Equitable Arabic Language Learning: An Innovative Response to Economic Challenges through the Hiwaruna Textbook

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Abstract: The development of the Hiwaruna textbook was initiated as a response to the dual challenge of linguistic complexity and economic limitation faced by ibtida' students at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja, Pamekasan. The existing textbook, Muhawarah Juz 1, was found to be linguistically demanding and economically inaccessible, creating disparities in students' learning engagement. This study aims to design and develop a more affordable yet pedagogically sound alternative to support equitable Arabic kalam learning. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) approach based on the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate), data were collected through classroom observation, teacher interviews, expert validation, and student feedback. The Hiwaruna textbook was designed to suit students' proficiency levels, incorporating contextual themes, simplified vocabulary, visual aids, and pronunciation guides, while being printed locally at a cost 80% lower than commercial materials. The implementation demonstrated significant improvements in student motivation, comprehension, and speaking ability. Furthermore, teachers reported that Hiwaruna facilitated more interactive and inclusive classroom communication. The findings suggest that pedagogical innovation rooted in local economic awareness can enhance accessibility without compromising educational quality, offering a sustainable model for Arabic language instruction in resource-limited contexts.

Keywords: Hiwaruna textbook, Arabic language learning, economic accessibility, 4D model, kalam pedagogy

Abstrak: Pengembangan buku ajar Hiwaruna dilakukan sebagai respons terhadap dua tantangan utama yang dihadapi santri tingkat ibtida' di Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja, Pamekasan, yaitu kesulitan linguistik dan keterbatasan ekonomi. Buku ajar yang digunakan sebelumnya, Muhawarah Juz 1, dinilai terlalu sulit secara bahasa dan harganya yang tinggi membuat banyak santri tidak mampu membelinya, sehingga menghambat proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merancang dan mengembangkan buku ajar alternatif yang lebih terjangkau namun tetap berkualitas secara pedagogis guna mendukung pembelajaran kalam yang berkeadilan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Research and Development (R&D) dengan model 4D (Define, Design, Develop, dan Disseminate). Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas,

wawancara guru, validasi ahli, dan tanggapan siswa. Buku Hiwaruna dirancang sesuai dengan tingkat kemampuan bahasa siswa dengan tema kontekstual, kosakata sederhana, ilustrasi pendukung, serta panduan pelafalan, dan dicetak secara lokal dengan biaya 80% lebih murah dibandingkan buku komersial. Hasil implementasi menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam motivasi, pemahaman, dan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Guru juga melaporkan bahwa Hiwaruna mendorong komunikasi kelas yang lebih interaktif dan inklusif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa inovasi pedagogis yang mempertimbangkan aspek ekonomi dapat meningkatkan aksesibilitas tanpa mengorbankan kualitas pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: buku ajar Hiwaruna, pembelajaran bahasa Arab, aksesibilitas ekonomi, model 4D, pedagogi kalam

Introduction

Arabic language education, particularly in the field of kalam (speaking), remains one of the core elements in developing communicative competence among students in Islamic institutions. At Darul Lugha wal Qur'an, the kalam learning process plays a crucial role in shaping students' linguistic proficiency and self-confidence in oral expression. However, despite the importance of kalam, various challenges persist—one of the most pressing being the economic barrier that affects students' access to appropriate and effective learning materials (Ahmad, 2022).

The textbook commonly used at the ibtida' (elementary) level in this institution, namely Muhawarah Juz 1, has proven to be less compatible with students' linguistic capabilities. Its vocabulary load is considerably advanced, and its grammatical explanations are complex for beginners. As a result, students face difficulties comprehending dialogues and practicing conversational Arabic effectively (Al-Zahrani, 2021). Moreover, the textbook's relatively high price creates a further obstacle for learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

This situation has raised academic concerns among educators and researchers regarding educational equity in Arabic language teaching. The inability of students to afford essential learning materials not only undermines their learning motivation but also deepens educational inequality within the classroom context (Farahani & Rahimi, 2020). Accessibility to educational

resources is therefore a determining factor in ensuring equitable learning opportunities.

Previous studies on Arabic language instruction have focused largely on pedagogical innovation, communicative methods, and the integration of technology (Abdullah, 2019; Hussein, 2021). While these studies have offered valuable insights into instructional efficiency, they often overlook the socio-economic realities of learners. The gap between pedagogical idealism and students' material conditions continues to be underexplored, particularly in traditional or semi-traditional institutions like Darul Lugha wal Qur'an.

Another limitation of prior research lies in its emphasis on expensive or imported textbooks that are not adapted to local linguistic and cultural contexts. Studies have shown that locally developed materials can enhance learner engagement and contextual understanding (Omar, 2020). However, there remains a scarcity of empirical research that examines how locally produced, low-cost textbooks can promote equitable access to quality Arabic education.

Responding to this pedagogical and economic challenge, teachers at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an have initiated the development of a new textbook entitled Hiwaruna ("Our Dialogue"). The book is specifically designed to meet the linguistic level of ibtida' students while maintaining an affordable production cost. Printed in-house, Hiwaruna provides simple, relevant dialogues supported by practical vocabulary, thus enabling students to grasp conversational Arabic more effectively.

This initiative reflects a broader educational innovation in the field of Arabic teaching: combining affordability with pedagogical quality. The Hiwaruna project embodies a grassroots approach to curriculum design—created not by commercial publishers but by teachers who understand the real needs and constraints of their students (Sulaiman, 2023). This approach resonates with the principle of education for all, emphasizing inclusivity and contextual adaptability in educational resources.

The novelty of this study lies in its dual focus: addressing the pedagogical gap in Arabic kalam learning and the economic inequality that limits learners' participation. Unlike previous research, which concentrated on teaching techniques or curriculum models, this study investigates the development and implementation of a cost-effective yet high-quality textbook as a practical solution to equity issues in language learning (Rahman, 2022).

Moreover, the Hiwaruna textbook serves not only as a didactic tool but also as a model of sustainable educational innovation. By producing materials independently, institutions can reduce dependence on commercial publishers while ensuring that the content remains aligned with students' linguistic levels and cultural realities (Nasr, 2021). This practice highlights the potential of low-cost educational innovation to support inclusive and equitable learning.

In sum, this study seeks to explore how the Hiwaruna textbook can bridge the gap between economic constraints and quality education in Arabic kalam learning at the ibtida' level. It also aims to shed light on the broader implications of such innovations for equitable access to education. Through this approach, the researchers hope to contribute to the growing discourse on educational justice and localized material development in Arabic language pedagogy..

Method

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach using the 4D model developed by Thiagarajan, Semmel, and Semmel (1974), which consists of four stages: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The Define phase involved identifying students' needs, linguistic difficulties, and economic constraints through classroom observations and informal interviews with teachers and learners at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an. The Design phase focused on structuring the content, vocabulary selection, and dialogue themes suitable for ibtida' learners. During the Development stage, the Hiwaruna textbook prototype was created and validated by Arabic education experts and practitioners. Finally, the Dissemination phase consisted of classroom

implementation and evaluation of the textbook's effectiveness in improving students' kalam performance and motivation.

Data for this research were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with Arabic teachers, and student questionnaires to assess usability and learning outcomes. Secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journal articles, and previous studies related to Arabic language pedagogy and textbook development. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were coded and thematically analyzed to identify pedagogical improvements and learner perceptions, while quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were statistically analyzed to measure the effectiveness of the Hiwaruna textbook (Creswell, 2018). The integration of these methods ensured both the reliability and validity of the findings in addressing pedagogical and economic challenges in Arabic kalam learning.

Result and Discussion

The Development Process of the Hiwaruna Textbook

The development of the Hiwaruna textbook was initiated as a response to the dual challenge of linguistic difficulty and economic limitation among ibtida' students at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja Pamekasan. During the Define phase of the 4D model, data collected through classroom observation and interviews revealed that the existing textbook, Muhawarah Juz 1, was not suitable for the learners' proficiency level. The content was too advanced, and the vocabulary density exceeded what beginning learners could manage (Al-Zahrani, 2021). Furthermore, its high price made it inaccessible to many students, thus impeding the learning process.

Table 1. The Development Process of the Hiwaruna Textbook Based on the 4D Model

Phase (4D Model)	Key Activities	Findings / Outputs
Define	- Conducted classroom observations and teacher–student interviews.- Identified linguistic and economic challenges with the existing textbook (*Muhawarah Juz 1*).	- The textbook was linguistically too advanced and vocabularies too dense for ibtida' students.- The high cost made it inaccessible for many learners, leading to learning inequality.
Design	- Reconstructed lesson units aligned with students' language proficiency.- Selected relevant themes: greetings, daily routines, classroom communication, and religious expressions.- Ensured vocabulary contextualization and scaffolded learning.	- Lesson units became linguistically manageable and culturally relevant.- Students demonstrated increased motivation and participation.
Development	- Created a locally printed textbook to reduce production costs (up to 80% cheaper than commercial books).- Integrated illustrations, pronunciation guides, and cultural notes.- Conducted expert validation by Arabic education specialists.	- Textbook achieved a balance between affordability and quality.- Revised for linguistic simplicity and enhanced visuals.- Experts confirmed pedagogical suitability for beginner-level *kalam* instruction.
Dissemination	- Implemented *Hiwaruna* in *ibtida'* classes over one academic term.- Provided teacher training on textbook integration.- Conducted iterative evaluations and refinements.	- The textbook proved effective in improving students' speaking performance and engagement.- Positive feedback from teachers and students confirmed its usability and relevance.

Based on this initial diagnosis, the Design phase involved the restructuring of lesson units to align with the linguistic competence of the students. Teachers collaborated to select basic conversational themes such as

greetings, daily activities, classroom expressions, and religious communication, ensuring the vocabulary was contextually relevant and manageable. According to Abdullah (2019), contextualized and scaffolded materials can significantly enhance students' motivation and comprehension in kalam learning.

The Development phase emphasized both pedagogical and economic aspects. The Hiwaruna textbook was designed using locally available printing resources, reducing production costs by up to 80% compared to commercial textbooks. Despite its affordability, the book maintained high content quality, integrating pictures, short dialogues, pronunciation guides, and cultural notes. This aligns with Nasr's (2021) argument that innovation in educational materials should balance accessibility and quality to promote equitable learning.

Expert validation was carried out by three Arabic education specialists who reviewed the Hiwaruna prototype for linguistic accuracy, content relevance, and pedagogical appropriateness. Minor revisions were made, such as simplifying sentence structures and providing more visual aids for vocabulary retention. The experts concluded that the book met pedagogical standards for beginner-level kalam instruction (Rahman, 2022). This validation process ensured the textbook's readiness for classroom implementation.

In the Dissemination stage, the Hiwaruna textbook was introduced to ibtida' classes during one academic term. Teachers received a short training on how to integrate the new material into daily lessons. The implementation aimed to test both its practical usability and its impact on students' language learning outcomes. The systematic approach of the 4D model facilitated an iterative process of evaluation and refinement (Thiagarajan et al., 1974).

Implementation and Classroom Effectiveness

During the classroom implementation, it became evident that the Hiwaruna textbook significantly improved students' participation and confidence in speaking Arabic. Compared to previous sessions using Muhawarah Juz 1, students demonstrated more spontaneous oral interaction and

were more willing to engage in pair and group dialogues. According to Hussein (2021), simplified and localized learning materials can foster a sense of familiarity, which lowers learners' affective barriers and increases willingness to communicate.

Teachers also reported that lesson delivery became more structured and time-efficient. The Hiwaruna book provided clear progression from simple to complex dialogues, enabling instructors to scaffold learning effectively. This pedagogical coherence supported students' gradual mastery of functional Arabic expressions. Moreover, because the textbook was inexpensive and personally relevant, students treated it as their own learning asset—something they could annotate, highlight, and personalize.

Quantitative data collected through pre- and post-tests confirmed the effectiveness of the Hiwaruna textbook. Average student scores in speaking performance increased by 37% after one semester of implementation. Statistical analysis using paired-sample t-tests showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between pre- and post-intervention results, indicating measurable improvement in oral proficiency (Creswell, 2018). These findings empirically support the claim that localized, affordable learning materials can yield substantial educational benefits.

Beyond linguistic performance, motivational indicators also showed a notable increase. Questionnaire responses revealed that 92% of students found the Hiwaruna textbook "easy to understand" and "interesting." Additionally, 87% stated that the low cost of the book reduced their financial stress and allowed them to participate more actively in class. These results align with Farahani and Rahimi's (2020) findings that economic inclusivity enhances learner engagement and academic persistence.

Figure 1: Hiwaruna Juz 1

Teachers' feedback further emphasized that the use of Hiwaruna fostered a more equitable classroom environment. Previously, disparities existed between students who could afford high-quality materials and those who relied on borrowed copies. With the introduction of the locally produced textbook, all students had equal access to learning resources. This eliminated economic bias and promoted collaborative learning, consistent with the principles of educational equity advocated by Sulaiman (2023).

Learner Response and Pedagogical Implications

Student enthusiasm toward the Hiwaruna textbook was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed that the book's relatable content made learning Arabic feel more practical and less intimidating. For example, dialogues featuring common activities such as visiting the mosque or shopping in the market resonated with their everyday experiences. According to Omar (2020), cultural familiarity in textbook design strengthens contextual learning and helps learners internalize linguistic forms more naturally.

Students also appreciated the visual design of the textbook. Although printed modestly, the layout was colorful and featured simple illustrations that

aided comprehension. The integration of short exercises at the end of each lesson provided opportunities for self-assessment, reinforcing vocabulary retention and communicative fluency. This approach reflects Abdullah's (2019) pedagogical recommendation that active learner involvement enhances long-term mastery in kalam learning.

From a socio-educational perspective, the Hiwaruna project demonstrated that innovation need not always rely on advanced technology or external funding. Rather, it can emerge from localized creativity and community-based problem solving. This echoes Nasr's (2021) notion of sustainable educational innovation, where grassroots initiatives produce durable and contextually relevant outcomes.

Moreover, the affordability of the textbook contributed to a more inclusive educational culture at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an. Teachers reported that absenteeism decreased, as students were more motivated to attend lessons when they felt confident and adequately equipped with learning materials. The psychological comfort of owning one's textbook, despite its simplicity, significantly boosted learners' sense of belonging and academic responsibility (Ahmad, 2022).

In conclusion, the implementation of the Hiwaruna textbook at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja Pamekasan represents a successful model of equitable and innovative Arabic language education. The combination of contextual design, affordability, and pedagogical effectiveness not only enhanced students' kalam proficiency but also addressed socioeconomic disparities in access to learning resources. These findings highlight the transformative potential of localized educational innovation in promoting justice, inclusivity, and sustainable learning outcomes within the broader field of Arabic language pedagogy.

Economic Dimensions of the Hiwaruna Innovation

Economic constraints have long been recognized as one of the most significant barriers to equitable education, particularly in rural and semi-urban Islamic learning institutions. Many students at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an come from modest socioeconomic backgrounds, where purchasing expensive instructional materials poses a serious challenge. The previously used Muhawarah Juz 1 textbook, while pedagogically sound, was financially burdensome for learners. As Ahmad (2022) notes, the high cost of textbooks in traditional Islamic schools often reduces student participation and limits learning continuity. Hence, the emergence of Hiwaruna as a low-cost alternative directly addresses these economic inequalities by ensuring that every student can access the same learning resources without financial discrimination.

The production model of the Hiwaruna textbook demonstrates how localized innovation can reduce dependency on commercial publishers and external funding. By adopting a self-publishing approach using in-house printing, the educators managed to decrease costs substantially—making each copy affordable while still maintaining structural quality and durability. This approach exemplifies what Nasr (2021) terms sustainable educational innovation, wherein economic efficiency is achieved without compromising pedagogical standards. Moreover, the reinvestment of minimal printing costs into improving visual and linguistic quality shows that even low-budget educational projects can sustain continuous improvement when driven by community initiative.

From an economic development perspective, initiatives like Hiwaruna contribute to the broader principle of education as an equalizer. Farahani and Rahimi (2020) argue that when educational materials are economically accessible, they not only promote classroom equality but also enhance students' long-term economic mobility by equipping them with essential communication skills. In the case of Darul Lugha wal Qur'an, affordable access to Arabic speaking materials opens opportunities for students to engage in higher studies or future

employment in religious, educational, and translation sectors—fields where Arabic proficiency is highly valued. Thus, the economic accessibility of Hiwaruna is not merely a matter of affordability but an investment in human capital development.

Figure 2: Hiwaruna's Cover

Finally, the economic success of the Hiwaruna project lies in its replicable model. The combination of affordability, contextualization, and quality can be adopted by other Islamic educational institutions facing similar financial barriers. This model underscores that innovation does not always require large budgets or advanced technology; rather, it depends on pedagogical creativity and social responsibility. As Sulaiman (2023) emphasizes, teacher-led initiatives rooted in local needs can serve as sustainable alternatives to commercially produced educational materials, fostering both educational and economic empowerment. In this sense, the Hiwaruna textbook serves as a tangible manifestation of educational equity through economic inclusivity.

Implementation, Classroom Effectiveness, and Economic Implications

The classroom implementation of the Hiwaruna textbook represented a transformative stage in Arabic language instruction at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja Pamekasan. The textbook encouraged active learner

participation and improved communicative confidence compared to sessions using Muhawarah Juz 1. Students became more spontaneous and interactive, particularly in pair and group discussions. This supports Hussein's (2021) finding that localized materials reduce learners' affective barriers and promote willingness to communicate. From an economic perspective, the affordability of Hiwaruna significantly reduced students' financial stress. When learning materials are low-cost yet pedagogically effective, economic inclusivity enhances student engagement and equal participation opportunities across socioeconomic backgrounds (Farahani & Rahimi, 2020).

Teachers also noted increased efficiency in instructional delivery. The Hiwaruna textbook offered coherent sequencing from simple to complex dialogues, allowing effective scaffolding of speaking skills. Quantitative analysis through pre- and post-tests demonstrated a 37% increase in oral proficiency, with a statistically significant improvement ($p < 0.05$) (Creswell, 2018). Such evidence underscores that contextually designed, low-cost materials can yield measurable learning gains. Moreover, the local production of Hiwaruna contributed to the regional education economy by minimizing dependency on expensive imported resources. As local educators and designers participated in its development, the project simultaneously strengthened local publishing capacity and created a micro-economy around community-based educational innovation.

The introduction of Hiwaruna also narrowed economic inequalities in the classroom. Previously, disparities existed between students who could afford commercial textbooks and those relying on borrowed copies. With Hiwaruna, every student had equal access to quality learning materials, reflecting Sulaiman's (2023) principle of educational equity and social justice in learning. This equitable access encouraged collaborative learning and reduced the stigma often experienced by economically disadvantaged students. Economically, the model demonstrates how local educational initiatives can stimulate small-scale creative industries—printing, illustration, and distribution—while simultaneously advancing academic fairness and classroom inclusivity.

Beyond its pedagogical success, the Hiwaruna project revealed that sustainable educational reform can emerge from local creativity rather than costly technological imports. As Nasr (2021) emphasizes, community-based educational innovation creates long-term benefits by addressing both pedagogical and socioeconomic realities. The psychological comfort of owning an affordable textbook fostered a sense of belonging and academic responsibility among students (Ahmad, 2022). Thus, Hiwaruna not only improved linguistic competence but also represented an economically empowering initiative—one that integrated learning effectiveness with the broader goals of social inclusion, local economic empowerment, and sustainable educational equity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Hiwaruna textbook represents a successful model of equitable and sustainable educational innovation in Arabic kalam instruction. Developed through the 4D model of Thiagarajan et al. (1974), the textbook effectively addressed both linguistic and economic barriers faced by ibtida' learners at Darul Lugha wal Qur'an Palengaan Daja Pamekasan. The findings demonstrate that simplifying vocabulary, contextualizing dialogues, and ensuring affordability significantly enhanced students' speaking competence, confidence, and motivation. Moreover, the initiative exemplified a form of community-based curriculum development where teachers functioned as both material designers and educational reformers (Sulaiman, 2023).

The economic dimension of this innovation is particularly noteworthy. By reducing production costs through local printing and minimizing reliance on external publishers, Hiwaruna succeeded in democratizing access to quality learning materials. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were able to fully participate in the learning process without the psychological or financial burden associated with expensive textbooks. This aligns with the principle of economic inclusivity in education, as emphasized by Ahmad (2022), who argues that affordability is an essential prerequisite for equitable learning

environments. The Hiwaruna project thus demonstrates how economic innovation can directly enhance academic equity and learning outcomes.

Despite its success, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single institution with a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the focus was primarily on short-term learning outcomes, while long-term effects on communicative fluency and retention were not extensively evaluated. Additionally, the self-publishing model—although economically efficient—may face challenges related to quality control and scalability in other contexts (Nasr, 2021). Future research should therefore explore cross-institutional applications of Hiwaruna and assess its long-term impact on both linguistic competence and socioeconomic empowerment.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. First, educational institutions with limited financial resources should consider adopting localized textbook development as a cost-effective strategy to ensure equal access to learning materials. Second, collaboration between teachers, local publishers, and linguistic experts is essential to maintain the quality of such materials while keeping production costs low. Finally, policymakers in Arabic language education should recognize and support grassroots educational innovations like Hiwaruna, which not only uphold pedagogical excellence but also promote economic justice and inclusivity in Islamic educational contexts. As Nasr (2021) highlights, sustainable innovation emerges when educational equity and economic feasibility are pursued together.

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