

## Perspectives on Language Learning at the Muhammadiyah An-Nur Islamic Boarding School, Sidoarjo, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Developing a learning platform is essential for advancing the competencies of students—including those in Islamic boarding schools. Such platforms aimed to know students' perspective after having the opportunity to learn independently, anytime and anywhere by using the online platform for teaching and learning process. Traditional classroom instruction tended to be teacher-centered, relying heavily on the teacher's physical presence. This community service initiative was conducted to facilitate them in order to make them up to date to the online meeting covering both Arabic and English—within the Islamic boarding schools setting, specifically focusing on how the foreign language learning were stimulated to improve the students' public speaking at Islamic Boarding School An-Nur Sidoarjo, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was adopted to ensure a meaningful impact and to enable intensive mentoring. Data for the project was gathered via questionnaires to serve as a basis for teaching and learning process. The result showed that they were actually competent students for public speakers, but they had many barriers to learn. There were 37 students which were given the questionnaire. The highest barrier was mastering the vocabularies (14%). Then, it was followed by Wariness (13%), Nervous (11%), shy (11%), in confidence (11%), Misconception (8%), tremor (8%), unstructured ideas (8%), individualist (8%). At the end of the program, 97 % responded that they preferred to have the training program which had been given by team of social service.

**KEYWORDS:** language, learning, boarding, school, perspective

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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools serve as learning centers for students seeking to gain the religious knowledge or pursue formal education across the elementary, junior high, and senior high levels. These students face a significant academic workload, as they must simultaneously follow the curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and participate in the boarding school's own programs. However, communication remains a challenge, particularly regarding Arabic and English proficiency. Language learning requires a process, a conceptual framework, and a learning system (platform) that is flexible, engaging, enjoyable, and adaptable to learners with diverse competency backgrounds. This necessitates specialized guidance in speaking skills—facilitated through the learning platform—to ensure students become proficient in conveying messages in Arabic or English. Furthermore, the platform allows for the development of learning materials that help equip graduates with strong soft skills for the future.

The An-Nur Islamic Boarding School—specifically its male dormitory located in Penatarsewu Village, Tanggulangin District, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia—aims to cultivate a resilient generation of Muslims who embody the spirit of a mercy to all creation). Aligned with this vision, the proposed community service program plays a pivotal role in realizing the school's goal of developing multilingual students who possess noble character. This language training and character education program had been implemented by using a language acquisition framework and a personalized approach to character development, all facilitated through an interactive learning platform; the ultimate objective was to produce exemplary graduates who served as positive influences and inspire noble character in future generations of students.

The development of this interactive learning system platform—part of a community service initiative—was expected to significantly enhance the quality of human resources among Islamic boarding school graduates. This initiative aimed to support Indonesia in realizing its "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision by fostering sustainable language and character education programs, thereby enabling

the Indonesian generation to compete globally through multilingual programs modeled on exemplary graduates. Visiting to Islamic boarding school revealed that a prevailing issue among students was a lack of communication proficiency. Consequently, the development of this platform would indirectly contribute to the growth of the digital economy within the social sciences and humanities sectors, ultimately fostering human resource development.

Technological advancements, automation, and learning systems capable of keeping pace with the times are crucial elements in fostering national intellectual growth. Traditional learning methods—whether manual, teacher-centered, or classroom-based—require the integration of technology to become adaptive and interactive for learners; this facilitates economic self-reliance through digital platforms and paves the way for the evolution of modern Islamic boarding schools. Addressing these needs, this community service initiative offered a language training program—covering Arabic and English—alongside character education. Participants were categorized based on questionnaire results to distinguish between those facing communication challenges and those with high potential for further development (Meniado: 2016). The language program focused on Arabic and English acquisition process that prioritized listening and speaking skills, as listening plays a positive role in language acquisition (Chaer: 2015). The training goes beyond passive listening to a speaker; it involves active engagement and practical application of what is heard. Consequently, the acquisition techniques employed in this program aiming to create a more natural learning environment.

In other respects, formal settings would not be the dominant mode (Green & Piel: 2016). The process of imitating what is heard is a key concept in the acquisition of Arabic and English. Meanwhile, character education is conducted by presenting real-life scenarios—sourced from reference materials on the importance of character education (encompassing both Islamic values and nationalism)—via a digital platform designed for the students' learning. Survey results indicated that the students recognized the importance of language training. The training provided under this program differs from standard instructional coursework. This language acquisition process—aimed at fostering multilingual students—employs specific techniques to ensure that language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation were mastered and retained in memory (Dardjo Wijoyo: 2018). One such technique involved specific actions to be performed following the listening phase. Role-playing was essential to the language acquisition process, whereas character education was delivered through lecturing and real-life case studies highlighting Islamic figures whose character traits transformed situations for the better (Taxler: 2012). The ultimate goal of this character education was to cultivate noble characters among the students at Pondok Pesantren An-Nur. All the aforementioned learning materials were integrated into a digital learning platform capable of facilitating audiovisual instruction and online sessions for guidance on topics requiring critical thinking. This approach aligned perfectly with the boarding school's clearly defined mission.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was a descriptive quantitative. The data were collected by using the survey to the 37 student learning at Islamic Boarding School an-Nur Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. There were steps which had been done by the tutors. They tried to conduct the environment as well as possible. The methods employed for Arabic and English language acquisition—and the associated character education were as follows:

1. Labeling all facilities and room amenities in three languages: Indonesian, Arabic, and English.
2. Promoting the Community Service Program to the students to support natural Arabic and English acquisition through the creation of "Language Zones" and the development of a digital learning platform.
3. Assessing student proficiency levels to provide tailored guidance; students are classified based on their average ability to minimize significant skill gaps between individuals.
4. Purchasing character education reference books to foster a reading culture within the Islamic boarding school) environment.
5. Conducting character education sessions through mentoring and the use of real-life scenarios combined with role-playing activities.
6. Involving the student to name the Arabic and English Language Zones to ensure mutual agreement, thereby maximizing the program's impact on students at An-Nur.
7. Providing materials focused on listening skills, which are then acted out and communicated based on information sources provided via a digital platform.
8. Engaging the student with above-average language proficiency in the acquisition process; they gain an intensive understanding of the Arabic and English acquisition concepts, enabling them to technically assist and mentor their fellow students.

Implementing these steps requires the active participation of the entire Islamic boarding school community, as it demanded a high level of awareness to collectively foster a language-conscious environment and cultivate a multilingual generation among the students at An-Nur. The division of tasks within this community service team was as follows: Imam Mahfudzi, S.Ag., M.Fil.I. was responsible for guiding Arabic language acquisition through both classroom-based and digital methods, creating a natural atmosphere that supports the acquisition process. This initiative would yield a service-related output in the form of a video documenting the activities. Furthermore, it facilitated practical Arabic language study, focusing on communication within

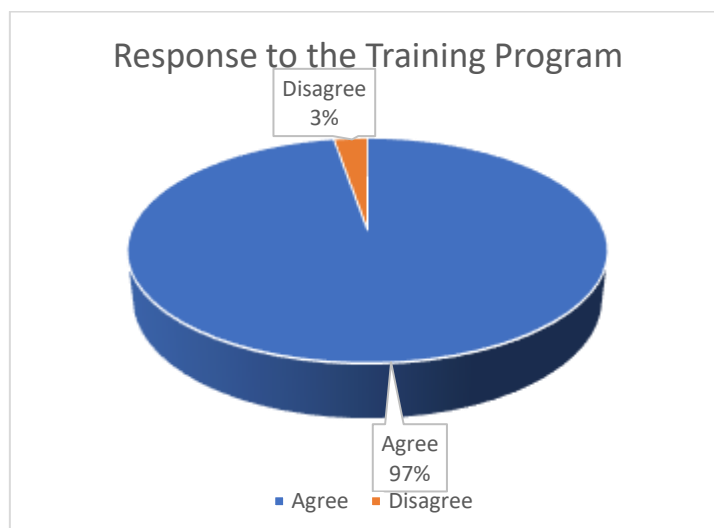
real-time interaction contexts. The Community Service Team Leader also identified specific interaction contexts that effectively facilitate this acquisition process. Dr. Rikat Eka Prastyawan, S.Pd., M.Pd. was responsible for guiding English language acquisition through classroom-based and digital methods, establishing an "English Zone" atmosphere to support the acquisition process. Relevant vocabulary were written on labels attached to surrounding objects, ensuring that the words could be easily recalled during interactions without significant delay. Activities from this project was served as research outputs—specifically articles—regarding the English language acquisition process and its implementation within the environment. Prativi Khilyatul Auliya, S.Pd., M.Pd. was responsible for developing a digital learning system platform capable of hosting interactive learning materials based on language acquisition approaches—for both English and Arabic—ensuring the content was effectively accessible to learners alike.

## RESULT OF STUDY

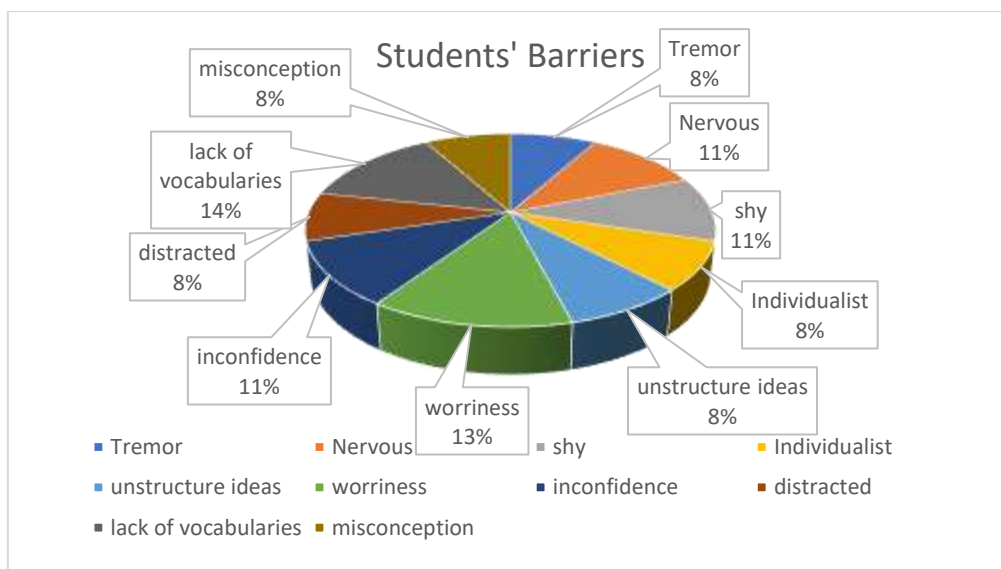
The community service activity was conducted at the Islamic boarding school yielded the expected outcome: the development of a learning platform utilizing the school's multimedia classroom. Education in this setting required special attention because the use of mobile phones was prohibited on the premises. This policy had both positive and negative impacts; a positive aspect was that students less exposed to the harmful effects of excessive screen time during the learning process.



Questionnaire results from the activity indicated that the students' communication skills were rated as "very good" for 43% of the group and "good" for 57 %; notably, no students exhibited communication limitations. Other findings highlight the importance of public speaking—a key soft skill—and the needed for training delivered via distance learning. This need arised because, while the religious teachers posed profound knowledge, there was a need to further develop their public speaking capabilities. Survey results regarding the need for this training was illustrated in the following diagram. Addressing the challenge of limited time for in-person visits, the proposed solution was to provide distance learning training using platforms such as Google Meet or Zoom. This allowed students to utilize the multimedia facilities provided by the school administration to enhance their communication skills and engage in further study with the teacher located elsewhere. The level of demand for this training was depicted in the following pie chart.



There were many students barriers for learning at Islamic Boarding School after they had joined for the language learning program given by the tutors coming from the lecturer at Shipbuilding Institute of Polytechnic Surabaya. The following was the illustration of the students' barriers while joining language training program



The smallest percentages barriers belonged to individualist, unstructured ideas, distracted, misconception, and tremors. The biggest percentage belonged to lack of vocabularies (14%), worries (13%), nervous (11%), shy (11%), in confidence (11%). In facts, the students were really lack of vocabularies. The tutors guided new vocabularies to express what they wanted to express. The students in Islamic Boarding School were lack of practice independently. They depended on the teacher which was closed to Teacher-Center. So, they were nervous, tremor, worrying, and speech less at the last to be the public speakers while practicing.

## CONCLUSION

The training activity led to the conclusion that developing a distance learning platform whether using Google Meet or Zoom—was essential for enhancing communication skills. Following the program, the community service team recommends establishing a more structured distance learning system; this should involve, at a minimum, ensuring that students had personal email accounts registered with the Islamic boarding school so they were already familiar with the platform when remote learning was required. Usernames and passwords could be easily accessed, as they were prepared and securely managed by the administration. Furthermore, this enabled broader communication way with family; interactions did not need to be limited to physical visits but they could also take place via digital platforms under the supervision or the staff in the Islamic boarding school.

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