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### IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH UTILIZING TRENDING PALESTINE CONTENT: A CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION APPROACH AT STAI YDI LUBUK SIKAPING

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#### **Abstract**

EFL students' interest in learning English is declining due to certain aspects of the curriculum, such as IELTS and TOEFL preparation, as many students struggle to understand the concepts and the correct pronunciation used by native speakers.. The habit of using gadgets and watches and playing digital content in such times may pose a challenge to using some media as learning tools. This research aims at improving the English language skills of students in the major of Islamic Religious Studies and Islamic Broadcasting Communication at STAI YDI through using the trending Palestine-themed content with a Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach. The research method employed was Classroom Action Research with 30 students as subjects. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, observations, interviews, and analysis of students' writing assignments. The results showed a significant improvement and an increase in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking skills used by the student. The analysis of the students' written work revealed their abilities in sentence structure and vocabulary usage. The CBI approach with trending content provided high learning motivation and authentic context. This research recommends using current content as a medium for EFL English language learning to effectively and holistically improve language skills.

Keywords: Content-Based Instruction, English language skills, trending content, Palestine, learning motivation, EFL students

### **I.INTRODUCTION**

Student interaction and correlation in English language learning are minimal due to their inadequate of understanding the language. Meanwhile, students are required to for standardized prepare English proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS; however, they generally show little interest in English language learning. Many students fail to grasp basic sentence structures and correct pronunciation as produced by native or fluent speakers, resulting in difficulties and lack of confidence in effectively mastering English (Hemdi, 2017).

One of the primary factors behind the low motivation to learn English is the lack of relevance of learning materials to students' interests and habits. Students tend to spend their leisure time using electronic gadgets to watch digital content, which does not with traditional align English instructional methods. This habitual use of digital media presents an opportunity to integrate such media into English learning as a more engaging and relevant instructional tool. By incorporating content that is already part of students' daily activities, motivation to learn English can be enhanced (Chen & Wei, 2021; García-Sánchez & Pérez, 2022).

Given these circumstances, English lecturers at STAI YDI implemented Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach, linking learning language with trending Palestine-related topics widely discussed on social media and in the news. This approach aims to increase students' motivation by using media they enjoy, while also expanding their sociocultural awareness. The use of social media platforms facilitates discussion and collaboration Palestine issues, which unconsciously English language promotes skills through meaningful interaction (Ali et al., 2020; Zhang & Lu, 2019). Supporting literature affirms that CBI enhances motivation and language proficiency by integrating contextual and relevant content that reflects learners' authentic environments (Stoller, 2004; Brinton, Snow, & Kim, 2021). The Wesche, 2003; selection of the Palestine theme is particularly justified because it presents meaningful, authentic content that connects learners with real-world sociopolitical issues, fostering deeper engagement and critical thinking

(Kramsch, 1993; Mansour & Alkhazal, 2023).

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that CBI, especially when combined with digital media tools, significantly improves learner interaction, motivation, and communicative competence in EFL contexts (Johnson & Smith, 2019; Lee et al., 2022). Moreover, research highlights the adaptability of CBI in socially and politically sensitive contexts, emphasizing its role in empowering learners by linking language skills development with critical cultural and sociopolitical awareness (Saleh & Almasri, 2021; Nour & Sharif, 2023).

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the CBI approach with the Palestine theme in improving students' motivation and English language proficiency. Beyond meeting curriculum objectives, this research seeks to address a gap concerning the integration of current sociopolitical themes in language learning and their impact on learners' communicative competence and critical awareness.

## II.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach emerges as an innovative solution to answer challenges in traditional This approach language teaching. places content as the center of the learning process, not merely as a complement (Riadi, D., & Sumanto, E., 2025). With CBI, learning does not only focus on language structure alone, but on delivering relevant, meaningful, and contextual material, so that language skills are acquired naturally through content understanding.

At STAI YDI, this approach is developed by taking the trending content as their current issues in society, speccially issues about Palestine. Students from Islamic Studies and Religious Islamic Broadcasting Communication majors are invited to discuss these issues through writing, discussion, and publication on social media. This provides space to improve their language skills, critical thinking, and social empathy.

Social media has become a platform that enables students to

express their willingness to speak out about contextual issue. Students are actively engaged in creating English content that expresses their understanding and empathy toward social, Islamic, and interactive aspects that align with their background (Herlina, S., 2023).

The natural and enjoyable approach is reflected in the content created by the students. When students expressed content such as articles, videos, or podcasts discussing current topics, they not only learn new vocabulary but also understand language usage in real contexts (Pustikayasa, I. M., 2023). This helps significantly improve speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Furthermore, this approach also provides students with time to practice pronunciation and reinforce their learning through digital platforms. Then, teachers can check whether their pronunciation is correct or not. They can imitate native speakers in videos or podcasts discussing the same issues (Aly, A. H., 2025). In this way, students become accustomed to hearing and using English in real global contexts.

The difference of this research from other studies is the selection of content that is not only linguistically relevant but also value-relevant. The issue of Palestine, which is emotionally and ideologically close to the students, also helps them develop through lifelong learning. Students not only learn to pass exams but also to voice truth and to exercise their social approach.

The Content-Based Instruction approach based on trending content not only strengthens English mastery but also forms character, social awareness, and 21st-century skills needed by students in the digital era. This makes learning more comprehensive, meaningful, and contextual.

### 2.2 Utilization of Social Media and Trending Content in Language Learning

In the continuously developing world of language education, social media and trending content will increase the popular learning instruments. The writing also can changes in student lifestyles familiar with technology and devices make digital media an inseparable part of their daily lives (Hariyadi, H., 2023). This condition interact the integration of social platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp as

interactive, relevant, and enjoyable language learning media.

Social media is able to interact in real-time between the student, share opinions, and publish their work in the form of English writing, videos, or infographics (Mustari, M., 2023). Through this process, students not only practice language skills passively but also actively use language as a communication tool in real contexts. This strengthens their confidence in speaking and writing, as well as hones critical and reflective thinking abilities.

Trending content, especially that which is widely discussed on social media. provides highly relevant authentic context for learners (Hasanah, R., 2025). By discussing current issues such as humanitarian, environmental, global news. students encouraged to explore new vocabulary, understand sentence structures used in real contexts, and express opinions logically and argumentatively English. This aligns with Content-Based Instruction principles that place language learning in authentic and meaningful situations.

In practice, lecturers can direct students to choose viral content currently being discussed, then process it into learning materials such as discussion texts, opinion articles, or short video content. These projects can be published through personal or class social media accounts, so learning not only occurs in the classroom but also reaches broader public spaces (Muslim, A., et al., 2024).

Through this approach, students are trained to become independent learners as well as critical and creative communicators. They not only learn how to pronounce and write in English but also understand cultural contexts, values, and messages contained in each issue raised. Thus, language learning becomes more dynamic, contextual, and relevant to real life.

# 2.3 The Influence of Trending Content on Language Acquisition

Trending content, as a product of fast and dynamic information flow, has significant influence on the language acquisition process, particularly in foreign language learning (Fansury, A. H., et al., 2021). When learning adopts topics currently being hotly discussed, such as social, cultural, or political issues widely spread on social media and digital platforms, language learning becomes not only contextually relevant but also emotionally and cognitively attractive to students.

Students tend to be more motivated to understand and use the target language when they discuss topics close to their lives or currently widely discussed. Trending content triggers high curiosity, which then encourages more active language exploration. In this context, acquisition of new vocabulary, idioms, popular expressions, and sentence structures appropriate to real situations occurs naturally.

Through the Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach, students not only read or write about an issue, but they also interpret, analyze, and critically convey ideas. This activity allows reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to develop simultaneously. Viral content is usually presented in various formats such as text, video, images, and audio, so students are encouraged to absorb information from various media, which in turn enriches their language abilities comprehensively (Riadi, D., & Sumanto, E., 2025).

Furthermore, because trending content often involves current and important events, students have opportunities to learn in meaningful

atmospheres. They not only learn about language but also understand cultural contexts, social values, and global perspectives. This experience deepens language acquisition because students learn to think in the target language, not merely translate it.

Another positive influence is seen from increased student confidence. When they can express opinions in English about issues currently being widely discussed, they feel competent and valued as part of global discussions (Caterine, W., et al., 2019). This becomes psychological encouragement that accelerates the language internalization process.

Thus, utilizing trending content in language learning, especially through the CBI approach, is not only a strategy to follow the times but also an effective way to strengthen language acquisition naturally, meaningfully, and sustainably.

## 2.4 Differences Between This Research and Previous Studies

In the current digital era, trending content has become an important element in students' daily lives. They are exposed to various popular information through social media, news platforms, and other

digital applications almost every day. This exposure, if utilized properly, can become an effective bridge in the foreign language acquisition process, including English. Learning based on trending content presents a fresher, current, and meaningful learning atmosphere, capable of accelerating natural language mastery.

When students learn language through issues currently being hotly discussed, they are encouraged to understand this information comprehensively. This encouragement fosters the need to understand new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structures used in real contexts. Thus, the language acquisition process is no longer mechanical but occurs contextually and comprehensively. Students not only memorize words but also learn to use them in appropriate sentences and situations.

Through the Content-Based Instruction approach, students can explore and express the social issues. For example, when discussing Palestine issues that attract world attention, students shows their opinions, give their arguments, and write their articles or essays in English. In this process, they unconsciously improve critical

thinking skills, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking simultaneously.

In addition the trending content give the unique and interesting aspect in learning. Students will give critical review, because they will connect to the real life. It will give a good motivation in producing the language specially in english language in this case. Since they can express their emotional expression based on the Palestina situation, and all the world telling about this situation.

Trending content also improve the collaborationin learning. The student can discuss, interact, involve in to the cases discussed. These activities only enrich their language not competence but also build social communication skills, cooperation, and active involvement in learning communities.

Trending content plays a major role in accelerating and deepening language acquisition. When combined with the CBI approach, this content can make language learning more alive, relevant, and impactful. Students not only learn to understand but also to participate actively in global conversations, equipped with contextual and meaningful language.

#### III.RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design comprising two learning cycles followed by evaluations. Participants were divided into two groups: an intervention group engaged with Content-Based Instruction (CBI) using trending content, and a control group that followed traditional methods. Both groups were taught by the same instructor to ensure consistency.

The learning activities spanned one academic semester, with each session lasting 90 minutes. Students in the intervention group selected trending topics relevant to their interests for discussions, fostering engagement. They produced written texts on these topics and presented them on social media, enhanced with readings or pronunciation practice accompanied by music to increase motivation and appeal.

Data collection encompassed observation sheets documenting classroom interactions, interviews capturing student perceptions, and analysis of student writing to assess linguistic outcomes. English language ability tests, including pre- and post-tests, measured skill improvement. Continuous assessments tracked

student progress throughout the study period.

The study analyzed descriptive data on language skill improvements and thematic insights into student motivation, confidence, and engagement. The CBI intervention complemented rather than replaced traditional methods, with teacher-student interactions and feedback conducted mainly via private direct messaging to provide personalized support without public exposure of errors.

This approach aimed to innovate English language learning by integrating trending content to enhance proficiency, relevance, and educational engagement, fostering motivation, confidence, social interaction, and a dynamic learning environment in the digital era. The findings are expected to inform future curriculum development and more effective teaching strategies.

#### IV.FINDING AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 English Language Ability Test Results

The study employed Computer-Based Instruction (CBI) as the core experimental methodology to enhance English language

competencies in vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and oral communication. The experimental cohort demonstrated significant improvements, with mean performance scores increasing from 60 in the pre-test to 78 in the post-test. This 30% increase reflected statistically meaningful advancement attributable to the CBI intervention, substantiating the method's efficacy. The research intentionally excluded control group comparisons to focus exclusively on scrutinizing experimental method and its strategic application.

During the instructional process, educators strategically synchronous implemented communication tools such as public chat forums, private messaging, and real-time question-and-answer sessions, effectively sociofostering a constructivist learning environment. This approach augmented learner engagement and accountability, reaffirming the shift of educators' roles toward facilitators who scaffolded learning through adaptive guidance and timely feedback rather than solely delivering content.

The CBI platform incorporated various question typologies intended to stimulate diverse cognitive processes. Learners encountered a range of formats, question from basic recognition tasks such as multiplechoice questions to complex expressive including essay tasks writing. Independent practice modules allowed learners to progress autonomously at personalized paces, promoting learner self-regulation and differentiated learning.

A vital component of the instructional design involved embedded data analytics within the CBI system, which enabled educators to monitor learner performance in real-time. This analytic insight facilitated identification of error patterns and learning obstacles, allowing educators to tailor pedagogical strategies responsively to individual and group needs. Such datadriven instructional adjustments enhanced the precision and effectiveness of teaching interventions.

The study emphasized outcome analysis within the experimental group, underscoring CBI as an innovative educational strategy and reflecting contemporary research

trends prioritizing emergent teaching methods in authentic environments.

Prospectively, the of gamification incorporation elements—such as points, achievement badges, leaderboards, and daily challenges—was anticipated to enhance learner motivation by engaging intrinsic competitive and playful drives, particularly significant for digitalnative learners.

functioned Educators as facilitators who integrated technology purposefully to foster learner and interaction autonomy. They leveraged analytic data to inform instructional decisions and are encouraged to continue developing competencies in technology-enhanced maximize pedagogies to learner engagement and achievement.

## 4.2 Writing Assignment Results Analysis

Following is the example of student writing results:

"I have did for my English class content about Palestine. Palestine is a free country, which is already exist since long time ago. But then Israel do any invation. The invation was done since 1900, they do any violent, and broke all Palestinian area. In order to kick out the Palestinian from their land. So as Moslem What should and could we do? We could do boycot, donate and etc.

Actually Palestine needs our help."

However, this writing shows content understanding and ability to convey ideas related to Palestine topics, which is the focus of learning content. Results are expected to provide clear pictures about student involvement in technology-assisted learning, challenges faced in integrating digital content, and strategies that can be applied to improve student learning experiences. This research should also include assessment of teaching method effectiveness using technology, as well as its impact on student motivation and participation in learning activities.

In the rapidly developing digital era, integration of technology and social media in English language learning processes becomes a need that cannot be ignored, especially for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Educational landscape changes increasingly directed toward online and hybrid learning require educational institutions and lecturers to adopt innovative and relevant learning methods with the times. This research confirms Content-Based that the Instruction (CBI) approach utilizing trending Palestine-themed content is not only effective in improving student English language abilities but also capable of generating higher learning motivation and social awareness. However, the success of this approach implementation greatly depends on several interrelated key factors that must be considered comprehensively.

First, social media plays a role as a very effective collaboration tool in English language learning. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram enable students to interact in real-time, share work results, and discuss learning materials. This interaction not only improves oral and written communication skills in English but also builds supportive and dynamic learning communities. In this research context, students use social media to publish their writing assignments discussing Palestine issues, so they not only learn language passively but also actively argue and express opinions English. media Furthermore, social also provides access to diverse and authentic learning resources, enriching student learning experiences and expanding their insights.

Second, using interactive and easily accessible learning applications and platforms becomes an important factor in creating flexible and attractive learning environments. Applications such as Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Google Classroom enable students to learn independently or collaboratively in enjoyable ways adaptive to individual needs. In this research, lecturers utilize various applications to deliver materials, give assignments, and facilitate online discussions. Interactive features provided by these applications students understand English concepts more deeply, especially in CBI contexts that demand comprehensive content understanding. Additionally, easy access through mobile devices enables students to learn anytime and anywhere, making learning more flexible and suitable for their digital lifestyles. The increase in average post-test scores from 60 to 78 in this research shows that interactive technology usage significantly accelerates language acquisition processes improves and learning outcomes.

Third, availability of lecturer training in mastering latest technology greatly determines the success of technology integration in learning. This training includes mastering online learning platforms, CBI-based teaching techniques, and strategies for effectively utilizing social media and digital applications. In this research, involved lecturers have undergone

intensive training equipping them with technical and pedagogical skills to design relevant and attractive learning materials. This training also helps lecturers overcome various technical and pedagogical obstacles that might arise during learning processes, so teaching quality remains maintained and continuously improves. Thus, investment in lecturer competence development is a key factor that should not be ignored in efforts to improve technology-based English language learning quality.

Fourth, curriculum adjustment to be more relevant to technology trends and student needs becomes a crucial aspect in creating effective and contextual learning. Curricula responsive to technology developments and current issues enable students to learn English in authentic meaningful contexts. In this research, integrating trending content such as Palestine issues not only provides strong sociocultural contexts but also increases student critical awareness toward ongoing global issues. This adaptive curriculum adjustment enables English language learning to become more applicable and suitable for modern world demands, so students not only master language but also can relate learning to social and cultural realities around them.

These factors synergistically contribute to the success of Content-Based Instruction-based English language learning applied in this research. Social media as collaboration and learning result publication spaces, interactive learning applications supporting flexibility and student involvement, adequate lecturer training, and relevant and adaptive curricula all play important roles in improving student motivation, language skills, and social awareness. Research results showing significant improvement in post-test scores and student writing quality become concrete evidence of this approach's effectiveness.

In the future. educational institutions need to continue developing and integrating technologybased learning strategies comprehensively, including strengthening lecturer training, curricula updating regularly, optimally utilizing social media and digital applications. Further research can be directed to explore educational policies that systematically support this technology integration, as well as examining its long-term impacts on learning quality and student learning outcomes. Thus, English language learning becomes not only a language mastery process but also a means of developing social, cultural, and technological competencies relevant to 21st-century needs.

Therefore, this research not only provides contributions to pedagogical development at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping but also potentially enriches scientific literature regarding language learning in the digital era.

### 4.3 Thematic Analysis of Motivation and Confidence

Interviews and observations showed that students felt more motivated to learn English because of relevant and current materials. They also felt more confident in speaking and writing because they could relate learning to social issues they cared about.

Further research shows that interactive learning approaches, such as group discussions and collaborative projects, also increase student motivation. They as Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Broadcasting Communication (IBC) students become interested because it relates to their field, namely Islam. Students feel more involved in learning processes when they can contribute and exchange ideas with their peers. Because each of these

religious majors has opinions and perspectives about religious and humanitarian issues echoed in the 'Palestine' theme. They become more enthusiastic because like IBC majors, they carry out their roles broadcasters of religious information social community issues. and Additionally, technology usage, such as language learning applications and online platforms, enables students to access additional resources supporting their learning.

Students also reported that receiving constructive feedback from instructors and classmates increased their confidence. They felt more motivated to correct mistakes and work harder in achieving their learning goals. By creating supportive and inclusive learning environments, students can experience significant increases in motivation and self-confidence in using English.

# 4.4 Relationship Between CBI Approach and Assignments

The CBI approach emphasizes language learning through meaningful content. Writing assignments and discussions about Palestine issues provide authentic contexts that force students to use English actively and

meaningfully. Using social media as publication platforms strengthens communicative and social learning.

The CBI approach also prioritizes interdisciplinary learning, enabling students to connect English with other study fields. Through crossdisciplinary assignments, literary text analysis or scientific research, students can expand insights and improve language skills in broader Additionally, contexts. group collaboration in projects related to global issues can train teamwork abilities and effective communication.

Information technology implementation, such as interactive learning applications, can also enrich learning experiences. By using digital tools, students can access diverse resources and interact with fellow learners from various parts of the world, thereby deepening their understanding of different cultural contexts. Overall, the CBI approach and content-based assignments not only strengthen language abilities but also build critical attitudes and global awareness, humanitarian awareness, religious awareness. and social awareness among students.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Content-Based Instruction approach with trending Palestine content utilization successfully improved EFL students' English language abilities at This STAI YDI. approach also increased student motivation and confidence in learning English. Relevant assignments and authentic contexts provided deeper meaning in learning. This applies to students maioring in Islamic Religious Education and Islamic Broadcasting Communication who have carried out tasks of creating texts and reading them or memorizing them and submitting them to social media.

This research that proves implementing the Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach with trending Palestine-themed content utilization significantly succeeded in improving EFL students' English language abilities at STAI YDI Lubuk Sikaping. This ability improvement is seen from the increase in students' average English test scores from 60 in pre-tests to 78 in post-tests, reflecting 30% progress. This improvement includes vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking ability aspects, showing that authentic contentbased learning can strengthen comprehensive language mastery.

Besides language ability improvement, this research found that using trending content that is socially and culturally relevant and meaningful can generate learning motivation and student confidence. Students felt more motivated because learning materials related to current issues they care about, particularly Palestine issues that have connections with Islamic Religious Studies Islamic and Broadcasting Communication major confidence backgrounds. Their increased through active interaction in discussions, writing, and publishing work results on social media, providing more authentic and communicative learning experiences.

Social media's role as collaboration and learning result publication platforms proved very effective in creating supportive and dynamic learning environments. Social media not only facilitates real-time interaction among students but also abilities, motivation, and confidence. This approach not only strengthens language skills but also builds social, critical, and humanitarian awareness relevant to 21st-century needs. This research provides important expands access to authentic and diverse learning resources. Additionally, utilizing interactive learning applications such as Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Google Classroom supports flexibility and student involvement, making learning more attractive and adaptive to individual needs.

The success of implementing this approach also greatly depends on lecturer training in mastering learning technology and CBI-based teaching strategies. Intensive training received by lecturers helps them design relevant materials and overcome technical and pedagogical obstacles during learning processes. Curriculum adjustment responsive to technology developments and current issues also becomes an important factor in creating contextual and applicable learning.

Integration of the CBI approach with trending Palestine content. supported by social media, interactive applications, lecturer training, adaptive curricula, synergistically improves students' English language contributions for developing innovative and contextual English language learning methods, particularly for Islamic Religious Studies and Islamic Broadcasting Communication students in the digital era.

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