

Project Based Learning (PBL) to Improve Listening Skills in Arabic Language Learning

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Abstract:

*This study aims to describe the implementation of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model in improving listening skills (*maharah istima'*) among students of the Arabic Language Development Program (PKPBA) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the PBL model effectively fosters students' active participation, motivation, and comprehension in Arabic listening activities. The learning process was carried out through systematic stages—listening to audio materials, repetition, interactive questioning, project creation, and presentation—which transformed the class atmosphere from passive listening to active, communicative engagement. The integration of the PBL model with the audiolingual approach strengthened students' ability to comprehend Arabic sounds, vocabulary, and contextual meanings. In addition to cognitive gains, students demonstrated higher confidence, creativity, and collaboration when completing group video projects. Theoretically, this study supports the constructivist and humanistic learning perspectives that emphasize meaningful learning through experience and interaction. Practically, it provides insights for Arabic language educators to apply PBL as an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing listening comprehension in higher education.*

Key Words: Project-Based Learning, Listening Skills, *Maharah Istima'*, Active Learning, Audiolingual Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic language learning in the modern era faces new challenges along with technological developments and changes in educational paradigms that emphasize active, creative, and contextual learning (Amir et al., 2025; Maulidi, 2025a; Supriatna et al., 2021). Arabic as an international language and the language of the Qur'an has an important position in the world of Islamic education, but in practice, learning Arabic is often considered difficult and boring, especially in the aspect of listening skills (*maharah istima'*) (Fauzi et al., 2025; Maulidi, 2025b; Rahmawati, 2018; Romzy et al., 2025). A phenomenon occurring in many educational institutions shows that listening learning activities tend to take place monotonously in language laboratories without

active student involvement. Learning activities are often limited to listening to audio or recordings without meaningful interaction with lecturers or classmates. As a result, students tend to be passive and struggle to fully understand the content of spoken Arabic texts due to limited vocabulary, low motivation, and minimal opportunities to practice in real-life communication contexts.

This phenomenon demonstrates that the Arabic listening learning process does not fully accommodate students' needs to develop critical thinking and communicative skills. Yet, listening skills are the primary foundation for second language acquisition. Without the ability to understand spoken input, other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing struggle to develop. Therefore, innovative learning strategies are needed that integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor elements of students so that learning in a meaningful way focuses not only on information transfer but also on an applicable, collaborative, and enjoyable learning experience.

One relevant approach to addressing this challenge is Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Khotimah et al., 2024; Afriana, 2016). The PBL model emphasizes active student engagement through contextual project completion, encourages the discovery of meaning, and integrates critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills (Nadiyah & Tirtoni, 2023). PBL is able to improve students' critical thinking skills because the learning process is based on solving real problems. Syukriya (2019) emphasizes that PBL provides space for students to learn through direct experience, whereas Abdurahman et al. (2022) found that this approach strengthens students' conceptual understanding and social skills. Thus, PBL emphasizes not only outcomes but also a meaningful and reflective learning process.

Several previous studies have also demonstrated the effectiveness of PBL in language teaching. For example, research (Assidik, 2018) shows that the implementation of PBL in learning media courses significantly increases students' knowledge and skills. Kavlu (2017) proves that PBL helps students recognize their own language abilities and improve English skills in real-life contexts. Study Syukriya (2019) and Putry & Muassomah (2021) highlighted the success of implementing PBL based on social media such as Instagram and TikTok in increasing motivation and engagement in Arabic language learning. These findings confirm that PBL is effective in improving foreign language skills through a contextual and collaborative approach.

However, these studies still reveal significant research gaps. First, most PBL research in the Arabic language context focuses on writing (maharah kitabah) or speaking (maharah kalam) skills, while studies specifically addressing the application of PBL to improve listening skills (maharah istima') are limited. Second, many previous studies have emphasized the aspects of increasing motivation and creativity, but have not yet thoroughly discussed the planning, implementation, and learning stages of PBL that contribute to improved listening skills. Third, there is still a misunderstanding among

educators that PBL is equated with simple task-based learning, resulting in suboptimal implementation.

Based on these research gaps, this article is novel in three main aspects. First, this study focuses on the application of PBL in the context of Arabic language learning to develop students' listening skills, an area that has not been comprehensively researched. Second, this study integrates the PBL stages with an audiolingual approach, which emphasizes repetition and drills to strengthen the ability to understand spoken Arabic input. Third, this study also highlights the implementation of PBL in the context of lectures in the Special Program for Arabic Language Development (PKPBA) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, thus providing an empirical contribution to the development of Arabic language learning models in Islamic higher education.

Thus, this research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this study expands the study of the effectiveness of PBL in developing maharah istima' (Islamic teaching) by combining an audiolingual approach and contextual experiences. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for lecturers and practitioners of Arabic language education in designing more interactive, enjoyable, and relevant learning strategies to meet students' needs in the digital age.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aimed to deeply understand the process and meaning behind the implementation of the Project Based Learning (PBL) model in Arabic language learning, particularly in developing listening skills (maharah istima'). This approach allows researchers to describe phenomena naturally within their context, without any manipulation of the research variables (Al Mursyidin & A'lal Hikam, 2024; Sugiyono, 2017; Ilmani & Hasanah, 2024).

This research was conducted at the Special Program for Arabic Language Development (PKPBA) at the State Islamic University (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The subjects were 30 first-year PKPBA students taking an Arabic language course focusing on developing listening skills. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, considering that PKPBA students are at the basic stage of Arabic language acquisition, making them relevant to the research objectives.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, assisted by supporting instruments in the form of observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation (Balaka, 2022; Basri et al., 2024; Putri, 2024) Direct observations were conducted during the Arabic language learning process using project-based learning (PBL) in the classroom, focusing on stages such as introduction, core activities, and evaluation. The observations aimed to identify student engagement and lecturer strategies in applying PBL to enhance listening

skills. In-depth interviews were also carried out with the lecturer, several students, and one Arabic language expert, Prof. Dr. H. Uri Bahruddin, MA, to gather detailed information about perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered during the PBL implementation. Documentation data included Semester Learning Plans (RPS), teaching materials, learning audio recordings, student reflection notes, and project results produced throughout the learning process. These three techniques—observation, interview, and documentation—were triangulated to ensure data validity by comparing the results across methods (Albustomi & Hefniy, 2024; Adhinugraha et al., 2024; Huberman, 1992). The research process consisted of several stages.

The preparation stage involved identifying problems in Arabic listening learning at PKBPA and developing the research design. The implementation stage focused on classroom observations of PBL stages, including project selection, planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. During this phase, the researcher acted as an active observer, recording every learning activity. The data collection and reduction stage involved organizing and filtering information obtained from various sources to focus only on data relevant to the research objectives. The data presentation stage compiled the findings in a systematic and narrative manner to describe the PBL implementation process in enhancing students' maharah istima' or listening skills. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage interpreted the results and formulated conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the PBL model in improving Arabic listening competence.

Data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously throughout the research process, as stated by (Huberman, 1992), which consists of three main steps. The first step, data reduction, involved selecting and simplifying raw data related to the implementation of PBL in Arabic language learning. The second step, data presentation, organized the reduced data into descriptive narratives to make emerging patterns and relationships clearer. The third step, conclusion drawing and verification, involved interpreting the findings to identify patterns, themes, and meanings concerning the effectiveness of PBL in developing listening skills. To ensure data accuracy, triangulation of sources and methods was applied by comparing observation results with interviews and supporting documents. Member checking was also conducted with informants to confirm that the collected data were valid and scientifically reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Project Based Learning (PBL) model in improving listening skills (maharah istima') in students of the Arabic Language Development Special Program (PKBPA) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the implementation of PBL was able to create a more active, communicative, and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Stages of Project Based Learning Implementation in PKPBA

Based on the observation results, the lecturer implemented the Project Based Learning model by following the stages as formulated by The George Lucas Educational Foundation (2003), namely starting from essential questions to project evaluation. Each stage of implementation was designed to develop students' ability to understand the material through active listening activities.

Table 1. Stages of PBL Implementation in Maharah Istima' Learning at PKPBA

No	Learning Stage	Activity Description	Learning objectives
1	Introduction	The lecturer plays audio on the theme "فصول السنة (Seasons of the Year)" to students.	Students recognize the context of the topic and focus on listening.
2	Repetition (Repetitive)	The audio is played three times, with a guide to new vocabulary and a brief explanation by the lecturer.	Train students' listening and enrich vocabulary (mufradat).
3	Interactive Q&A	The lecturer gives oral questions about the content of the conversation and the meaning of the vocabulary.	Improve understanding of audio content and listening comprehension.
4	Project Formation	Students are divided into groups to create conversational video projects based on the same theme.	Train creativity, collaboration, and active use of language.
5	Presentation and Evaluation	Each group presents their project results to the class. The instructor provides feedback and assessments.	Develop students' self-confidence and communicative skills.

Source: processed data 2025

The implementation of PBL not only emphasizes understanding the contents of spoken texts, but also encourages students to apply learning outcomes in real contexts through the creation of conversation video-based projects.

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Results of Observations of the Learning Process

Observations showed that students appeared enthusiastic about participating in each stage of the lesson. While listening to the audio, they took notes on new vocabulary and attempted to imitate the correct pronunciation. During the question-and-answer session, most students were able to answer simple questions related to the conversation, such as:

”ما هو الفصل الذي تُحبه تِبْلًا؟“ أو ”في أيِّ فصلٍ تُطِير السَّمَاءُ كَثِيرًا؟“

The interaction between lecturers and students is two-way. Lecturers not

only act as facilitators but also as discussion directors. During group project sessions, students actively discuss scripts, assign roles, and record project results using their devices. This project activity provides students with the opportunity to develop both listening and speaking skills. They must review previous audio material to construct dialogue that is contextual and appropriate to the season's theme.

To deepen the observation results, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with one Arabic language lecturer and five students participating in Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the Arabic Language Development Special Program (PKPBA) at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. These interviews aimed to explore perceptions, experiences, and the impact of PBL implementation on improving listening skills (maharah istima').

Lecturers' Perceptions of PBL Implementation

The lecturer stated that listening lessons, which previously tended to be passive, have now become more lively and engaging after using a project-based approach. According to the lecturer, students appear more focused and take greater responsibility for their learning because they will present the final results of their projects to the class.

"Previously, listening lessons were often monotonous. With projects like this, students are more focused on listening because they will present the final results themselves." (UB_2025)

This statement demonstrates that PBL not only changes classroom activity patterns but also fosters a sense of ownership over learning outcomes. The lecturer believes that this approach fosters students' enthusiasm for active listening and deeper understanding of audio content.

Student Experience during Learning

Interviews with students revealed that the implementation of PBL provided a new and enjoyable learning experience. Most students stated that they initially struggled to understand Arabic conversations due to their limited vocabulary and the speed of native speakers' pronunciation. However, after several repetitions and Q&A sessions, their comprehension of the audio material improved significantly.

"At first, it was difficult to grasp all the conversation content, but after playing it repeatedly and having questions and answers, we understood the meaning." (Anisa_2025). The repetition and Q&A activities were an effective way to practice listening focus and enrich vocabulary. Furthermore, students experienced tangible benefits when they were asked to create video projects based on the themes they had learned.

"When making project videos, we re-learned from the audio provided. So it wasn't just listening, but also practicing and memorizing." (Putri_2025). Project activities involving creating conversational videos provided students with

opportunities to practice listening and speaking naturally. This reinforces the theory of experiential learning, where students construct knowledge through direct engagement in meaningful activities.

Impact of PBL on Self-Confidence and Participation

In addition to improving listening skills, some students also expressed that implementing PBL helped them become more confident in using Arabic, both when speaking and interacting with classmates.

"This project made me confident in speaking and listening to friends who speak Arabic. I'm usually passive, but now I'm more confident." (Imam_2025). From this quote, it can be seen that project-based learning contributes to improving students' affective aspects, namely self-confidence, motivation, and social engagement in the classroom. Students who were previously passive in traditional learning now demonstrate active participation and high enthusiasm in group discussions and project presentations.

Synthesis of Interview Findings

Based on the overall interview results, it was found that the implementation of Project Based Learning had a positive impact on students' learning experiences. Key findings include:

Table 2. Synthesis of Interview Findings on the Implementation of Project-Based Learning in Arabic Listening Skills Learning

No	Aspects of Findings	Interview Results
1	Active engagement	Students are more focused on listening because they have to present the project results at the end of the lesson.
2	Deep understanding	Audio repetition and question and answer sessions help students understand the meaning of spoken texts.
3	Vocabulary mastery	Students enrich their vocabulary and understand the context of the conversation through direct practice.
4	Self-confidence	PBL fosters self-confidence in speaking and interacting using Arabic.
5	Learning motivation	Kegiatan proyek yang menarik meningkatkan motivasi dan minat mahasiswa terhadap pelajaran mendengarkan.

Source: processed data 2025

These results indicate that PBL not only improves cognitive aspects such as listening comprehension but also positively impacts affective aspects such as motivation, interest, and self-confidence. Therefore, it can be concluded that the application of Project-Based Learning in Arabic language learning provides a meaningful learning experience and fosters comprehensive student engagement.

Improving Students' Listening Skills

Based on the lecturer's observations and reflections, there was a significant improvement in the listening skills of 30 students after the implementation of

Project-Based Learning (PBL). The improvement was evident in several aspects of learning outcomes and classroom behavior. Students became more capable of identifying new vocabulary and understanding sentence contexts from the audio materials provided during lessons. Their ability to respond accurately to oral questions also showed remarkable progress, increasing from only 40% of students answering correctly before PBL to 85% afterward.

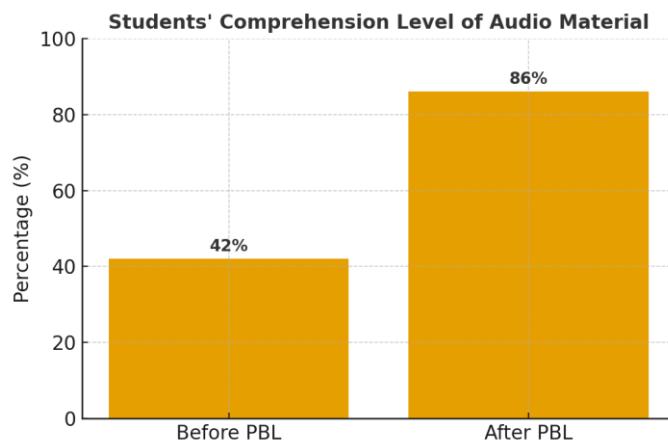


Figure 1. Diagram of Student Understanding Improvement of Audio Material

In addition, students displayed higher levels of engagement in class, as reflected in their active participation during group discussions and question-and-answer sessions. This increase in linguistic comprehension and classroom interaction demonstrates the positive impact of PBL in enhancing students' Arabic listening proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the application of the Project Based Learning (PBL) model in the learning of maharah istima' in the Arabic Language Development Program (PKPBA) of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang was able to significantly improve students' listening skills. Through systematic stages—from listening, iteration, questions and answers, to project creation and presentation—PBL succeeds in creating an active, communicative, and collaborative learning atmosphere. Students not only show improvements in understanding Arabic vocabulary and audio contexts, but also experience higher development of motivation, confidence, and affective engagement. The application of PBL integrated with the audiolingual approach provides a holistic learning experience, combining cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner. These findings confirm that the PBL model is effectively applied in Arabic language learning in higher education and opens up opportunities for further research in the development of project-based pedagogical approaches in other language skills.

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