



A Rhythmic-Musical Audio Learning Media for Enhancing Arabic Vocabulary Retention: A Classroom Action Research Study

Iqbal Al Faruq

Universitas Islam KH. Achmad Muzakki
Syah, Jember, INDONESIA

Souheil Hallit

Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
Lebanon

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Abstract

Background: Vocabulary mastery remains a persistent challenge for junior secondary students learning Arabic, particularly when instruction relies on repetitive memorization with limited use of learning media. Such approaches often fail to support long-term retention and student engagement. Recent perspectives in language pedagogy suggest that audio-based and rhythmic learning media may offer alternative cognitive pathways to strengthen memory and motivation.

Aims: This study examines the effectiveness of the Assamsiyah method as a rhythmic-musical, audio-based learning media for enhancing Arabic vocabulary retention and improving students' classroom engagement.

Methods: The research employed a classroom action research design consisting of two instructional cycles involving 25 seventh-grade students. The Assamsiyah media was implemented through structured rhythmic chanting and melodic vocal patterns without digital tools. Data were collected through pre- and post-vocabulary tests, classroom observations, and short student interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify learning gains, while qualitative data were examined to capture changes in participation and learning behavior.

Result: The findings indicate a steady improvement in students' vocabulary achievement, with mean scores increasing from 63.2 in the pre-intervention stage to 71.4 after the first cycle and 82.6 after the second cycle. The proportion of students achieving mastery rose from 24 percent to 88 percent. Observational data revealed increased attention, confidence in pronunciation, and active participation during learning activities mediated by rhythmic audio patterns.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the Assamsiyah method functions effectively as a low-tech, audio-based learning media that supports Arabic vocabulary retention and fosters an engaging learning environment. This approach offers a practical alternative for Arabic language instruction, particularly in contexts with limited technological resources.

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INTRODUCTION

The urgency to strengthen students' mastery of Arabic vocabulary has become increasingly visible as classroom evidence shows that many learners struggle to retain even the words they have recently learned (Alsaria & Alsaraireh, 2024). Teachers often observe that students can recognise vocabulary immediately after practice but quickly forget it once the lesson ends. This inconsistency makes reading comprehension difficult and reduces students' willingness to participate in language activities (Tai & Chen, 2024; Williams et al., 2022). When such patterns persist, learners' motivation declines and their overall ability to engage with the Arabic curriculum weakens. Traditional memorisation techniques, which rely heavily on mechanical repetition, no longer meet the cognitive and emotional needs of early adolescents. At the same time, innovative methods that could address these challenges are rarely examined systematically in real classroom contexts. This situation

* Corresponding author:

Iqbal Al Faruq, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic, INDONESIA,
iqbalalfaruq343@gmail.com

highlights the need for teaching approaches that are both effective and enjoyable for learners. The present study emerges from a recognition that without such support, students' progress in Arabic language learning will remain limited.

Arabic occupies a distinctive position in the curriculum of Islamic schools because it grants access to classical texts and foundational religious knowledge (Abdalla, 2025; Ozgen & El Shishtawy Hassan, 2021). However, many students enter the junior secondary level with little to no prior exposure to foreign languages. As a result, vocabulary becomes the essential first step they must master before developing other skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. When vocabulary knowledge is weak, all other language skills are affected (Bashori et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021). Teachers often attempt to compensate through additional practice, yet improvement tends to be inconsistent and short-lived. This challenge extends beyond instructional technique and relates closely to how learners experience the learning process itself. Early adolescents quickly lose interest when activities feel monotonous, making it harder for them to retain new words. Consequently, vocabulary instruction must be supported by an approach that feels more dynamic and meaningful for this age group.

From a cognitive psychology perspective, the ease with which vocabulary is remembered is shaped by how information is processed at the moment of learning (Kang, 2023; Murphy, 2022). When new words are delivered verbally without supporting sensory cues, the brain has fewer pathways to store the information. This makes forgetting more likely, especially when learners do not feel emotionally connected to the task. While traditional memorisation may help some students, it does not work equally well for all learners. Differences in learning preferences also contribute to the problem: some learners rely on auditory cues, others need visual reinforcement, and others benefit from kinesthetic activities (Fallace, 2023). These variations demonstrate that a single instructional approach cannot accommodate all learners. Vocabulary instruction therefore requires methods that can bridge diverse learning needs without overwhelming the classroom environment.

This consideration leads to the idea of incorporating rhythm and melody as learning aids. Research in cognitive psychology and language pedagogy suggests that rhythm can strengthen memory by creating patterned repetition (Lee, 2022), while melody helps establish emotional engagement that supports long-term recall (Vigl et al., 2023). The use of musical elements does not aim to transform the lesson into entertainment, but rather to provide an additional cognitive pathway for storing information. Many students are able to remember songs for years, long after they have forgotten lists of unrelated words. This observation raises a relevant question: can rhythmic-musical strategies be used meaningfully in Arabic vocabulary instruction, particularly given the unique phonological features of Arabic? This question forms one of the motivations for conducting the present study.

The Assamsiyah method developed from the simple idea that vocabulary may be memorised more effectively when presented through rhythmic patterns. Instead of using musical instruments, the method relies solely on students' voices to create structured repetition. In practice, teachers invite students to vocalise vocabulary through rhythmic sequences and repeat them together as a group. This approach engages auditory processing while fostering a sense of shared participation. Many teachers who have informally experimented with the method report that students show higher enthusiasm during lessons (Leite et al., 2022; Rethman et al., 2021). However, such observations remain anecdotal and lack systematic documentation. To determine whether the method genuinely improves vocabulary retention, a structured, evidence-based examination is required. This study therefore seeks to test the method with measured outcomes and observable behavioural indicators.

Students in the seventh grade are at a developmental stage marked by significant cognitive and emotional transitions (Meyer et al., 2024; Nygaard & Ormiston, 2024). They require learning activities that are stimulating yet manageable to maintain focus and interest. A rhythmic-musical

strategy such as Assamsiyah may meet these needs because it combines repetition, sound patterns, and active participation. When learners engage through movement and vocalisation, the learning environment becomes more lively and interactive. In such conditions, vocabulary learning is no longer perceived as a burdensome task but as part of a shared classroom experience. Positive learning experiences of this kind can increase students' confidence when using Arabic in other contexts (Almusharraf, 2022). For this reason, it is important to investigate whether the rhythmic-musical approach can support both memorisation and learner confidence at the junior secondary level.

Despite growing interest in music-based language instruction, research on rhythmic techniques within Arabic language education at the junior secondary level remains limited. Most prior studies focus on younger learners and do not represent the needs and developmental characteristics of early adolescents. In addition, many studies overlook changes in classroom behaviour or the emotional responses of learners, producing findings that are incomplete (Aldrup et al., 2024; Zhou & Hou, 2024). These gaps reveal the need for more comprehensive investigations that examine not only test scores but also learner engagement. Classroom action research offers a suitable framework because it captures learning progress over successive cycles and incorporates teacher reflection. Through this approach, researchers can obtain richer insights into how rhythmic-musical strategies influence both performance and participation. Such insights are essential to understanding how the method works in authentic classroom settings.

Considering these challenges and opportunities, examining the effects of the Assamsiyah method becomes both relevant and necessary (Zubaidi et al., 2025). This study aims to provide empirical evidence on whether rhythmic structures can meaningfully assist learners in memorising Arabic vocabulary. It also seeks to understand how students respond to the method emotionally and behaviourally within a culturally appropriate classroom environment (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Lau & Shea, 2024). If proven effective, the method may offer a practical alternative for teachers seeking ways to enhance vocabulary retention. The findings could further support schools in designing lessons that align with the learning tendencies of today's students. Strengthening vocabulary is not only beneficial for academic performance but also crucial for enabling learners to engage more deeply with religious texts. Ultimately, this study contributes to the pedagogical development of Arabic language education by offering structured evidence on a method that is beginning to gain informal acceptance. Through this work, the study aims to fill an important gap in both research and classroom practice.

Recent discussions in Arabic language education show that vocabulary remains a central predictor of students' success, a point that appears in different forms across various studies. Allouzi & Ewaidat (2025), for example, note how cross-linguistic influence shapes the way learners process unfamiliar Arabic words, while Arifa et al. (2025) reveal that students' writing confidence is often tied to the amount of vocabulary they can actively use. Research with a more technical lens also contributes to this field; Kboubi & Chaibi (2025) explore dialect patterns that influence lexical recognition, and Elsayed et al. (2025) introduce data-driven tools that help evaluate Arabic writing. Pedagogical studies take a different route. Bin Dahmash (2025) shows that collaboration enhances learners' willingness to work with new vocabulary, and Antar & Elsayed (2025) demonstrate how digital platforms like TikTok can support vocabulary practice. Broader studies, such as Akallouch & Fardousse (2025), highlight the challenges of learning in low-resource environments, and Naqrash et al. (2025) illustrate how AI-assisted translation can reinforce comprehension. Meanwhile, Al-Anzi & Thankaleela (2025) focus on vocabulary sensitivity across different Arabic dialects. Complementing these perspectives, Ahmad Yusoff et al. (2025) develop an instructional model incorporating augmented-reality technology to support adults learning Arabic vocabulary. Taken together, these studies show a wide interest in improving learners' engagement with Arabic, yet none

directly examine how rhythmic or musical elements might reinforce vocabulary retention. This absence indicates a clear research gap, especially in junior secondary settings where learners respond strongly to auditory and participatory techniques.

The motivation for this study arises from a very common yet often overlooked challenge in Arabic classrooms: students may appear to memorise new vocabulary during lessons, but much of that knowledge fades almost immediately after the session ends. Teachers frequently try to remedy this by repeating words more often, yet repetition alone seldom produces lasting results. In contrast, research on memory and learning consistently points to the benefits of rhythm, sound patterns, and melodic cues in helping the brain retain new information, but these insights rarely make their way into Arabic vocabulary instruction. The Assamsiyah method is particularly interesting because it aligns with this body of research while still fitting comfortably within the cultural and religious atmosphere of Islamic schools. Teachers who have experimented with it informally often note that their students seem less anxious, more energetic, and more willing to repeat vocabulary without being prompted. These observations suggest that the method may hold real potential, but they have never been tested in a structured way. This study is therefore driven by the need to examine whether a method that feels natural, enjoyable, and culturally familiar can genuinely strengthen students' long-term vocabulary retention and their engagement during learning.

Although recent research in Arabic education covers a broad range of themes—including digital platforms, dialect recognition, creative writing, and AI-assisted translation—very little attention has been given to how rhythmic or musical elements might support vocabulary learning. Most studies focus on university students or young children, leaving adolescents in junior secondary schools noticeably underrepresented, even though this group tends to respond strongly to interactive and auditory forms of learning. Some studies report improvements in achievement scores, but they rarely explore what happens behaviourally or emotionally during the learning process. There is also a lack of evidence showing whether rhythmic repetition can help learners navigate the unfamiliar sounds and structures characteristic of Arabic. These limitations create a clear space for research that blends cognitive insights, classroom practice, and cultural sensitivity. The present study positions itself precisely in this gap by evaluating a rhythmic-musical technique across multiple learning cycles in an actual school setting.

The main purpose of this study is to determine whether the Assamsiyah rhythmic-musical method can genuinely improve students' ability to memorise and retain Arabic vocabulary. Beyond measuring test results, the study also seeks to understand how the method influences students' behaviour in class—whether it helps them participate more actively, feel more confident, or develop a more positive attitude toward learning Arabic. Guided by both theoretical reasoning and initial classroom observations, the study proposes two hypotheses. First, students who learn vocabulary through rhythmic-musical patterns will show noticeable gains in their recall compared to their initial performance. Second, the learning atmosphere will become more interactive and supportive, with students displaying greater enthusiasm and a stronger sense of involvement during lessons.

METHOD

Research Design

The study was carried out using a Classroom Action Research framework, following the well-known model introduced by Kemmis and McTaggart. Their model moves in a cyclical pattern—planning, action, observation, and reflection—which allows the teacher-researcher to respond directly to what happens in the classroom. In this research, two full cycles were completed. Before the first cycle began, the researcher identified a recurring issue in the class, namely students' difficulty in retaining Arabic vocabulary. Each cycle then unfolded through a series of planned activities using the Assamsiyah method, followed by careful observation of how students reacted

during the lessons. Reflections at the end of each cycle helped determine what aspects needed to be revised before moving to the next stage.

Participants

The participants in this research were 25 seventh-grade students enrolled at MTs Bahjatul Ulum for the 2024/2025 academic year. Thirteen of them were boys and twelve were girls. Since the purpose of the study was to improve the quality of learning in one intact classroom, every student in the class took part in the intervention. No sampling procedures were applied because the researcher intended to capture the authentic learning dynamics of the group as a whole.

Instruments

Data were collected using several complementary instruments. The vocabulary memorization test, administered before and after each cycle, served as the primary indicator of students' progress. Alongside the tests, the researcher used observation sheets to keep track of students' participation and responses during the Assamsiyah-based learning sessions. To gain a more personal understanding of students' experiences, short interviews were conducted, allowing them to talk about what helped or hindered their learning. Additional documentation such as photographs, teacher notes, and student worksheets provided further support for interpreting the results.

Data Analysis

The analysis combined numerical comparison and descriptive interpretation. Test scores from the pretests and posttests were examined to determine how much improvement occurred from one cycle to the next. The changes in mean scores provided a clear picture of whether the intervention had a measurable impact on students' vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, the qualitative information gathered from observations, interviews, and documentation was read and interpreted carefully to identify patterns related to engagement, confidence, and the overall classroom atmosphere. The study was considered successful once most students, at least three-quarters of the class, reached the minimum expected score of seventy and showed more active involvement in the learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The patterns that emerged from the data show that the students' vocabulary achievement changed quite noticeably after the rhythmic-musical activities were introduced. Before the intervention began, most students could only recall a limited number of words, and this was reflected in the initial mean score of 63.2. Many of them hesitated when asked to repeat vocabulary items, and their responses tended to fade quickly once the exercise ended. After the first cycle, the atmosphere in the classroom began to shift. The rhythmic chanting sessions helped students follow the flow of repetition more easily, and their recall became more stable. This improvement can be seen in the rise of the mean score to 71.4. Even though not all students had reached the expected mastery level, a significant portion of the class began showing clearer pronunciation and greater willingness to participate. By the time the second cycle was completed, the effect of refining the method—especially the addition of pair practice and short audio reinforcement—became more visible. The average score increased once again, reaching 82.6. The majority of students no longer waited passively for the teacher to prompt them; instead, they repeated vocabulary voluntarily and often initiated the rhythm together. Their confidence also grew, which could be seen in how quickly they responded during review sessions.

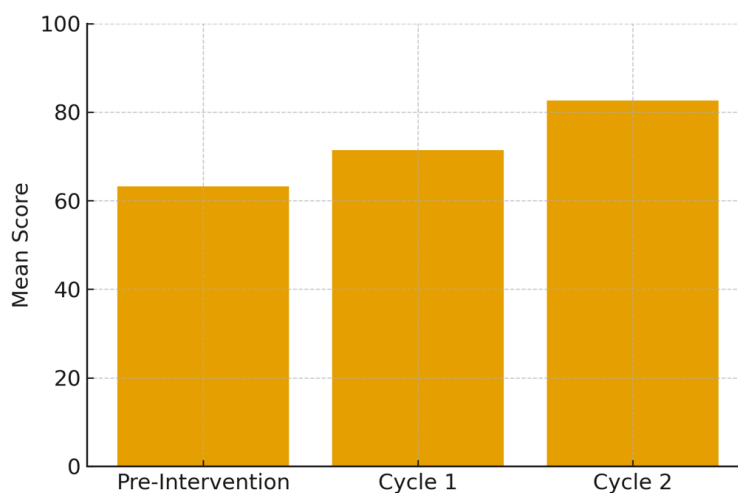


Figure 2. Mean Vocabulary Scores Across Learning Cycles

A similar pattern appears when looking at the mastery threshold. Initially, only a small fraction of students (24 %) met the minimum expected score. After the first cycle, the number of students achieving mastery rose sharply to 60 percent. In the second cycle, with the method more familiar and the learning atmosphere more supportive, mastery reached 88 percent. This change mirrors the classroom observations, where students were more expressive, more focused, and more eager to repeat vocabulary as a group.

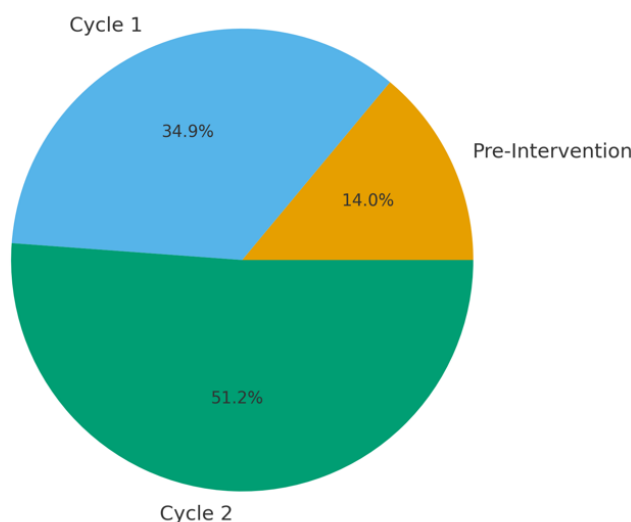


Figure 3. Mastery Percentage Across Learning Cycles

Taken together, the numerical gains and behavioural changes suggest that the rhythmic-musical format of the Assamsiyah method created a learning experience that felt easier to follow and more enjoyable for the students. The consistency of improvement across both cycles also indicates that the method did more than provide momentary enthusiasm, it contributed to a more lasting pattern of vocabulary retention and classroom engagement.

Discussion

The improvements observed across the two intervention cycles point to an interesting shift in how students processed and recalled vocabulary when rhythmic cues were introduced. At the beginning of the study, many learners treated new Arabic words as isolated bits of information, which made memorisation fragile. Once the Assamsiyah chanting pattern was used consistently, the recall process seemed smoother and more automatic. This echoes the idea raised by Allouzi and

Ewaidat (2025), who argue that learners benefit when lexical material is presented in ways that feel cognitively familiar and easier to access. The rise in scores from one stage to the next reinforces this claim, suggesting that rhythm may have helped create a mental anchor for new words. Another shift worth noting appeared in students' emotional responses to the lessons. During the early meetings, several students looked unsure and preferred not to speak unless prompted. This hesitancy gradually faded once rhythmic repetition became part of the routine. That transformation aligns with the observation by Arifa et al. (2025), who note that learners engage more confidently when the learning environment allows them to express themselves without fear of judgement.

In this study, rhythm provided that safe space because the students were speaking together rather than individually, easing the pressure they often feel when practising pronunciation. Pronunciation accuracy, which was problematic at first, also improved steadily, especially during the second cycle. Learners became more sensitive to differences in sound and stress, suggesting that the rhythm helped them internalise the phonological patterns of the vocabulary. This finding resonates with work by Kboubi and Chaibi (2025), who highlight how intricate phonological distinctions in Arabic often require repeated auditory exposure. Although the focus of this study was not dialect analysis, the rhythm seemed to serve as a bridge that made challenging pronunciations more reachable. The structured nature of the rhythmic sequence may also explain why students were able to stay focused for longer periods. Elsayed et al. (2025) discuss how learners benefit from external scaffolds that organise their attention during difficult tasks. The rhythmic beat in the Assamsiyah method acted as a simple but effective scaffold, guiding students through each repetition without making it feel like a forced exercise.

The classroom atmosphere became more energetic, and the sense of monotony typically associated with vocabulary drills was noticeably reduced. The cooperative dimension of the method also played a role in sustaining motivation. When students chanted together, they interacted in ways that resembled group work more than traditional drilling. This matches the argument by Bin Dahmash (2025), who emphasises that collaboration creates a supportive space where learners are more willing to take linguistic risks. In this study, chanting in unison created small moments of collective success that seemed to help even the quieter students join in without hesitation. The pattern of engagement also reflected broader learning habits shaped by students' exposure to digital media. Antar and Elsayed (2025) observe that short, repetitive auditory formats, common in platforms like TikTok, tend to hold students' attention more effectively than long, static explanations. Although this research used no digital tools, the rhythmic exercises unintentionally imitated the pacing and energy that students often experience online. Their quick recall during cycle two suggests that this alignment with their everyday listening habits may have strengthened the method's effectiveness. It is also important to note that the method required almost no additional resources, making it accessible for classrooms with limited facilities. This observation aligns with the argument put forward by Akallouch and Fardousse (2025), who explain that learning strategies that work well in low-resource settings are particularly valuable in developing regions. The Assamsiyah method falls squarely into that category: it is low-cost, low-tech, but still able to produce meaningful academic gains.

The qualitative feedback from students further clarifies why the method seemed to work. Several students explained that hearing the same rhythm repeatedly made the vocabulary "stick," a description that fits well with the findings of Naqrash et al. (2025) regarding the role of auditory cues in language processing. Their work, though focused on AI-assisted translation, highlights the importance of multimodal reinforcement. In this study, rhythm served as that additional sensory layer, helping students recall words more easily than when they relied on written memorisation alone. The upward trend in mastery levels, from 24 percent to 88 percent, also supports the idea that structured auditory patterns help learners stabilise vocabulary more effectively. This is consistent

with insights from Al-Anzi and Thankaleela (2025), who argue that regular auditory repetition enhances sensitivity to lexical forms. Even though their context was dialect classification, the principle carries over: repeated sound patterns help learners grasp language features they might otherwise overlook. Finally, the overall improvement in classroom atmosphere suggests that the method did more than simply increase test scores. Students began to approach vocabulary lessons with greater enthusiasm, and their willingness to participate improved from one cycle to the next. This echoes findings by Ahmad Yusoff et al. (2025), who show that innovative and engaging instructional approaches can create a more inclusive learning environment for students with diverse needs. In this study, rhythm acted as a subtle motivator that made learning feel more communal and less stressful. Taken together, these findings indicate that the Assamsiyah method offers a promising alternative for Arabic vocabulary instruction, particularly in junior secondary classrooms where engagement and confidence often determine the success of language learning.

Implications

The results of this study open several practical possibilities for improving vocabulary instruction in Arabic classrooms. One of the clearest implications is that teachers can create a more memorable learning experience simply by adjusting how vocabulary is delivered rather than adding more instructional material. The rhythmic-musical pattern used in this study helped students stay focused, repeat words more willingly, and remember them for longer, suggesting that the method can serve as a bridge between traditional drilling and more interactive forms of learning. For schools with limited technological support, this strategy offers an accessible alternative that does not depend on devices or specialised resources. It also fits comfortably within the cultural environment of Islamic education, allowing teachers to innovate without feeling that they are departing from established norms. Perhaps most importantly, the method encourages students to participate in a way that feels natural and non-threatening, which can gradually build their confidence in using Arabic beyond the classroom.

Limitations

While the findings are encouraging, they should be interpreted with an awareness of the study's boundaries. The research was carried out in only one classroom, meaning that the results reflect the characteristics of a specific group of students rather than a broader population. The duration of the intervention was also relatively short, making it difficult to determine whether the gains in vocabulary retention would remain stable over a longer timeframe. Because the study followed a classroom action research design, the observations relied heavily on the teacher's perspective, which naturally carries a degree of subjectivity. Another limitation is that the vocabulary examined consisted mainly of concrete, introductory-level words; the method may produce different outcomes when applied to more abstract or less familiar lexical items. The absence of a comparison class also makes it difficult to claim that the rhythmic-musical approach outperforms other commonly used techniques. These limitations point to areas where future work could provide more depth and validation.

Suggestions

To build on the insights gained from this study, future research could involve a larger and more diverse group of students, allowing for a clearer picture of how the technique performs in different school environments. A longer intervention period, possibly with delayed post-tests, would help determine whether the improvements in retention are sustained over time. Including a comparison group—such as students taught with gesture-based vocabulary learning or visual mapping—could also strengthen conclusions about the method's relative effectiveness. For teachers, experimenting with small variations, such as adding gestures, images, or contextual examples alongside the rhythm, might deepen students' understanding of meaning while preserving the musical element that makes the method engaging. Another interesting avenue would be exploring whether the rhythmic

approach can support other areas of Arabic learning, such as reading fluency or basic grammar patterns. Developing a more refined version of the method based on student feedback could also help tailor the strategy to different types of learners.

CONCLUSION

The progression of learning across the two cycles makes it clear that the Assamsiyah rhythmic-musical approach brought a noticeable change in how students engaged with Arabic vocabulary. What began as hesitant, fragmented recall gradually shifted into more confident and coordinated responses as students became familiar with the rhythmic patterns. Their test results improved steadily, but what seemed even more meaningful was the change in their behaviour: students who were previously reluctant to speak began to participate naturally, and the classroom atmosphere grew more supportive and lively. This suggests that rhythm did more than simply help students memorise words; it created a learning space where they felt comfortable enough to practise repeatedly without fear of making mistakes. The practicality of the method, requiring no special tools, only voice and consistent pacing, makes it a realistic option for schools with limited resources, especially in Islamic educational settings where culturally appropriate methods are essential. Although the study involved only one class and a relatively short timeframe, the consistency of the gains across the two cycles indicates that the Assamsiyah method deserves further exploration. In essence, the study not only demonstrates the method's potential for improving vocabulary retention but also highlights its capacity to cultivate a more engaged and confident group of learners, offering a promising direction for future research and classroom practice.

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