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Enhancing Arabic Speaking Skills via ChatGPT: An Exploratory Study at Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri University

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Abstract

Mastery of *mahārah kalam* (speaking skills) is a primary objective in Arabic pedagogy, yet students frequently encounter challenges such as limited vocabulary, psychological barriers, and insufficient interactive practice. In many Indonesian higher education settings, speaking activities are often eclipsed by grammar-centric instruction, resulting in a discrepancy between curricular objectives and oral proficiency. This study investigates the integration of ChatGPT as an AI-driven conversational tool to bridge this gap at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI). Employing a qualitative exploratory design, the research engaged twenty intermediate-level students from the Arabic Language and Literature Program. Data were synthesized through in-depth interviews, standardized speaking rubrics, and longitudinal learning protocols. The findings demonstrate that ChatGPT significantly enhances fluency, grammatical precision, and communicative confidence by providing a responsive, low-anxiety environment for iterative practice. Furthermore, the AI's immediate feedback serves as a scaffold for independent oral development. This research addresses a critical gap regarding AI-mediated Arabic instruction in the Indonesian context. The implications suggest that structured, lecturer-guided integration of ChatGPT can effectively mitigate affective filters and expand interactive opportunities in environments where authentic Arabic immersion is limited.

Keywords: *Mahārah Kalam, ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, Arabic Speaking-skills.*

Abstrak

Penguasaan *mahārah kalam* (keterampilan berbicara) merupakan tujuan utama dalam pedagogi bahasa Arab, namun mahasiswa sering kali menghadapi hambatan seperti keterbatasan kosakata, hambatan psikologis, dan kurangnya praktik interaktif. Di banyak lingkungan perguruan tinggi di Indonesia, aktivitas berbicara sering kali terpinggirkan oleh instruksi yang berpusat pada tata bahasa, sehingga terjadi kesenjangan antara tujuan kurikulum dan kemahiran lisan mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menginvestigasi integrasi ChatGPT sebagai alat percakapan berbasis kecerdasan buatan (AI) untuk menjembatani kesenjangan tersebut di Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI). Dengan menggunakan desain eksploratif kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan dua puluh mahasiswa tingkat menengah dari Program Studi Bahasa dan Sastra Arab. Data disintesis melalui wawancara mendalam, rubrik penilaian berbicara standar, dan protokol pembelajaran longitudinal. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ChatGPT secara signifikan meningkatkan kefasihan, ketepatan gramatikal, dan kepercayaan diri komunikatif dengan menyediakan lingkungan rendah kecemasan untuk praktik yang berulang. Selain itu, umpan balik langsung dari AI berfungsi sebagai perancah (*scaffold*) bagi pengembangan lisan mandiri. Penelitian ini mengisi celah kritis mengenai instruksi bahasa Arab berbasis AI dalam konteks Indonesia. Implikasi penelitian

menunjukkan bahwa integrasi ChatGPT yang terstruktur dan terbimbing oleh dosen dapat secara efektif memitigasi filter afektif dan memperluas peluang interaktif di lingkungan dengan keterbatasan paparan bahasa Arab yang autentik.

Kata Kunci: *Mahārah Kalām, ChatGPT, Kecerdasan Buatan, Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa-Arab.*

Introduction

Mastery of *mahārah al-kalām* (speaking skills) is regarded as an essential linguistic ability in Arabic language teaching for non-native learners, particularly in higher education settings such as Arabic Language and Literature (BSA) programs. However, field observations indicate that students still face significant obstacles in developing this skill. Several key inhibiting factors include limited vocabulary, insufficient opportunities for intensive practice, language anxiety, and the dominance of teacher-centered and text-based instructional methods.¹ In the Indonesian context, these challenges are further exacerbated by the limited availability of natural Arabic-speaking environments, which results in minimal real-life communicative interaction using the target language.²

Several empirical studies in Indonesian higher-education contexts corroborate the above observations. For example, Zulharby, Rasyid and Nuruddin found that in Indonesian Arabic Language Education programmes, teaching materials for speaking skills often derive from Middle East sources and fail to incorporate phonetic practice, relevant dialogues, or culturally-embedded communicative tasks resulting in a gap between curricular aims and actual oral production capability.³ Furthermore, Arifin analysed the difficulties encountered in learning Arabic at the university level in Indonesia and revealed that institutional practice remains dominated by reading, writing and grammar, while speaking receives minimal emphasis, thereby reinforcing students' reluctance or inability to engage in interactive oral communication.⁴ These findings suggest that the contextual constraints in Indonesia's limited communicative environment, conventional pedagogy, inadequate teaching materials form a systemic barrier to the development of *mahārah al-kalām*.

¹ Icha Gilang Permata Icha Gilang Permata and Machrup Eko Cahyono, "Implications of Social Anxiety Disorder on the Improvement of Maharah Al-Kalam Arabic Students," *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 4, no. 2 (July 30, 2023): 124–147.

² Nurul Musyafaah et al., "Improvement of Mahārat Al-Kalām in Arabic Learning through Total Physical Response Method," *Al-Ma'rifah* 20, no. 1 (2023): 77–90.

³ Puti Zulharby, Yumna Rasyid, and Nuruddin Nuruddin, "The Characteristics of Teaching Material Arabic Speaking Skills in Higher Education," *Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 11, no. 2 (2019): 194–213.

⁴ Yuswandi Yuswandi and Danial Hilmi, "Analysis Study of the Problems of Arabic Language Learning at Junior High School," *Lughawiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Arab* 7, no. 2 (October 19, 2024): 122–136.

Despite these contributions, previous studies generally treat the challenges of Arabic speaking competence in Indonesia as technical or pedagogical issues such as lack of vocabulary, insufficient practice opportunities, or ineffective materials without examining how institutional cultures and learning traditions shape students' willingness and ability to engage in oral interaction. Moreover, existing research rarely investigates how learners from *pesantren*-based or NU-affiliated backgrounds negotiate the shift from text-centered learning to communicative oral tasks, leaving an important dimension of the problem unexplored.

Amidst these challenges, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially advanced language models like ChatGPT, provides fresh possibilities for innovation in language learning. ChatGPT is capable of conducting interactive dialogue,⁵ providing instant linguistic corrections, and offering simulated conversation across various contexts from self-introductions and job interviews to academic discussions.⁶ These features position it as a potential learning companion accessible anytime and anywhere, without the social pressure often experienced when speaking in front of peers or instructors.⁷

Emerging research has begun to assess how artificial intelligence contributes to the teaching of Arabic though with a primary focus on non-speaking skills or general contexts. For instance, Nasaruddin investigated how Arabic teachers use ChatGPT to prepare teaching materials and revealed that while the tool supports text generation, its use in speaking practice remains under-explored.⁸ In another study, the large-scale evaluation GPTAraEval reported that although ChatGPT performs well on Arabic natural-language-processing tasks, it still lags behind fine-tuned Arabic-specific models pointing to the need for careful adaptation when applied to Arabic oral interaction tasks.⁹ Thus, while the technological promise exists, the pedagogical integration of AI for speaking skills in Arabic remains at a nascent stage.

⁵ Muhammed Parviz, "AI in Language Teaching, Learning, and Assessment," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* (July 3, 2025): 1–5.

⁶ Ana Stojanov, "Learning with ChatGPT 3.5 as a More Knowledgeable Other: An Autoethnographic Study," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2023): 35.

⁷ Lucas Kohnke, Benjamin Luke Moorhouse, and Di Zou, "ChatGPT for Language Teaching and Learning," *RELC Journal* 54, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): 537–550.

⁸ Nasaruddin Nasaruddin, "Using ChatGPT in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Babasa Arab* 8, no. 1 May SE-Articles (May 27, 2024): 1–24, <https://journal.iaincurup.ac.id/index.php/ARABIYATUNA/article/view/9413>.

⁹ Md Tawkat Islam Khondaker et al., "GPTAraEval: A Comprehensive Evaluation of ChatGPT on Arabic NLP," in *Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, ed. Houda Bouamor, Juan Pino, and Kalika Bali (Singapore: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2023), 220–247.

Recent studies have shown that integrating AI into foreign-language learning positively impacts students' motivation, fluency, and confidence. For instance,¹⁰ found that students who used ChatGPT for Arabic conversation practice experienced significant improvements in fluency and speech accuracy.¹¹ In Indonesia, similarly reported increased student confidence after practicing with AI, while also noting the need for teacher supervision to ensure response accuracy.¹² Nevertheless, these studies tend to adopt a generalist view of learners and do not address how specific educational subcultures such as *pesantren*-oriented learners accustomed to textual and recitative learning respond to AI-mediated oral practice

In the context of Arabic speaking skill development specifically, research on the intervention of AI remains extremely limited. A recent mapping study by Roziqi on strategies and methods for learning Arabic speaking in Indonesia identified a research gap: few studies explore AI-mediated speaking practice, and none focus on Islamic boarding school or NU-based university settings.¹³ This reinforces the urgency of investigating how models such as ChatGPT can serve as interactive platforms for speaking skills in these under-researched contexts.

Nevertheless, few studies have specifically explored the utilization of ChatGPT in the context of *mahārah al-kalām* instruction within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or NU-based Islamic universities, such as Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI). In fact, the characteristics of students in such institutions often equipped with traditional Islamic textual knowledge (*turāts* books) yet limited practical speaking experience call for innovative approaches capable of bridging the gap between text mastery and oral communication ability.

Given these conditions, an important question arises: how can AI-based tools like ChatGPT mediate the transition from text-centered learning habits to more communicative oral practices among NU-affiliated students? Furthermore, can ChatGPT provide the type

¹⁰ Usrotin Anjani et al., "Peran Teknologi Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Maharah Kalam Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab," *Muhadasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 6, no. 2 SE-Articles (December 21, 2024): 232–249.

¹¹ Ricardo Queirós, Mário Cruz, and Daniela Mascarenhas, *Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Education: Enhancing Teaching Practices for Future Learning* (IGI Global, 2024).

¹² Muhamad Fahmi and Syifaul Adhimah, "Peran Artificial Intelligence Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Peluang Dan Tantangan," *Journal of Practice Learning and Educational Development* 4, no. 4 (December 2, 2024): 330–336.

¹³ Muhammad Ainur Roziqi et al., "Mapping Of Strategies And Methods For Learning Arabic Speaking Skills," *IJAZ ARABI: Journal of Arabic Learning* 8, no. 1 (2025): 430–450.

of scaffolding that these learners need to activate their passive linguistic knowledge into spoken proficiency?

Moreover, research on Arabic speaking in *pesantren* or NU-based institutions often highlight the dominance of traditional textual learning and the absence of sustained oral practice environments. For example, Takdir in his study on Arabic in higher education found that although *bi'ah lugawiyyah* (language environment) plays a critical role in speaking skill advancement, many Islamic universities in Indonesia still lack structured conversational frameworks or immersive Arabic-speaking environments.¹⁴ Therefore, the convergence of traditional Islamic pedagogy with AI-mediated interactive tools offers a promising but unexplored frontier.

Drawing on this context, the present research seeks to investigate how ChatGPT can function as an interactive medium to support the development of speaking abilities among students in the Arabic Language and Literature Program at UNUGIRI. The research focuses on: (1) how students utilize ChatGPT for speaking practice, (2) the perceived benefits and challenges, and (3) the pedagogical implications of integrating AI into Arabic-language instruction.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically by enriching scholarly discourse on technology-enhanced Arabic language learning through AI-based tools, and practically by offering concrete recommendations for instructors and program administrators in designing instructional strategies that employ technology wisely and purposefully. The distinct contribution of this study emerges from its investigation of ChatGPT use within the unique NU academic environment, where traditional *pesantren* values intersect with digital innovation, a convergence that has not yet been systematically examined in previous research.

Additionally, from a theoretical standpoint, this study builds on interactionist and sociocultural theoretical lenses, including models like Long's Interaction Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and Vygotsky's concept of the More Knowledgeable Other by investigating how ChatGPT can scaffold oral production and decrease affective filters like speaking anxiety in an Arabic-learning context. From a practical perspective, it will offer actionable guidelines on how to integrate ChatGPT into conversation modules, peer-practice

¹⁴ Takdir Takdir, Nur Agung, and Amran AR, "Optimizing Students' Speaking Skills: Arabic Language Learning Model Based on Bi'ah Lugawiyyah in Islamic Higher Education Institutions," *Al-Ta'rib: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab LAIN Palangka Raya* 12, no. 2 (2024): 455–468.

labs or blended-learning designs taking into account the cultural, linguistic and institutional constraints of Indonesian NU programmes.

Method

A qualitative exploratory methodology was applied in this study to investigate how students in the Arabic Language and Literature Program at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI) utilize ChatGPT to enhance their *mahārah al-kalām* (speaking skills). In this study, “exploratory” refers to an open-ended, inductive inquiry aimed at uncovering how learners naturally use ChatGPT for Arabic speaking practice, what interaction patterns emerge, and how they perceive the tool’s role in supporting their oral production. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, the design seeks to discover dimensions of experience that have not yet been systematically theorized in the context of AI-mediated Arabic learning.

The research was conducted during the 2024/2025 academic year, specifically in the odd semester, from March to August 2025. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants’ lived experiences, perceptions, and linguistic practices in natural learning situations without relying on numerical measurement.¹⁵ The participants consisted of twenty intermediate-level students enrolled in the third and fourth semesters, selected through purposive sampling based on the criterion that they had previously used ChatGPT for Arabic speaking practice.¹⁶ Most participants had between one and two semesters of prior experience in Arabic conversation classes and reported using ChatGPT independently before the study, making them information-rich cases for examining AI-mediated speaking practice. Students who had never used the tool or were unable to participate in online interviews due to technical constraints were excluded. All participants provided written informed consent, and their personal identities were concealed to ensure participant confidentiality. Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the university ethics committee.

Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews conducted online chat-log documentation, and indirect observation. The interviews, conducted through digital communication platforms, lasted approximately 20–30 minutes per participant and were

¹⁵ Weng Marc Lim, “What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines,” *Australasian Marketing Journal* 33, no. 2 (July 25, 2024): 199–229, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>.

¹⁶ Shaohua Fang and ZhaoHong Han, “On the Nascency of ChatGPT in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning,” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 45 (2025): 148–178, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/1B5D76D2AC3F391F54E337CA6C5B645A>.

recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants also voluntarily submitted samples of their conversational interactions with ChatGPT, which were examined to identify linguistic patterns, interaction strategies, and the types of support provided by the AI system. Additionally, indirect observation was carried out to capture students' interaction tendencies with AI-based tools during language practice without interrupting their natural behavior. The instruments employed in the study included an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions, field notes for observational data, and a document review sheet for analyzing chat logs.¹⁷ The interview guide focused on three clusters of questions: (1) patterns of ChatGPT use (frequency, preferred tasks, and situational context); (2) perceived benefits and difficulties in using ChatGPT for speaking practice; and (3) reflections on how ChatGPT affected students' confidence and willingness to speak. The document review sheet for chat logs included prompts to note turn-taking patterns, error-correction episodes, reformulations suggested by ChatGPT, and instances where students requested example expressions or topic-specific dialogues.

A simple speaking-assessment rubric was also employed as an interpretive tool rather than a numerical scoring scheme. The rubric focused on three qualitative dimensions that were central to the findings: (1) fluency, observed through the smoothness of sentence production, reduction of long pauses, and students' ability to sustain short exchanges; (2) grammatical accuracy, inferred from instances of correct or corrected verb forms and sentence structures as they appeared in students' utterances and AI-assisted reformulations; and (3) speaking confidence, reflected in students' self-reported anxiety levels, their willingness to initiate conversations, and their readiness to present or speak in class after practicing with ChatGPT. These dimensions were not converted into quantitative scores; instead, they provided a structured lens to categorize and interpret patterns emerging from interviews and chat logs.

The chat logs were subjected to a focused interactional analysis. Each conversation snippet was read multiple times to identify: (a) how students opened and closed conversations with ChatGPT; (b) how they responded to corrections and suggestions; (c) the types of prompts they used (e.g., requesting dialogues, sentence correction, or example expressions); and (d) how often they engaged in self-repair or reformulation after AI feedback. Episodes in which ChatGPT corrected a sentence or provided alternative wording

¹⁷ Wan Mohd et al., "The Use of ChatGPT AI Audio in Mastering Arabic Speaking Skills at the Beginner Level," *IJRIS* 9, no. 10 (2025): 55–66.

were coded as “correction events,” while segments where students explicitly requested examples or situational phrases were coded as “expression requests.” This analytic layering allowed the chat logs to be linked directly to the broader themes that later appear in the Results section

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis analytical framework, which involves familiarization with the data, coding, categorizing emerging concepts, extracting themes and examining the outcomes in accordance with the research purposes. To enhance the study’s reliability was strengthened through the application of several validation techniques, including source triangulation and member checking, whereby preliminary interpretations were returned to participants for confirmation and accuracy.¹⁸ An audit trail was also maintained to ensure transparency in the analytic process and to provide replicability for future researchers.

Result and Discussion

This research offers a thorough depiction of the ways in which students the Arabic Language and Literature Program at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI) utilize ChatGPT as a support tool in developing their *mahārah al-kalām* (speaking skills). Drawing on thematic analysis of interview data, chat-log documentation, and indirect observations involving 20 participants, the research yielded rich, nuanced, and contextually grounded findings. The results are structured coherently based on the three guiding research questions: (1) the patterns of ChatGPT use among students, (2) the perceived benefits and challenges, and (3) the pedagogical implications of integrating AI into Arabic-language learning.

Patterns of ChatGPT Use

The findings indicate that all participants used ChatGPT regularly, with an average frequency of three to five sessions per week, particularly in the evening or prior to oral class tasks. Three primary patterns of use emerged: (a) simulated conversational practice, (b) real-time sentence correction, and (c) requests for context-specific speaking expressions. Approximately 90% of participants reported utilizing ChatGPT as a primary resource for preparing oral presentations, classroom discussions, and examinations. This reliance is exemplified by one student’s testimony: “I request ChatGPT to generate dialogues regarding

¹⁸ Prokopis A Christou, “How to Use Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research,” *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism* 3, no. 2 (2022): 79–95.

campus life, which I kemudian memorize and adapt for my presentations. This method significantly reduces my anxiety when speaking before an instructor.”

Beyond simple content generation, an analysis of chat-log data revealed dynamic and reflective linguistic interactions. For example, when a student submitted the ungrammatical sentence “أنا يذهب إلى الجامعة” (“I go to the university”), ChatGPT responded with a precise correction: “الصواب: أنا أذهب إلى الجامعة... The verb ‘يذهب’ is incompatible with the first-person pronoun ‘أنا’; the correct form is ‘أذهب’.” Such exchanges indicate that learners do not merely replicate AI output; rather, they actively engage in linguistic processing, reformulate their utterances based on immediate feedback, and subsequently cultivate a more profound grammatical awareness.

Beyond serving as a correction tool, ChatGPT functioned as a realistic conversation simulator. Students frequently requested prompts such as, “Let’s have a dialogue about campus life in Arabic,” “Make a job-interview role-play in Arabic,” or “Teach me how to formally ask permission from a lecturer in Arabic.” The coherent and context-appropriate responses provided students with an experience akin to real-life interaction. As one student expressed, “I can practice speaking without being afraid of making mistakes. In class, I feel embarrassed if I’m wrong. Here, I can try again and again.” This phenomenon supports the Affective Filter Hypothesis¹⁹, asserting that emotional factors such as anxiety and embarrassment can hinder language acquisition. By reducing affective burden, ChatGPT creates a psychologically safe learning space that encourages active participation and experimentation in spoken Arabic.

The results show that ChatGPT acts as a “more knowledgeable other” within the framework of Sociocultural Theory (SCT), where interaction with AI extends the students’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). With the assistance of ChatGPT, students were able to produce more complex language forms than they could achieve independently, consistent with the principle of scaffolding—temporary support that enables learners to master new skills until they can perform them autonomously. This finding underscores that language learning is not merely a process of repetition or memorization, but rather a social and cultural

¹⁹ Yangyu Xiao and Yuying Zhi, “An Exploratory Study of EFL Learners’ Use of ChatGPT for Language Learning Tasks: Experience and Perceptions,” *Languages* 8, no. 3 (September 13, 2023): 212, <https://www.mdpi.com/2226-471X/8/3/212>.

interaction in which ChatGPT serves as a tool that provides scaffolding through correction, conversation simulation, and contextual responses.²⁰

Benefits and Challenges

The findings reveal that ChatGPT has a significant positive impact on three core aspects of *mahārah al-kalām*.²¹ fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Nine out of ten participants reported increased confidence when speaking in front of the class after practicing with the AI tool. As one student expressed, “I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but now I know that errors can be corrected, so I feel more confident.” Speaking fluency also improved, as students became accustomed to “dialoguing” with the AI, allowing the language production process to become more automatic. One participant stated, “Previously, I needed a long time to think before speaking, but now the sentences come out naturally.”

Despite its advantages, three critical challenges emerged that necessitate rigorous pedagogical consideration. The first concern is cognitive over-reliance; 60% of participants reported feeling “unprepared” or experiencing “mental blocks” when attempting to communicate without AI assistance. As one student observed, “Without ChatGPT, I struggle to initiate the conversation.” This dependency suggests that while AI facilitates production, it may simultaneously inhibit autonomous critical thinking and linguistic creativity, potentially stunting the development of independent communicative competence.

The second challenge involves semantic and pragmatic inaccuracies, often characterized as “AI hallucinations.” Although infrequent, several students reported receiving suggestions that, while grammatically valid, were sociolinguistically unnatural or non-idiomatic. For instance, the phrase “أنا أحب أن أذهب إلى النوم” (“I like to go to sleep”) was suggested; however, in an authentic Arabic context, this literal translation lacks the idiomatic fluidity of natural speech. This highlights a discrepancy between the model’s grammatical processing and the nuanced pragmatic requirements of real-world Arabic usage.

Lastly, the absence of prosodic and paralinguistic cues remains a significant limitation. One participant noted that the lack of facial expressions and vocal intonation made the interaction feel “stiff.” This deficit in non-verbal communication underscores that ChatGPT, in its current form, cannot fully replicate the human element of language. These

²⁰ Binod Neupane, “A Review of Sociocultural Theory and Language Teaching,” *International Journal of Research in Academic World* 1, no. 15 (2022): 85–89, <https://academicjournal.ijraw.com>.

²¹ Ferry Maulana Firdaus and Muhammad Tareh Aziz, “Pemanfaatan Aplikasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Mengubah Cara Belajar Di Era Digital,” *Journal of Practice Learning and Educational Development* 4, no. 4 (November 30, 2024), <https://digitalpress.gaes-edu.com/index.php/jpled/article/view/312>.

findings indicate that AI remains a complementary tool rather than a replacement for human interaction, particularly within the complex sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions of *mahārah kalām*. To further clarify these qualitative findings, Table 1 presents a summary of students' usage patterns and perceptions regarding ChatGPT.

Table 1. Qualitative Analysis of Student Usage, Perceived Benefits, and Challenges of ChatGPT in *Mahārah Kalām* Practice

Aspect	Sub-category/Findings	Participants (n=20)	Representative Quote
Usage Frequency	High Engagement (3-5 sessions/week)	20	"I utilize the tool almost every night."
	Conversational Interaction	10	"I initiate dialogues as if speaking with a native speaker."
Primary Functions	Automated Linguistic Correction	9	"I receive immediate feedback on grammatical errors."
	Lexical & Expression Modeling	8	"I request examples of formal expressions, such as asking for permission."
Perceived Benefits	Enhanced Communicative Confidence	9	"I am no longer apprehensive about making linguistic mistakes."
	Oral Fluency Development	9	"Sentence construction feels more spontaneous and fluid."
Identified Challenges	Over-reliance & Cognitive Dependency	10	"Without ChatGPT, I experience 'mental blocks' or a lack of ideas."
	Occasional Semantic Inaccuracy	9	"The AI intermittently generates unnatural or awkward phrasing."
	Absence of Paralinguistic Cues	8	"The interaction lacks emotional depth, facial expressions, and vocal tone."

These results can be analyzed more deeply with the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) framework, where the benefits of ChatGPT in increasing confidence, fluency, and speaking accuracy show that AI serves as a scaffolding, helping students through their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by providing temporary support in the form of correction, conversation simulation, and contextual response. However, findings on excessive reliance on AI and limitations in providing emotional and prosodic nuances show that ZPD limits remain, and human support is still needed for the development of pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills. The finding that some participants experienced confusion or dependence that was not anticipated before is an unexpected finding that enriches the analysis and emphasizes the need for a reflective and adaptive approach in qualitative research. The use of numbers such as "nine out of ten" or "six out of ten" is intended to describe the dominance of findings, not for statistical generalization, according to the principle of qualitative reporting.

Pedagogical Implication

The findings indicate that ChatGPT operates not only as a technological application but also as a cognitive and affective support mechanism within the language-learning process.

It extends students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by providing immediate support, enabling them to produce more complex utterances than they could independently. This aligns with Sociocultural Theory (SCT),²² which highlights the role of scaffolding in learning. In this context, ChatGPT operates as a more knowledgeable other, offering temporary assistance that students gradually internalize.²³

However, as emphasized by the integration of AI must remain pedagogically supervised. Within the UNUGIRI context, which upholds traditional Islamic values and scholarly authority, the role of lecturers as critical facilitators remains indispensable. Instructors need to guide students in evaluating AI-generated responses, avoiding dependency, and ensuring that technology use aligns with cultural and religious values. Supporting this stance, maintain that AI ought to function as an auxiliary resource rather than a substitute for human instructors.²⁴

Accordingly, the research questions outlined in the introduction have been addressed comprehensively: (1) The use of ChatGPT was strategic and purposeful, particularly for conversational practice and corrective feedback. (2) The primary benefits included improved fluency, accuracy, and confidence, although challenges such as over-reliance and AI hallucination were also observed. (3) The pedagogical implication emphasizes the need for structured integration between AI tools and lecturer guidance rather than replacing the instructor's role.²⁵

These findings indicate that the use of ChatGPT in Arabic language learning should remain within a pedagogical framework supervised by lecturers, as emphasized in recent studies. The integration of AI must consider cultural and religious values, and maintain a balance between technology and human interaction, because ChatGPT cannot fully replace the lecturer's role in facilitating the development of students' critical thinking and creativity. The finding that students can use ChatGPT to expand their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) should be balanced with an approach that emphasizes critical evaluation of AI-

²² I.G.A. Lokita Purnamika Utami, "Teori Konstruktivisme Dan Teori Sosiokultural: Aplikasi Dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris," *Prasi: Jurnal Bahasa, Seni, dan Pengajarannya* 11, no. 01 (2016): 4–11, <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/PRASI/article/download/10964/7022>.

²³ Micheal M Van Wyk, *AI Smart-Enabled Architecture and Infrastructure for Higher Education* (IGI Global, 2025).

²⁴ Shabbir Pokkakilath and Javed Suleri, "ChatGPT and Its Impact on Education," *Research in Hospitality Management* 13, no. 1 (June 26, 2023): 31–34.

²⁵ Mohammed Almulla and Sayed Ibrahim Ali, "The Changing Educational Landscape for Sustainable Online Experiences : Implications of ChatGPT in Arab Student s ' Learning Experience," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 23, no. 9 (2024): 285–306.

generated results, ensuring that technology is used wisely and does not lead to excessive dependence. This approach is in line with pedagogical principles in qualitative research, where findings are not only reported descriptively but also analyzed reflectively and contextually.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion presented, this study aimed to explore how students in the Arabic Language and Literature Program at UNUGIRI utilize ChatGPT to enhance their *mahārah al-kalām* and to identify the benefits, challenges, and pedagogical implications of its use. It can be concluded that the use of ChatGPT among students of the Arabic Language and Literature Program at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri (UNUGIRI) provides a significant contribution to the development of *mahārah al-kalām* (speaking skills). Students employed ChatGPT strategically for simulated conversational practice, real-time sentence correction, and requests for context-specific oral expressions. This use not only enhanced students' fluency and accuracy in speaking, but also substantially reduced affective barriers such as fear of making mistakes and speaking anxiety, thereby strengthening their confidence in using Arabic orally.

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