another, clapped after each presentation, and offered spontaneous praise such as “good job” or “I like your topic.” These apparently small responses are analytically significant because they show how the audience participated in constructing the presentation experience. Applause and brief verbal encouragement communicated acceptance immediately after a highly visible speaking event. The audience was therefore not merely a group against which individual performance was tested. Peers also helped create the social conditions under which speaking became less threatening and more sustainable. This observation helps explain why confidence in the earlier themes cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological change.

Written narratives also highlighted this collective dimension, with one student writing, *“This was not just about me speaking. We helped each other and became more confident together”* (P1, narrative). P1’s contrast between “me speaking” and becoming confident “together” captures the central meaning of this theme. Presentation appears individual at the moment one student stands before an audience, yet the preparation and emotional experience were collective. The participant attributed growing confidence not only to repeated personal practice but to reciprocal assistance within the group. In this sense, individual performance rested on shared participation.

Across the three data sources, community support connected the four themes. Peers helped students prepare linguistically, provided reassurance when public exposure produced anxiety, acknowledged speakers after presentations, and participated in a setting where religious forms of encouragement could be expressed naturally. The resulting pattern changes the interpretation of presentation from an isolated demonstration of individual competence to an activity sustained by relationships. The students stood individually before the audience, but they did not learn or develop confidence entirely alone. Their accounts indicate that becoming an English speaker in this setting was partly a relational achievement.

Taken together, the four themes reveal neither a uniformly positive experience nor a simple sequence from fear to successful performance. Students developed voice while remaining attentive to social judgment. They became more comfortable speaking while continuing to interpret confidence through expectations concerning appropriate conduct. Some incorporated Islamic meanings explicitly, while others did not make faith equally visible in their presentations. Peer relationships provided important support across these experiences. The central finding is therefore that English presentation became meaningful through the interaction of language, emotion, identity, faith, and community rather than through linguistic performance alone.

Discussion

This study investigated how senior high school students from an Islamic youth organization reflected on their experiences of learning and performing English presentations, and what these reflections revealed about their linguistic development, self-expression, and socio-religious identities. Four key themes emerged: finding their voice, facing tension and transformation, expressing Islamic values through English, and learning supported by community. Together, these findings highlight that English presentation is not only a tool for language practice but also a means of shaping identity, confronting social and emotional challenges, and expressing personal and spiritual beliefs.

More importantly, the four themes suggest that presentation should be understood as a socially situated language practice in which identity, emotion, faith, interaction, and community participation are mutually connected. This interpretation extends the study beyond the question of whether presentation improves speaking ability. It shows that learning to present in English also involves becoming a particular kind of speaker within particular social relationships and systems of value. The findings therefore contribute theoretically to identity perspectives on language learning, Sociocultural Theory, and Communities of Practice by showing how these processes operate together within one speaking activity.

The participants' growing confidence and sense of voice through English presentations reflect findings in previous studies that link presentation tasks with increased self-efficacy and oral fluency (Nguyen & Ly, 2025; Al-khresheh, 2024). Like these earlier works, the current study confirms that English presentations can strengthen speaking proficiency and public expression. However, this study extends those conclusions by revealing how students experienced a deeper form of self-recognition, describing presentation as a moment of being “seen” and valued, even within the boundaries of a foreign language. These reflections show that the learning process was not only linguistic but also personal, underscoring how voice and identity can emerge powerfully from situated classroom practices.

From the perspective of Norton Peirce (1995) and Norton (2013), this finding can be interpreted as more than an increase in confidence. Students were developing new positions for themselves as legitimate users of English. When participants described having something meaningful to say or feeling that their ideas were valued, they were not simply reporting improvement in speaking competence. They were claiming greater authority to participate as English speakers. This extends identity theory by showing that investment in language use can emerge through relatively small community-based presentation practices, where recognition from peers contributes to learners' sense that English belongs within their available ways of expressing themselves. The finding also suggests that voice is relational. Students did not develop a sense of legitimacy entirely through individual achievement, but partly through being listened to, acknowledged, and supported by others.

The tension between performance and modesty, especially for female participants, contrasts with the relatively general focus in prior studies on anxiety,

technical challenges, and classroom discomfort (Makhlouf, 2025; Syam et al., 2024). While existing literature identifies speaking anxiety as a common barrier (Fadhilah & Pitaloka, 2025; Anggraini et al., 2025), this study adds a culturally specific perspective by showing how religious expectations around modesty shaped how students approached public speaking. The participants did not simply fear linguistic error but were also concerned with appearing boastful or overly assertive, especially in front of mixed-gender audiences. This layer of emotional and cultural pressure has not been fully explored in past research, suggesting that EFL instruction should account for social expectations in faith-based learning environments.

The theoretical significance of this finding is that anxiety cannot always be treated as an individual psychological condition detached from identity and social context. From an identity perspective, concern about appearing too confident reflects learners' awareness of how particular forms of speaking may position them in relation to others. Confidence therefore did not have a single meaning. It could signify achievement, but it could also create uncertainty when students believed that visible assertiveness might conflict with valued expectations concerning modest conduct. Norton's view of identity as socially constructed and subject to change helps explain this apparent contradiction (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013). Learners were not choosing simply between confidence and modesty. They were working toward forms of English speaking through which both could coexist. This extends identity-based explanations of language participation by showing that becoming a confident speaker can involve moral and social self-positioning as well as linguistic development.

The third major finding, students embedding Islamic values into their English presentations, offers a direct contribution to the field. Few studies have explored how religious identity is expressed during English language tasks. Although Andreani and McKinley (2025) discuss how Global Englishes pedagogy fosters critical awareness and language ownership, their participants did not explicitly reference faith. In this study, students deliberately wove religious expressions and concepts into their presentations, showing a desire to align linguistic development with spiritual integrity. Their choice to open with Islamic greetings or end with faith-driven messages illustrates that English, rather than threatening cultural identity, can become a medium for affirming it. This challenges the often-assumed separation between English use and local cultural values in EFL contexts.

The finding also extends identity theory by demonstrating that language ownership can include the ability to carry religious meanings into English rather than requiring learners to separate English from valued aspects of self. Participants did not merely adapt themselves to an existing model of English speaking. They adapted English to the communicative purposes and moral meanings that mattered within their community. In this sense, identity was expressed not only through attitudes toward English but through choices about what could appropriately be said in English and how it could be said. Theoretically, this suggests that religious identity deserves greater attention in language identity

research because faith can function as an active resource for meaning-making rather than only as contextual background.

Collaborative learning also played a central role in students' experiences, reinforcing findings from studies on peer-assisted and community-supported learning (Kulsawang & Ambele, 2025; Pojchanaphong et al., 2025). Similar to previous research, this study found that encouragement from peers helped reduce anxiety and strengthen students' motivation. However, it extends this line of inquiry by emphasizing the communal spirit that surrounded the presentation task. The classroom, situated in a mosque-affiliated setting, became a shared space of growth where faith, friendship, and learning were mutually reinforcing. Unlike Jeong (2023) and Chen (2024), whose studies emphasized technological or digital tools, the current study highlights the enduring value of human relationships and community interaction in shaping oral language development.

This finding provides the clearest connection with Sociocultural Theory and Communities of Practice. Vygotsky (1978) conceptualizes learning as socially mediated, and the participants' experiences show how assistance from peers became part of the process through which speaking developed. Grammar correction, rehearsal, encouragement, observation, applause, and prayer all functioned as forms of social support surrounding individual performance. The learner who eventually stood alone before an audience had therefore reached that moment through interaction with others. From the perspective of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), the presentation workshop can also be understood as participation in a community practice. Students developed competence while learning how to participate, support other speakers, respond as an audience, and express shared values. This extends Communities of Practice by showing that participation in language learning may involve linguistic, emotional, and religious forms of membership at the same time.

Moreover, while previous studies have advocated for the use of storytelling (Ahmad et al., 2025; Chen, 2024) or artificial intelligence (Zhu et al., 2025) to support speaking tasks, this study relied solely on face-to-face interaction within a modest learning environment. Yet, the learning outcomes, such as improved fluency, increased confidence, and stronger identity expression, mirrored or even exceeded those reported in high-tech contexts.

Rather than establishing that one instructional environment is superior to another, the finding suggests that technological resources are only one form of mediation available in language learning. Sociocultural Theory directs attention to the wider range of mediational resources through which participation develops (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, those resources included peer assistance, repeated participation, audience response, religious language, and the shared practices of the youth community. The theoretical implication is therefore not that technology is unnecessary, but that its educational value should be considered alongside the social relationships and culturally meaningful resources through which learners participate. Meaningful speaking development may depend less on the sophistication of a tool itself than on how available resources support interaction, recognition, and purposeful communication.

Finally, this study contributes to existing scholarship by foregrounding learner reflection in a faith-based EFL context, an area underexplored in current literature. While Syahriar and Susanti (2025) examined the effectiveness of video presentations, and Yetkin and Özer-Altinkaya (2024) addressed disengagement and boredom in presentation settings, this study offers a narrative-based view that centers on students lived experiences, not merely their performance. It also adds an essential religious dimension to the discourse on EFL presentation, showing how learners do not leave their identities behind when performing in English, but rather bring them into the language task with pride and purpose.

The contribution of narrative inquiry is particularly important here. Performance measures could have identified changes in fluency, delivery, or observable confidence, but they would have provided limited access to why those changes mattered to participants. Through students' accounts, expressions such as feeling "seen," worrying about "showing off," viewing the stage as "a test of my courage," and maintaining Islamic identity while speaking English revealed meanings that would have remained difficult to identify through performance data alone. Consistent with narrative inquiry perspectives that treat participants as interpreters of their own experiences (Freitas, 2025; Robertson & Lappeman, 2025), the study shows that learner narratives can reveal how language development becomes connected with moral evaluation, belonging, recognition, and self-understanding. The study therefore advances narrative inquiry in EFL research by demonstrating its value not merely for documenting experience, but for identifying relationships among language, identity, faith, and community that may remain hidden in outcome-focused approaches.

To summarize, the theoretical contribution of the study lies in connecting three levels of explanation that are often treated separately. At the individual and relational level, Norton's identity perspective explains how students developed voice and positioned themselves as legitimate English speakers while responding to expectations concerning appropriate conduct. At the interactional level, Sociocultural Theory explains how speaking development was mediated through peers, feedback, repeated participation, and culturally meaningful resources. At the community level, Communities of Practice explains how competence and identity developed through participation in a group characterized by shared relationships and values. Narrative inquiry provides access to how learners themselves interpreted these processes. The findings therefore extend existing theory by showing that English presentation in a faith-based setting is simultaneously a linguistic practice, an identity practice, a socially mediated learning activity, and a form of community participation.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. EFL educators, especially those working in culturally and religiously diverse contexts, should create learning environments that allow students to express their values while building linguistic competence. English presentations should not only aim to develop technical fluency but should also be framed as opportunities for self-

expression and cultural affirmation. Teachers should be attentive to students' emotional experiences and offer support structures such as peer feedback, safe spaces, and gender-sensitive groupings to reduce fear and reinforce confidence. Moreover, integrating reflective practices such as narrative writing and open discussion can help students process their growth, deepen engagement, and foster a more holistic approach to oral language development. Encouraging students to bring in elements of their cultural or religious identity during English speaking tasks can make learning more meaningful and personally relevant. Educators should also recognize that presentation is not merely a performance, but a dialogic process that connects language learning with identity construction and self-worth. In informal or mosque-based educational spaces, volunteers and facilitators can adapt instructional methods to respect local values while still promoting communicative competence. Ultimately, this study calls for a more inclusive and empathetic approach to EFL pedagogy, one that honors who the learners are, not just how well they speak.

These practical implications should not be interpreted as requiring teachers to prescribe particular religious expressions or assume that all students from the same faith community experience presentation in identical ways. The findings showed variation in how explicitly participants connected faith with English use and in how they understood confidence and public visibility. Pedagogical responsiveness therefore requires providing space for identity expression rather than determining in advance what that identity should look like. Teachers can offer students choices concerning presentation topics, forms of expression, audience interaction, and reflective activities while maintaining clear expectations for communicative development.

The study also carries theoretical implications. First, it extends Norton's identity perspective by showing that investment in speaking can involve the search for compatibility between communicative confidence and religiously informed understandings of appropriate conduct. Learners' participation is therefore shaped not only by access to English or anticipated linguistic benefits but also by whether speaking practices allow them to recognize themselves within the identities they value. Second, the findings extend Sociocultural Theory by showing that mediation in oral presentation can include emotional, relational, and spiritual resources alongside conventional linguistic assistance. Peer encouragement and prayer, for example, did not teach grammar directly, yet they supported the learner's capacity to participate in the speaking event. Third, the study extends Communities of Practice by illustrating how language development can occur within an existing faith-based youth community where participation involves shared social and moral practices as well as English learning.

Methodologically, the findings demonstrate the contribution of narrative inquiry to research on oral language learning. Narrative accounts made it possible to examine the meanings learners attached to confidence, anxiety, faith, recognition, and peer relationships rather than treating these as isolated variables. This approach reveals that similar observable behaviors may have different meanings for different learners. Increased confidence, for example, could

represent empowerment for one participant while generating concern about appropriate self-presentation for another. Narrative inquiry therefore contributes a form of explanation that complements performance-focused research by showing how learners interpret the significance of their own development.

Altogether, these implications call for a broader conceptualization of English presentation pedagogy. Presentation should be designed not only as a task through which students demonstrate linguistic competence but as a socially supported opportunity to participate, express valued identities, receive recognition, and develop a sense of legitimate membership as English users. In faith-based and other culturally distinctive learning settings, such an approach allows communicative competence and identity expression to develop in relation rather than in opposition to one another.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how senior high school students in an Islamic youth community experienced and interpreted English presentation activities. The findings revealed four interconnected patterns. First, presentation enabled students to develop greater confidence and a stronger sense of voice as English speakers. Second, this development was accompanied by anxiety and concerns about public visibility, including questions about how confidence could be expressed while maintaining expectations of modest conduct. Third, some students incorporated Islamic expressions and moral values into their presentations, showing that English could function as a medium for expressing religious identity rather than distancing them from it. Fourth, peer encouragement, feedback, prayer, and shared participation supported students in managing anxiety and developing confidence. These findings show that English presentation was experienced not simply as a speaking exercise but as a social practice shaped by language development, identity, emotion, faith, and community relationships.

Theoretically, the study contributes to identity-oriented and sociocultural perspectives in EFL research by demonstrating how English-speaking development can involve linguistic growth and identity positioning at the same time. Drawing on Norton's perspective on identity and investment, the findings show that students' participation was connected with their developing sense of legitimacy as English speakers and with their ability to express identities they considered meaningful. From a sociocultural perspective, the study demonstrates that speaking development was mediated through interaction, peer assistance, audience response, repeated participation, and culturally meaningful resources. The findings also extend the Communities of Practice perspective by showing how language learning can develop within an existing faith-based youth community where competence, belonging, and shared values are closely connected. In addition, the use of narrative inquiry demonstrates how learners' own accounts can reveal meanings related to recognition, anxiety, faith, and self-expression that may remain less visible in performance-focused research.

Empirically, the study contributes evidence from a population that remains limited in EFL presentation research: senior high school students participating in a mosque-based Islamic youth community in Indonesia. Existing studies have largely examined presentation through speaking performance, anxiety, technological support, or classroom strategies. This study adds evidence that religious identity and community membership can also shape how learners interpret public speaking in English. It further shows that confidence is not experienced uniformly. For some students, greater confidence represented personal growth, while for others it also raised concerns about how public assertiveness might be socially interpreted. These findings broaden current understanding of English presentation by showing how linguistic, emotional, religious, and relational dimensions can operate together within the same learning experience.

Practically, the study suggests that English presentation instruction should provide opportunities for students to develop communicative competence while also expressing identities and values that are meaningful to them. Teachers and facilitators can support this process through peer feedback, repeated opportunities to present, reflective writing, supportive audience practices, and flexible choices concerning topics and forms of expression. In faith-based settings, cultural and religious values should not be prescribed as required content, but students should be given space to incorporate them when they consider such expression relevant. Presentation pedagogy should therefore attend not only to fluency, accuracy, organization, and delivery, but also to the social and emotional conditions that allow learners to participate with confidence and a sense of belonging.

The study is limited by its small and context-specific group of eleven participants within one Islamic youth community in Tangerang City. Its findings are therefore intended to provide an in-depth understanding of this particular setting rather than broad generalization to all Muslim learners or faith-based educational contexts. Future research could examine similar experiences across different religious communities, educational institutions, and cultural settings, as well as follow learners over longer periods to explore how identity, confidence, and participation develop over time. Research involving teachers and community facilitators could also provide further insight into how instructional beliefs and community values shape English presentation practices. Overall, the study demonstrates that learning to present in English can become a process through which learners develop not only communicative ability but also voice, belonging, and meaningful forms of self-expression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all participants who took part in this research project. Without their willingness to share experiences, reflections, and insights, this study would not have been possible. Their active participation and openness contributed significantly to the depth and quality of the findings.

Generative AI Statement

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used generative AI tools such as Quillbot, Grammarly, and DeepL to revise grammar, improve word choice, and adjust sentence structure to fit an academic writing style. These tools assisted in refining language clarity and coherence. However, all data analysis, interpretation of findings, and overall scholarly reasoning were entirely the responsibility of the authors. The intellectual content, critical engagement with the literature, and conclusions reflect the authors' original academic work.

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