

## **The Students' Speaking Attitudes toward International Islamic Conferences: A Qualitative Exploration of Confidence and Expression**

**Herman Resyadi**

*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Indonesia*

*hermanresyadi24@gmail.com*

**Ferawaty Syam**

*Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Indonesia*

*ferawatysyam@polimedia.ac.id*

**Irmayani**

*Universitas Islam Ahmad Dahlan Sinjai, Indonesia*

*irma\_ryu@yahoo.co.id*

**Deny Sundari**

*Universitas Darwan Ali, Indonesia*

*denysundari@unda.ac.id*

### **Abstract:**

This study investigates students' experiences and challenges when presenting at international Islamic conferences, focusing on their confidence and self-expression. Using a qualitative case study design, two participants were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that while students expressed enthusiasm for participating in these events, they faced several challenges, including time constraints, language barriers, and adapting to the expectations of diverse audiences. Confidence levels

varied; some students felt reasonably confident, while others demonstrated higher self-assurance due to thorough preparation. The findings emphasize the importance of preparation, language proficiency, and cultural sensitivity when presenting at international academic forums, especially in Islamic forums. The study also highlights the need for academic institutions to provide better support to help students develop these critical skills. Future research could explore a broader range of participants and contexts and the long-term development of public speaking confidence in such settings.

**Keywords:** speaking, international Islamic conference, students' attitude

## A. Introduction

The event of international conferences plays a crucial role in Islamic studies by serving as a platform for scholars, students, and professionals to engage in intellectual discussions, share research, and exchange ideas on a global scale. These conferences not only contribute to the advancement of Islamic knowledge but also promote intercultural dialogue among scholars. Taking along participants from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, these events foster collaboration across borders, enabling the development of new perspectives and solutions to contemporary issues within the Islamic world<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, international conferences provide opportunities for students to engage with experienced scholars, enhancing their academic exposure and contributing to their personal and professional growth<sup>2</sup>.

Especially for students pursuing Islamic studies, attending international conferences is an invaluable opportunity to present their research, receive feedback, and learn from global experts<sup>3</sup>. These events offer a unique environment where they can actively participate in academic forums, gaining insights into current trends in Islamic studies. Additionally, students are exposed to different methodologies and approaches to research, which can

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<sup>1</sup> Wei Wang et al., "From Triadic Closure to Conference Closure: The Role of Academic Conferences in Promoting Scientific Collaborations," *Scientometrics* 113, no. 1 (October 24, 2017): 177–93, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-017-2468-x>.

<sup>2</sup> Issa Ibrahim Berchin et al., "The Importance of International Conferences on Sustainable Development as Higher Education Institutions' Strategies to Promote Sustainability: A Case Study in Brazil," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 171 (January 2018): 756–72, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.10.042>.

<sup>3</sup> Beverley Hill, "It's Good to Talk: Speaking up for Oracy in the Management Classroom," *The International Journal of Management Education* 19, no. 2 (July 2021): 100462, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100462>.

enrich their academic work. By engaging with scholars from around the world, they are able to develop critical thinking and communication skills<sup>4</sup>.

Students as non-native English speakers frequently face significant challenges when speaking at international conferences, including in academic fields like Islamic studies. One issue is the anxiety associated with public speaking in a foreign language. Research indicates that language anxiety is a common barrier to effective communication for non-native speakers, stemming from fear of negative evaluation and unfamiliarity with academic discourse in English<sup>5</sup>. For many students, the pressure of presenting research in front of an international audience adds to the stress, affecting their overall confidence. This can result in nervousness, hesitancy, and difficulty articulating their ideas clearly.

Anxiety and confidence are critical factors that influence non-native speakers' participation at international conferences. Students who lack confidence in their English-speaking abilities tend to avoid participating in discussions or asking questions during conference sessions<sup>6</sup>. This lack of participation can limit their academic growth, as engaging in dialogue with scholars and experts is a key learning component<sup>7</sup>. Many students feel that their limited vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar mistakes will be judged negatively by the audience, further reinforcing a lack of confidence and reducing their willingness to speak publicly.

In addition to anxiety and confidence, non-native speakers often face the challenge of expressing complex academic ideas in English. Islamic studies, like many academic fields, involves discussing abstract concepts, historical contexts, and nuanced theological debates, which can be difficult to convey in a second language. Non-native speakers often struggle with academic language proficiency, which is the ability to use formal vocabulary, construct coherent

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<sup>4</sup> Hidayatul Fikra, Fitriani Fitriani, and Susanti Vera, "Manajemen Konferensi Mahasiswa Fakultas Ushuluddin UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung," in *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, vol. 37, 2024, 95–111, <https://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/2091>.

<sup>5</sup> Elaine Horwitz, "Language Anxiety and Achievement," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 21 (January 1, 2001): 112–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190501000071>.

<sup>6</sup> Gaya Tridinanti, "The Correlation between Speaking Anxiety, Self-Confidence, and Speaking Achievement of Undergraduate EFL Students of Private University in Palembang," *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 31, 2018): 35, <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.6n.4p.35>.

<sup>7</sup> Carmen M. Amerstorfer and Clara Freiin von Münster-Kistner, "Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (October 28, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057>.

arguments, and engage in scholarly discussions<sup>8</sup>. These challenges can hinder the clarity and depth of students' presentations, preventing them from fully participating in the intellectual exchange at international conferences.

While there is substantial research on public speaking challenges faced by non-native English speakers in academic settings, a notable lack of studies focusing specifically on how students from Islamic backgrounds experience international conferences. Much of the existing literature on academic presentations highlights general issues such as language anxiety, confidence, and language proficiency<sup>9</sup>. Still, few studies explore the unique experiences of Islamic studies students at international Islamic conferences. Given the religious and cultural contexts in which these students operate, their challenges and experiences may differ from those of students in other academic fields. The intersection of language barriers and cultural considerations, such as maintaining religious identity while engaging with global audiences, is an area that remains largely underexplored<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, the nature of Islamic conferences, which often involve specialized discussions of religious texts, theological debates, and cultural practices, adds further complexity to students' speaking experiences. Studies have addressed general academic speaking difficulties, but they do not take into account the specific dynamics of Islamic conferences, where both religious and academic expectations may heighten the pressure on students<sup>11</sup>. This gap in the literature suggests a need for more focused research on how students from Islamic backgrounds navigate these spaces, including how their religious identities influence their speaking confidence and ability to express themselves effectively in such specialized academic environments.

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<sup>8</sup> Enric Llurda, "Non-native-speaker Teachers and English as an International Language," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 14, no. 3 (November 20, 2004): 314–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2004.00068.x>.

<sup>9</sup> Beyza Björkman, "Pragmatic Strategies in English as an Academic Lingua Franca: Ways of Achieving Communicative Effectiveness?," *Journal of Pragmatics* 43, no. 4 (March 2011): 950–64, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.07.033>; Neil E. Barrett and Gi-Zen Liu, "Global Trends and Research Aims for English Academic Oral Presentations," *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 4 (December 9, 2016): 1227–71, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316628296>.

<sup>10</sup> Hill, "It's Good to Talk: Speaking up for Oracy in the Management Classroom."

<sup>11</sup> Ikhfi Imaniah, Goziyah, and Chooi Heji, "The Students' Difficulties in Presenting the Academic Speaking Presentation," *Globish: An English-Indonesian Journal for English, Education, and Culture* 7, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 44, <https://doi.org/10.31000/globish.v6i2.663>.

This research aims to explore the attitudes of students from Islamic backgrounds toward public speaking at international Islamic conferences, with a particular focus on their confidence and self-expression. This study seeks to understand how these students perceive the challenges and opportunities of presenting in culturally and academically significant settings by conducting qualitative interviews. The research will investigate the factors that influence their speaking confidence, such as language proficiency and prior experiences with public speaking. Additionally, it will explore how these students express their ideas in English while maintaining the integrity of their religious and cultural values. Ultimately, the study aims to provide insights to help educators and institutions better support Islamic studies students in developing the skills necessary to participate in international academic discussions confidently.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. International Conference**

International conferences are key platforms for scholars, professionals, and students to exchange knowledge and ideas across various fields. They foster global collaborations and provide opportunities for academic growth. Conferences contribute significantly to professional development, particularly for doctoral students, by allowing them to engage with new research, receive feedback on their work, and develop presentation skills). Moreover, international conferences play a critical role in shaping global research communities. They emphasize the importance of effective participation, which includes preparation, networking, and understanding cultural differences in communication styles<sup>12</sup>.

### **2. Speaking Attitudes**

Speaking attitudes encompass individuals' feelings and approaches toward public speaking, which can significantly influence their performance<sup>13</sup>. Public speaking anxiety is one of the most common communication barriers, but preparation and practice can help in overcoming it. Confidence, audience awareness, and clear articulation are essential for effective communication<sup>14</sup>. Public speaking anxiety, or glossophobia, has

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<sup>12</sup> Berchin et al., "The Importance of International Conferences on Sustainable Development as Higher Education Institutions' Strategies to Promote Sustainability: A Case Study in Brazil."

<sup>13</sup> Gülşah Tercan and Kenan Dikilitaş, "EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety: A Case from Tertiary Level Students," *ELT Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2015): 16–27.

<sup>14</sup> Hill, "It's Good to Talk: Speaking up for Oracy in the Management Classroom."

been extensively studied by some researchers. These include cognitive restructuring, relaxation techniques, and systematic desensitization, which help speakers shift their attitudes towards more positive and confident public performances<sup>15</sup>.

Further, speaking attitudes are influenced by various factors, including self-efficacy, prior experiences, and cultural norms. Individuals with positive attitudes toward speaking are often more likely to engage in communicative tasks and take risks in expressing their ideas, leading to improved performance over time<sup>16</sup>.

Speaking attitude significantly influences performance, particularly in communicative tasks such as public speaking at international conferences<sup>17</sup>. A positive attitude fosters confidence, which enhances clarity and fluency in speech, leading to better engagement with the audience. Studies have shown that individuals who develop self-assurance through consistent practice and feedback tend to exhibit marked improvements in speaking performance<sup>18</sup>.

### C. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design to investigate students' attitudes toward public speaking at international Islamic conferences<sup>19</sup>. The research involves two participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure they have relevant experiences and perspectives related to the study's focus. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing in-depth exploration of participants' views and experiences. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved coding the interview transcripts to identify key themes and patterns related to confidence, self-expression, and the influence of cultural and

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<sup>15</sup> Tercan and Dikilitaş, "EFL Students' Speaking Anxiety: A Case from Tertiary Level Students."

<sup>16</sup> Dewa Ayu Ari Wiryadi Joni and I Gusti Agung Putri Wirastuti, "Self-Efficacy Effect on Basic Level Learners in Speaking Activities," *Journal of Applied Studies in Language* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1–9, <https://ojs.pnb.ac.id/index.php/JASL/article/view/808>.

<sup>17</sup> Maria De Paola et al., "Do Women Shy Away from Public Speaking? A Field Experiment," *Labour Economics* 70 (June 2021): 102001, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2021.102001>.

<sup>18</sup> Greis Evalinda, Haryanto Haryanto, and Kisman Salija, "Students' Attitude toward Performance-Based Assessment in Speaking Class at The State University of Makassar" (UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MAKASSAR, 2020), <https://eprints.unm.ac.id/18011/>.

<sup>19</sup> John Ward Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018).

religious factors<sup>20</sup>. This methodological approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the participants' attitudes and experiences in the context of international Islamic conferences.

## **D. Findings**

### **1. Students' Experience**

#### **Extract 1:**

*"I feel so excited, especially when I see the keynote speakers from many countries.."*

#### **Extract 2:**

*"I learned a lot of things during this international conference"*

In response to the first question, "How was your experience attending the international Islamic conference?" both participants expressed positive experiences. The first respondent shared that he felt very excited about the opportunity, particularly because he gained valuable experiences and had the chance to listen to speakers from various countries. This highlights the importance of international exposure and the ability to learn from diverse perspectives in such conferences. Global participation seems to have enhanced the respondents' overall satisfaction and engagement.

Similarly, the second respondent emphasized the learning aspect, stating that she gained and learned many things from the conference. This response underscores the educational value of international Islamic conferences, where students can acquire knowledge beyond their local context, engage with different viewpoints, and broaden their understanding of Islamic studies through global interaction. Both responses suggest that participation in these events offers not only academic enrichment but also a sense of excitement and personal growth.

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<sup>20</sup> John Ward Creswell and T C Guetterman, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 6th ed. (Pearson, 2019).

## 2. Students' Challenges

### Extract 3:

*"The challenges I think is the time because every presenter was given a very short time to present the research"*

### Extract 4

*"I have to adapt with various audience and have to maintain attitude when I do the presentation"*

In response to the second question, "What challenges did you face during your presentation at the international Islamic conference?", both respondents highlighted different but significant challenges. The first respondent mentioned that the biggest challenge was the time constraint when delivering their presentation. This indicates a common issue in academic conferences, where speakers often struggle to condense their material within limited time frames, potentially affecting the depth and clarity of their presentation.

On the other hand, the second respondent identified the challenge of adapting to the audience and maintaining an appropriate demeanor and speech throughout the event. This reflects the cultural and religious sensitivities present in Islamic conferences, where speakers may need to be particularly mindful of their language, behavior, and presentation style to align with the expectations of a diverse, international audience. This challenge also points to the importance of cultural competence and adaptability in such academic settings, as participants must balance the content of their presentations with the cultural norms of the audience.

## 3. Students' Feeling

### Extract 5

*"I was so excited because that was my the first time in international conference."*

### Extract 6

*"I had mixed feeling because this is the first time join in international conference.. I also got a lot of questions in my head"*



Responding to the third question, "How did you feel when attending the international Islamic conference?". The participants expressed contrasting emotional responses. The first respondent conveyed a strong sense of enthusiasm, stating he was highly motivated to participate in the event. This response highlights the excitement and eagerness often associated with attending prestigious international conferences, particularly in a field as significant as Islamic studies. It suggests that the respondent viewed the experience as a valuable learning and professional growth opportunity.

The second respondent, however, reported mixed feelings, explaining that it was their first time attending an international Islamic conference. This response reflects the emotional complexity of such experiences, especially for first-time participants. The combination of excitement, anxiety, and uncertainty can be common, as students may feel both thrilled by the opportunity and intimidated by the new and challenging environment. This highlights the need for further research into how students manage their emotions in high-stakes academic settings, particularly when representing themselves on an international stage for the first time.

#### **4. Students' Perspective**

##### **Extract 7**

*"The difference is on my mental because this is international event so the preparation must be total and different"*

##### **Extract 8**

*"There is no significant difference the language is only the difference"*

In response to the fourth question, "Is there a difference in how your present material at an international conference compared to a national conference?". Both respondents acknowledged notable differences in their approach. The first respondent emphasized the need for more thorough preparation when presenting at an international conference. This suggests that international events are perceived as requiring higher standards of performance, possibly due to the presence of a more diverse and expert audience. The respondent's focus on preparation highlights the added pressure and responsibility felt when addressing a global audience compared to a national conference.

The second respondent noted a significant language difference, particularly the need for greater proficiency in English at international conferences. While national conferences may allow for presentations in the native language, the international stage requires a command of English, which adds an extra layer of complexity for non-native speakers. This indicates that language proficiency, especially in English, plays a critical role in the confidence and effectiveness of students' presentations in international academic settings, underscoring the importance of language skills in global academic exchanges.

## 5. Students' Confidence

### Extract 9

*"I am so confident during the presentation because I always get support from my friends"*

### Extract 10

*"I always confident because I am sure, and I know my ability"*

In response to the next question, "Did you feel confident presenting your material at the international Islamic conference?". Both respondents expressed varying levels of confidence. The first respondent mentioned feeling reasonably confident in delivering their presentation, suggesting a balance between nervousness and self-assurance. This indicates that while he may have felt prepared, external factors, such as the international setting or the pressure of presenting to a diverse audience, likely moderated their confidence.

The second respondent, however, reported feeling very confident during their presentation. This highlights a strong sense of self-assurance, possibly reflecting thorough preparation and a comfortable command of the material. The high confidence level may also indicate a positive perception of the audience's reception or the respondent's prior experience with public speaking. This contrast between the two respondents suggests that individual factors such as previous experience, personality, and preparation level significantly influence students' confidence in international academic settings.

## **E. Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal several key insights into the experiences and challenges faced by students attending international Islamic conferences, particularly regarding their confidence and self-expression during presentations. One of the primary themes that emerged was the sense of enthusiasm and excitement experienced by the participants, especially the first-time attendees. This aligns with research which suggests that emotions play a critical role in public speaking experiences, with positive emotions like excitement often enhancing performance<sup>21</sup>. However, the mixed emotions felt by some participants, such as the second respondent, indicate that anxiety and uncertainty can also be prevalent, especially for those new to international academic environments. This finding is consistent with Chen, who found that novice presenters often experience heightened levels of anxiety in unfamiliar academic settings<sup>22</sup>.

Another significant finding was the participants' acknowledgement of the differences between presenting at international and national conferences. The first respondent's emphasis on the need for more rigorous preparation at international events echoes the findings of Chen, who argues that the global stage demands higher readiness levels due to the diverse and critical audience<sup>23</sup>. The complexity of adapting to different audiences and ensuring professional behavior, as noted by the second respondent, further supports the notion that international conferences require academic competence and cultural and communicative adaptability. This is especially important in Islamic conferences, where religious and cultural sensitivities are heightened.

Language barriers were also highlighted as a significant challenge for non-native English speakers. The second respondent's observation that they needed to be more proficient in English when presenting at an international conference reinforces the findings of Imaniah, who reports that non-native speakers often face additional difficulties in academic presentations due to linguistic limitations. This underscores the importance of language proficiency in

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<sup>21</sup> Alice Baird et al., "Emotion Recognition in Public Speaking Scenarios Utilising An LSTM-RNN Approach with Attention," in *2021 IEEE Spoken Language Technology Workshop (SLT)* (IEEE, 2021), 397–402, <https://doi.org/10.1109/SLT48900.2021.9383542>.

<sup>22</sup> Yusi Chen, "ESL Students' Language Anxiety in in-Class Oral Presentations," 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Chen.

international academic settings, especially in Islamic studies, where English often serves as the lingua franca for scholarly exchange<sup>24</sup>.

Confidence levels varied among the participants, with both respondents expressing moderate to high levels of self-assurance during their presentations. This variation reflects findings from Muna, who suggests that multiple factors, including preparation, experience, and audience reception, influence confidence in public speaking. For some, thorough preparation and familiarity with the material boosted confidence<sup>25</sup>. In contrast, others may have experienced moments of hesitation due to the international context and the presence of a global audience. These findings reinforce the idea that confidence in academic presentations is not a static trait but one that can be developed through practice and experience and by fostering a supportive environment for novice speakers.

In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on public speaking in academic settings by shedding light on the unique experiences of students attending international Islamic conferences. The intersection of language barriers, cultural sensitivities, and the demands of presenting to a global audience create a complex environment for students, particularly those from Islamic backgrounds. As previous research suggests, thorough preparation, language proficiency, and cultural adaptability are essential for success in these settings. Future research could explore how Islamic students manage these challenges and how institutions can better support them in developing the skills necessary for effective public speaking in international academic forums.

## **F. Concluding Remarks**

This study explored the experiences and challenges faced by students attending international Islamic conferences, with a focus on their confidence and self-expression during presentations. The findings revealed that while students generally felt enthusiastic and excited about participating in these events, they also encountered several challenges. These included time constraints, adapting to diverse audiences, managing language barriers, and ensuring culturally appropriate behavior. Confidence levels varied among participants, with thorough preparation and familiarity with the subject matter contributing to higher levels of self-assurance. The study underscores the unique nature of

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<sup>24</sup> Imaniah, Goziyah, and Heji, "The Students' Difficulties in Presenting the Academic Speaking Presentation."

<sup>25</sup> Muidal Muna, "Students' Perception Toward Their Self-Confidence in Public Speaking" (UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 2023), <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/26202/>.

international Islamic conferences, where religious and cultural sensitivities, along with the global context, add layers of complexity to students' speaking experiences.

This research highlights the importance of cultural competence, language proficiency, and strong preparation in helping students navigate the challenges of presenting at international conferences. Additionally, it points to the need for academic institutions to provide greater support in helping students develop these skills, ensuring they are equipped to succeed on the global stage.

Future studies could involve a larger and more diverse group of participants to generalize findings across different Islamic academic institutions and cultural backgrounds. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various factors, such as nationality, linguistic proficiency, and prior experience, influence public speaking confidence at international events.

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