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Enhancing Arabic Listening Comprehension Skills through YouTube-Based Learning: A Community Service Program at Ribath Imam Al-Ghazali

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Abstract

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia continue to face challenges in developing students' Arabic listening comprehension (*maharah istimāʿ*), particularly due to limited exposure to authentic spoken Arabic. This community service program aimed to enhance students' Arabic listening skills through the structured integration of YouTube-based learning at Ribath Imam Al-Ghazali Islamic Boarding School, Pasuruan, East Java. The program involved 45 students in a 12-week participatory intervention utilizing curated videos from the Ahmad Fakhouri YouTube channel, combined with guided listening activities, collaborative discussion, and reflective practice. A mixed-methods evaluation was employed, incorporating pre–post listening assessments and qualitative feedback from focus group discussions. The results indicate a meaningful improvement in students' listening comprehension, accompanied by increased confidence and engagement in understanding naturally paced spoken Arabic. Participants demonstrated noticeable progress in identifying main ideas, recognizing contextual vocabulary, and comprehending conversational discourse. The findings suggest that YouTube-based learning, when pedagogically structured and culturally aligned with *pesantren* values, can serve as an accessible and sustainable approach to strengthening *maharah istimāʿ* while complementing traditional text-based instruction in Islamic boarding schools.

Kata Kunci:
Maharah Istimāʿ, Pembelajaran Berbasis Youtube, Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat, Pendidikan Pesantren, Keterampilan Menyimak Bahasa Arab

Abstrak

Pesantren di Indonesia masih menghadapi tantangan dalam mengembangkan keterampilan menyimak bahasa Arab (*maharah istimāʿ*), terutama akibat keterbatasan paparan terhadap bahasa Arab lisan yang autentik. Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak bahasa Arab santri melalui integrasi pembelajaran berbasis YouTube secara terstruktur di Pondok *Pesantren* Ribath Imam Al-Ghazali, Pasuruan, Jawa Timur. Program ini melibatkan 45 santri dalam intervensi selama 12 minggu dengan memanfaatkan video terkurasi dari kanal YouTube Ahmad Fakhouri yang dipadukan dengan aktivitas menyimak terpandu, diskusi kolaboratif, dan refleksi pembelajaran. Evaluasi dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan campuran melalui tes pra–pasca dan umpan balik kualitatif dari diskusi kelompok terarah. Hasil pengabdian menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan menyimak santri yang disertai dengan bertambahnya kepercayaan diri dan keterlibatan dalam memahami bahasa Arab lisan dengan kecepatan natural. Santri menunjukkan perkembangan dalam mengidentifikasi gagasan utama, mengenali kosakata dalam konteks, dan memahami percakapan bahasa Arab. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis YouTube yang dirancang secara pedagogis dan selaras

dengan nilai *pesantren* dapat menjadi pendekatan yang efektif dan berkelanjutan dalam penguatan *maharah istimāʿ* di lingkungan *pesantren*.

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic language proficiency constitutes a fundamental component of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly within *pesantren*, where Arabic functions not only as a subject of study but also as a medium for accessing classical Islamic texts and religious knowledge (Albantani & Madkur, 2017; Ardiansyah et al., 2022; Hanifansyah et al., 2025). Among the four core language skills, listening comprehension (maharah istimāʿ) plays a foundational role in Arabic language acquisition, as it serves as the primary channel for linguistic input and supports the development of other skills. However, numerous studies indicate that listening remains one of the most challenging competencies for Indonesian learners of Arabic, largely due to limited exposure to authentic spoken Arabic, pedagogical emphasis on reading-based instruction, and insufficient integration of audio-visual learning resources (Albirini, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2020; Ritonga et al., 2022).

Traditional *pesantren* often prioritize reading classical texts while providing limited exposure to authentic spoken Arabic, creating a gap between students' receptive reading skills and their aural comprehension abilities (Baharun, 2025; Masnun, 2025). This pedagogical imbalance necessitates innovative approaches that integrate contemporary digital resources with established *pesantren* learning methodologies.

A number of community-based and applied studies have highlighted the pedagogical potential of audio-visual digital media in supporting Arabic language learning within Islamic educational contexts. A practice-oriented case study conducted in an East Javanese *pesantren* by Arisandi and Habib (2025) illustrates that the structured use of YouTube content featuring Arabic-language videos with visual cues, interactive tasks, and contextual learning activities can enhance students' comprehension and communicative engagement. Similarly, Habib et al. (2024) report that podcasts function as an effective digital audio medium for addressing limited exposure to authentic Arabic input, particularly in the development of *maharah istimāʿ* and *maharah kalām*.

Within the scope of community service and professional development, Rahmawati (2024) shows that asset-based digital media mentoring programs play a vital role in strengthening Arabic teachers' technological competence, thereby supporting sustainable technology integration in Islamic educational institutions. These applied findings are complemented by a large-scale instructional implementation in Malaysian higher education, which indicates that YouTube-based learning kits foster learner engagement, listening comprehension, and speaking confidence (Othman et al., 2025). In addition, a systematic review by Alamin and Ardinal (2025) confirms that YouTube, when pedagogically guided and culturally aligned, consistently supports listening development and learner motivation across Islamic elementary education settings.

Despite these contributions, the existing body of research reveals several notable gaps. Most studies concentrate on formal madrasah or modern *pesantren*, while traditional *pesantren* grounded in kitab kuning–based instruction remain underexplored. Community service initiatives employing participatory approaches are still limited compared to experimental or descriptive studies, and prior research frequently combines listening and speaking skills, leaving maharah istimāʿ insufficiently examined as a distinct competence. In addition, interventions are often short-term, with limited

documentation of structured, longer-duration programs. Research that explicitly evaluates specific YouTube channels as primary instructional resources and documents gender-separated instructional settings in accordance with *pesantren* culture is also scarce.

Responding to these gaps, the present community service program introduces a hybrid pedagogical model that integrates YouTube-based learning with traditional *pesantren* instructional practices. The program adopts a structured three-phase intervention framework pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention supported by curated digital content aligned with Islamic educational values and *pesantren* curricular needs. A participatory approach positions students as active learners, while technology integration is implemented in a culturally responsive manner. Program effectiveness is evaluated through a mixed-methods design combining quantitative assessment and qualitative reflection to capture learning outcomes holistically.

Accordingly, this program aims to strengthen students' maharah istimā' through structured and value-oriented YouTube-based instruction, enhance their ability to identify main ideas, supporting details, and inferences in naturally paced spoken Arabic, and foster greater confidence and learning motivation. Beyond skill development, the program seeks to demonstrate an accessible and sustainable model for integrating digital learning resources in *pesantren* contexts and to offer practical guidance for educators implementing culturally responsive YouTube-based Arabic instruction.

Students at Ribath Imam Al-Ghazali Islamic Boarding School, located in Bangil, Pasuruan, East Java, demonstrated difficulties in understanding spoken Arabic during religious lectures and instructional sessions. Preliminary observations revealed that while students possessed adequate vocabulary knowledge through kitab kuning (classical text) study, they struggled to comprehend Arabic when delivered at natural speaking pace. This disconnect between written and oral comprehension skills limited their ability to engage with Arabic-language Islamic content and hindered their overall language proficiency development.

This community service program aimed to: enhance students' Arabic listening comprehension skills through structured YouTube-based learning, develop students' ability to identify main ideas and supporting details in spoken Arabic, increase students' confidence and motivation in Arabic language learning, demonstrate the effectiveness of digital learning resources in *pesantren* educational contexts.

METHOD

This community service program adopted a participatory action research approach conducted over a 12-week period from August to November 2025, integrating structured YouTube-based learning with collaborative reflection and skill-building activities (Cornish et al., 2023; Hafferty et al., 2024). The program was implemented at Pondok *Pesantren* Ribath Imam Al-Ghazali, Bangil, Pasuruan, East Java, involving 45 male and female students (in separate sessions) aged 15–18 years at the madrasah aliyah level, all of whom demonstrated intermediate Arabic proficiency equivalent to A2–B1 CEFR levels based on internal curriculum assessment. Learning took place in a multimedia classroom equipped with a projector, audio system, and internet access, while students also utilized mobile devices for independent study. The primary learning material was content from the Ahmad Fakhouri YouTube channel, selected due to its clear pronunciation, moderate speaking pace suitable for intermediate learners, thematic relevance to students' interests and the *pesantren* curriculum,

high-quality audio-visual production, appropriateness for Islamic educational contexts, and progressively graded difficulty across video series. Supplementary materials included listening comprehension worksheets, curated vocabulary lists, and guided discussion questions developed by the program team. Implementation followed three phases: a pre-intervention phase in Week 1 consisting of an Arabic listening comprehension pre-test, a survey on students' self-perceived listening abilities and learning preferences, and an orientation to the YouTube-based learning methodology; an intervention phase from Weeks 2–11 with weekly 90-minute sessions comprising pre-listening activities (vocabulary introduction, topic activation, and prediction), while-listening tasks (guided video viewing with note-taking, main idea identification, and detail recognition), post-listening activities (comprehension checks, collaborative discussions, and vocabulary review), and brief independent practice guidance; and a post-intervention phase in Week 12 involving a parallel-form listening comprehension post-test, focus group discussions on learning experiences, and a survey measuring confidence and motivation. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests to examine statistically significant improvements, while qualitative data from focus groups and open-ended survey responses were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits. Ethical considerations were upheld through informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymization of all collected data.

RESULT AND CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this community service–based academic inquiry indicate a substantial improvement in participants' Arabic listening comprehension following the implementation of the structured YouTube-assisted learning program. A comparison between initial and final assessments shows that the mean listening score increased from 62.3 (SD = 11.7) to 78.6 (SD = 9.4). Statistical analysis using a paired-samples *t*-test confirms that this improvement is highly significant, $t(44) = 8.72$, $p < .001$, with a large practical impact as reflected by Cohen's $d = 1.30$. This finding suggests that the educational intervention functioned effectively as a capacity-building effort within the *pesantren* learning environment.

Table 1. Arabic Listening Comprehension Scores Before and After the Community Service Program

Measurement	Mean	SD	t (df = 44)	p-value	Effect Size (d)
Initial assessment	62.3	11.7			
Final assessment	78.6	9.4	8.72	< .001	1.30 (Large)

Further examination of specific listening sub-skills demonstrates consistent development across all measured dimensions. Participants showed notable gains in vocabulary recognition within context (27%), followed by main idea identification (23%), detail recognition (19%), and inference-making ability (16%). These patterns indicate that the audiovisual learning activities supported both global comprehension and more refined linguistic processing, particularly at the lexical and interpretive levels.

Qualitative reflections gathered through focus group discussions and open-ended feedback reveal five dominant themes characterizing participants' learning experiences during the community service program. First, students reported heightened engagement and learning motivation, attributing this to the dynamic visual elements, authentic cultural representations, and topical

relevance of the video materials. One participant expressed that learning through videos made Arabic "feel alive rather than merely a collection of words from textbooks," highlighting a shift in affective engagement.

Second, participants demonstrated increased awareness of effective listening strategies. They became more conscious of predicting content, identifying key words, and tolerating partial misunderstanding without losing overall meaning. Repeated exposure to naturally paced Arabic speech was also perceived as beneficial in improving listening stamina and processing speed. Third, the integration of cultural and situational contexts through video content enriched comprehension by linking language forms with everyday Arab practices, social interactions, and contemporary issues. Fourth, participants acknowledged initial challenges, particularly related to unfamiliar speech variations and rapid delivery in certain videos. However, these difficulties encouraged adaptive behaviors such as adjusting playback speed, replaying segments, and collaboratively clarifying meaning. Fifth, peer interaction emerged as a significant supportive factor, as group discussions enabled learners to exchange strategies, confirm understanding, and construct meaning collectively, reinforcing the communal learning ethos of the *pesantren*.



Figure 1. Community service–based Arabic listening session using YouTube-assisted collaborative learning in a *pesantren* setting.

The outcomes of this community service program are closely aligned with previous community-based and applied initiatives that have explored the use of digital media in Arabic language education within Islamic institutions. In particular, the findings resonate with the practice-oriented work of Arisandi and Habib (2025), who demonstrated that the structured use of YouTube content supported by visual cues, interactive activities, and contextualized tasks can enhance learners' engagement and communicative responsiveness in *pesantren* settings. Similarly, the present program confirms that YouTube, when pedagogically framed, can function as an effective bridge between traditional text-centered instruction and authentic spoken Arabic exposure.

The emphasis on guided listening activities and reflective discussion in this program also parallels the community-based pedagogical approach described by Habib et al. (2024), who highlighted podcasts as a practical solution to limited Arabic listening environments in *pesantren*. As

reported in their initiative, repeated exposure to authentic audio input supported learners' listening endurance and strategic awareness. In the current program, similar patterns emerged as students gradually developed adaptive listening strategies, such as predicting meaning, focusing on key lexical items, and maintaining comprehension despite incomplete understanding.

From the perspective of community service and educator capacity building, the present findings support the conclusions of Rahmawati (2024), who emphasized that sustainable digital integration in Islamic educational institutions depends on strengthening teachers' digital competence through mentoring and participatory training. Although the current program primarily targeted students, its structured design and guided implementation implicitly reflect the same principle: digital tools are most effective when embedded within pedagogical support systems rather than introduced in isolation.

The program's outcomes are further consistent with broader applied implementations beyond the *pesantren* context. For example, the large-scale instructional initiative reported by Othman et al. (2025) in Malaysian higher education demonstrated that YouTube-based learning kits enhance learner engagement, listening comprehension, and speaking confidence. While the institutional context differs, the convergence of findings suggests that carefully curated video-based instruction can foster similar benefits across diverse Islamic educational environments when adapted to local cultural norms.

Finally, the present program extends insights synthesized in the systematic literature review conducted by Alamin and Ardinal (2025), which concluded that YouTube serves as an effective instructional medium in Islamic education when its use is pedagogically guided and culturally aligned. By documenting a longer-duration, participatory community service program in a traditional *pesantren* with gender-separated sessions, this initiative contributes practical evidence that complements and operationalizes the patterns identified in earlier applied studies.

Overall, the discussion indicates that the effectiveness of YouTube-based Arabic listening instruction lies not merely in technological availability, but in deliberate pedagogical structuring, cultural responsiveness, and participatory implementation. Building on the experiences documented by Arisandi and Habib (2025), Habib et al. (2024), Rahmawati (2024), Othman et al. (2025), and Alamin and Ardinal (2025), this community service program illustrates how digital media can be meaningfully integrated to strengthen *maharah istimā'* while preserving the educational identity of *pesantren*.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that the systematic integration of YouTube-based learning materials can effectively enhance Arabic listening comprehension among *pesantren* students while simultaneously increasing motivation and active engagement with the language. The observed improvements indicate that digital resources, when pedagogically structured and aligned with *pesantren* traditions, are capable of addressing persistent gaps in aural comprehension without undermining established educational values. The outcomes of this initiative suggest that *pesantren*-based learning environments can benefit from curated digital content when it is embedded within guided activities, reflective discussion, and balanced instructional practices. From a practical perspective, the program highlights the importance of equipping educators with the skills to select, frame, and integrate digital materials meaningfully, ensuring harmony between technology-

supported learning and classical text-based study. Looking ahead, similar community service initiatives may benefit from longer implementation periods to examine sustained skill development, broader application across varying levels of Arabic proficiency, and the creation of organized digital resource repositories tailored to *pesantren* curricula. At the policy level, the findings underscore the need for institutional support in infrastructure development, clear guidelines for culturally appropriate digital content, targeted professional development in technology-enhanced pedagogy, and collaborative partnerships between *pesantren* and technology providers to ensure sustainable and context-sensitive implementation.

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