



Development of Audiolingual Digital Audio Materials for Maharah Istima' at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

Listening skills (maharah istima') serve as the fundamental receptive competence in Arabic language acquisition; however, instruction in Islamic boarding schools frequently encounters constraints due to limited standardized audio resources and electronic device restrictions. This study aims to develop, validate, and evaluate the effectiveness of audiolingual-based printed teaching materials integrated with digital audio media for ninth-grade students at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School. Employing the Borg and Gall Research and Development (R&D) model across ten systematic stages, the instructional product was realized as an A5 drill-focused pocketbook synchronized with native-speaker audio recordings accessed through centralized computer and dormitory facilities. Expert appraisal confirmed high product validity, with an average score of 88.8% (material experts: 92.0%, language experts: 86.5%, and design/media experts: 88.0%). An operational field trial with 20 students demonstrated significant improvement in listening proficiency, as indicated by a paired sample t-test ($t_{\text{calculated}} = 14.82 > t_{\text{table}} = 2.093$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Student learning outcomes rose from a pre-test mean of 61.75 to a post-test mean of 86.25, yielding an N-gain score of 0.64 (moderate-to-high effectiveness). Practicality was further corroborated by 93.8% positive student responses. In conclusion, this instructional package provides a viable, practical, and effective pedagogical solution for enhancing contextual Arabic listening comprehension in boarding school environments.

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role as an instrument of communication, cognitive articulation, and the transmission of scholarly values among people. In the field of Arabic lexicography, as emphasized in *al-Mu'jam al-Wasit*, language is essentially defined as arbitrary sound symbols used by a civilized community to express their intentions, ideas, and collective concepts (Mustori & Kurniawan, 2026).

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In addition, Keraf asserts that language is a communicative instrument that conveys messages, feelings, and thoughts through organized acoustic sound structures (Keraf, 2010). Furthermore, Muzakki asserts that language is an arbitrary and conventional system of sound symbols used by society to interact, cooperate, and affirm their social identity (Muzakki, 2021). In the context of Islamic education, the Arabic language holds the most fundamental and strategic position, not only as a medium of international communication but also as the language of divine revelation, which is the key to comprehensively understanding the sacred texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Arsyad, 2020).

Comprehensive mastery of the Arabic language integrates four core skills: listening (*istima'*), speaking (*kalam*), reading (*qira'ah*), and writing (*kitabah*). Among these four skills, listening (*maharah istima'*) occupies the first and most fundamental level (receptive skill) in subsequent language acquisition. A person naturally builds phonological memory through the sense of hearing before being able to reproduce that sound system in communicative speech or writing (Rahma & Irma 2025). This aligns with Tarigan's view, which emphasizes that listening skills form the foundational basis in the hierarchy of language skills (Islam et al., 2025). Therefore, a solid mastery of listening is an absolute prerequisite for students' success in mastering speaking and reading skills fluently. (Hamid et al., 2020) As Mustofa and Pransiska noted, contextual auditory stimulation plays a decisive role in shaping learners' phonetic intuition in Islamic secondary schools (Mustofa & Pransiska, 2022).

Despite its central importance, empirical observations in the field indicate that the teaching of listening skills at the madrasah and Islamic boarding school levels is often neglected and has not been managed optimally. Based on initial observations and interviews at the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, students face significant challenges in understanding spoken Arabic. This problem stems from a lack of audio-oriented teaching materials and the dominance of conventional methods in the classroom. Instruction tends to rely solely on the manual reading of module texts by the teacher, without standardized phonetic drills led by native speakers or progressive auditory stimulation. The lack of appropriate audio materials results in students adopting a passive attitude, lacking motivation, and frequently experiencing perceptual dissonance when hearing spoken Arabic with precise articulation of the *makhraj*.

To address this pedagogical stagnation, the implementation of the audiolingual method is viewed as a strategic solution. The audiolingual method emphasizes the formation of language habits through repeated exposure, drills, familiarization with sentence patterns, and direct sound-meaning associations without the intermediary of mechanical translation (Safira & Qodir, 2025). The theoretical foundation of this method is rooted in the principle of behavioral conditioning, which holds that foreign language proficiency is developed through repeated auditory-motor exercises until they become automatic responses (Widodo, 2025). According to Brown, language acquisition requires structured mechanical, meaningful, and communicative drills to establish automatic processing in the learner's cognitive schema (Istiqomah & Sopian, 2025). Furthermore, Hanifah demonstrated that intensive audiolingual practice significantly enhances foundational oral-aural proficiency in Arabic language classrooms (Hanifah, 2022). A number of previous studies have examined the use of digital media; however, most of these studies focused on smartphone-based applications, which often conflict with strict boarding school regulations prohibiting personal electronic devices (Hidayat et al., 2023).

The novelty of this study lies in the design of practical-sized (A5) printed instructional materials for listening skills that synergize the principles of the audiolingual method with the integration of structured digital audio files. This media integration enables direct convergence between printed instruction sheets and tiered interactive audio recordings that can be accessed via computers in the language lab or centralized audio players in the dormitories without requiring students to use their personal mobile devices. Based on this need, this study aims to design, test the feasibility of, and demonstrate the effectiveness of audiolingual-based listening comprehension teaching materials supported by digital audio media in improving the listening skills of ninth-grade students at the Language Dormitory of Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School Lamongan.

METHODS

This study is a research and development (R&D) project that adapts the procedural model of Borg and Gall (Borg & Gall, 1989). The Borg and Gall model was chosen because it provides systematic, step-by-step, and proven guidance for designing, validating, and testing the effectiveness of instructional products in the field. As emphasized by Nunan, instructional material design must sequence learning tasks systematically from receptive auditory exposure to communicative production to ensure pedagogical efficacy (Suryani et al., 2022). The ten operational steps implemented include: (1) identifying potential and problems at the Islamic boarding school; (2) gathering information and analyzing material needs; (3) designing print instructional materials and producing digital audio; (4) validating the design with a team of subject matter, language, and media experts; (5) refinement of the initial design; (6) limited-scale product testing with a small group; (7) first-stage product revision; (8) field operational testing; (9) final product refinement; and (10) dissemination of development results.

The research subjects consisted of 20 ninth-grade students from the Language Dormitory at Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School Lamongan as participants in the large-scale field trial, 6 students for the limited small-group trial, and a team of experts acting as product validators. The validation team included subject matter experts who assessed the relevance of the content to the madrasah curriculum, language experts who evaluated grammatical structure and the accuracy of vowel marks, and graphic design experts who assessed the book's layout, typography, and visual composition, as well as the clarity of the audio.

Research data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative instruments. Qualitative data were gathered through learning observation guidelines and semi-structured interviews with mentor teachers and student representatives to identify challenges in the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, quantitative data were obtained through a Likert scale validation questionnaire for the expert panel (Zikrillah et al., 2025) a student practicality response questionnaire, and testing instruments in the form of pre-tests and post-tests of listening comprehension skills. Data analysis of validity and student responses was calculated using descriptive percentage statistics. To evaluate the significance of the improvement in students' listening skills before and after the instructional material intervention, an inferential analysis was conducted using a paired-sample *t*-test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (Afifah et al., 2025) supplemented by the calculation of the *N*-gain score.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The product developed in this study is an A5-sized printed teaching module on *maharah istima'* that is synchronized with standardized digital audio recordings by native speakers. The material is organized in a progressive manner based on the

learners' linguistic proficiency levels, beginning with phoneme discrimination exercises (*tamyiz al-ashwat*), vocabulary identification in context (*fahm al-mufradat*), comprehension of phrases and short sentence structures, and extending to the analysis of dialogues (*binar*) and simple narrative texts. Each unit of material includes a designated audio track number that is played during listening drill sessions in the classroom or language dormitory.

Suitability of Teaching Materials Based on Expert Assessment

The suitability of the product was validated by three expert validators who are competent in their respective fields before the teaching materials were pilot-tested with students. A summary of the validators' assessment results is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of Expert Validation Results for Instructional Materials

No	Expert Validator	Evaluation Aspect	Percentage Score (%)	Validity Category
1	Subject Matter Expert	Curriculum Alignment and Istima' Content	92.0%	Very Valid
2	Language Expert	Grammatical Rules and Accuracy of <i>Shakl</i> (Vowel Marks)	86.5%	Very Valid
3	Design & Media Expert	Layout, Typography, and Digital Audio Quality	88.0%	Very Valid
Overall Average			88.8%	Very Valid

The validation results in Table 1 show that all aspects content substance, accuracy of Arabic orthography, and visual layout were assessed as meeting the standards for educational media according to Sugiyono's criteria, with a combined average of 88.8%. The language validator provided minor correction notes regarding the consistency of *harakat* markers (*shakal*) in the story's dialogue script, while the media validator offered feedback on the clarity of vowels in the audio recordings and the color contrast of the exercise instructions, which were immediately revised before entering the pilot testing phase.

Effectiveness and Practicality of Learning

The effectiveness of the instructional materials was measured by comparing learning outcomes before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the use of the materials among 20 ninth-grade students at the Language Boarding School of the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan. A summary of the comparison of the students' achievement scores is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Effectiveness Test (Pre-Test and Post-Test) for Students

Assessment Indicators	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Score Difference	Statistical Remarks
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Number of Students (N)	20	20	—	Class IX Language Dormitory
Mean Score	61,75	86,25	24,5	Significant Improvement
Minimum Score	50.00	76.00	+26.00	Exceeds MCC (75.00)
Maximum Score	72.00	96.00	+24.00	Optimal Mastery of Material
Paired Sample -Test ($t_{\text{calculated}}$)	—	14,82	—	($t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ (2.093))
Significance (p - value, 2-tailed)	—	0.000	—	Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$
Average N -Gain	—	0,64	—	Medium-to-High Effectiveness
Practicality Response	—	93,80%	—	Very Positive Category

Based on the inferential statistical analysis of the paired t -test, the calculated t -value was 14.82, which is absolutely greater than the critical t -value of 2.093 at a 5% significance level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). These results indicate that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, meaning there was a statistically significant improvement in Arabic listening comprehension following the implementation of instructional materials based on the audiolingual method aided by digital audio media. The mean N -gain score for the students was 0.64, which falls into the category of moderate-to-high effective improvement (Hake, 1998).

The practicality of the instructional materials was supported by the findings of the student response questionnaire, which recorded a percentage of 93.8% (in the “very positive” category). The results of the evaluative interviews confirmed that the practicality of playing the material via digital audio recordings enabled students to independently review phonetic exercises they had not yet mastered within the boarding school environment.

The significant improvement in students’ listening proficiency demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating the audiolingual method into the design of Arabic phonetics teaching materials. The theoretical foundation of the audiolingual method is rooted in behaviorism, which views language acquisition as habit formation through a stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern. According to Effendy, oral language skills are developed through repetitive practice (*listen-repeat*) and continuous, structured conditioning (Effendy, 2017). By presenting recordings of standardized word sounds and speech via digital audio media, students receive clear auditory stimuli, repeat the pronunciations, and gradually internalize the correct intonation patterns and articulation points (*makebraj*) of the Hijaiyah letters.

The progressive structure of this instructional material also reflects the stages of listening instruction as outlined by Hermawan, which include five essential phases: sound recognition, symbolic identification, initial comprehension, intermediate comprehension, and advanced interpretation (Hermawan, 2014). These stages prevent learners from experiencing cognitive overload, as the instructional material guides them from distinguishing similar letter sounds (such as the comparison between the letters ح and ه, or ت and ط) to grasping the main ideas in everyday communicative dialogues. This approach confirms the argument that the listening process is not merely passive hearing, but rather an active cognitive process of

decoding auditory information into coherent units of semantic meaning (Thu'aimah & al-Naqah, 2006).

Another key advantage of this instructional material lies in its use of integrated digital audio recordings as a stimulus for listening practice without requiring students to own personal devices, which could potentially violate boarding school regulations. This aligns with Kosasih's theory, which emphasizes that modern instructional materials must be adaptable to the learning environment in order to foster students' self-regulated learning (Kosasih, 2021). This finding also reinforces the results of recent empirical studies by Nugrawiyati, Afif, and Fatimah, which confirmed that structured digital audio media enhances listening attention, reduces auditory fatigue, and accelerates communicative mastery in language classrooms (Nugrawiyati et al., 2023). Thus, these teaching materials have proven effective in transforming listening instruction from what was originally monotonous and isolated into an interactive, goal-oriented process focused on mastering real-world communicative competencies in Islamic boarding schools.

CONCLUSION

This research and development project successfully produced valid, practical, and effective listening skills (*maharah istima'*) instructional materials based on the audiolingual method and supported by digital audio media for junior high school madrasah students. The product's feasibility was confirmed by expert validators, with scores of 92.0% for content, 86.5% for language, and 88.0% for design (classified as "highly valid" with an average of 88.8%). The product's effectiveness was confirmed by an increase in students' average scores from 61.75 on the pre-test to 86.25 on the post-test, with a significant *t*-test result: $t_{\text{calculated}} = 14.82 > t_{\text{table}} = 2.093$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), an *N*-gain score of 0.64, and a 93.8% positive response rate from the students. The functional integration of digital audio files expands the flexibility of students' independent learning within the boarding school environment without being constrained by device usage restrictions.

For practitioners in Arabic language education, this instructional material is recommended as a contextual learning resource to continuously develop students' phonological awareness. For madrasah and Islamic boarding school administrators, it is recommended to optimize computer lab facilities and shared audio equipment to support the use of teaching materials in both classrooms and dormitories. For future researchers, this study can be expanded by integrating receptive (*istima'*) and productive (*kalam*) skills into an interactive multimedia format based on a multiplatform language lab.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Rohmatul Kusniah, Sepriyadi & Muhammad Hafidz: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization, **Giva Oktavia:** Visualization, Methodology, Improve Language, Investigation.

AI Statement

The data and language usage in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

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