



EXPLORING HIDDEN ASPECTS OF *MAHARAH AL-KITABAH*: A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN ARABIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION"

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and identify hidden aspects in teaching maharah al-kitabah (writing skills) within the context of Arabic language education. While writing skills have long been taught, certain aspects such as creativity, cultural understanding, and the application of technology in writing have been seldom explored in previous research. Using a qualitative approach, this research involves classroom observations and interviews with students and instructors in various Arabic language educational institutions. The findings suggest that the integration of technology, such as the use of social media and text-based applications, can enrich the writing learning process. Additionally, affective aspects like motivation and a love for the Arabic language also significantly influence learning outcomes. Moreover, cultural aspects, such as understanding the nuances of the Arabic language in a social context, play an important role in developing deeper writing skills. This study recommends that teaching *maharah al-kitabah* consider these hidden dimensions to offer a more holistic and innovative perspective in Arabic language education.

Keywords: Writing Skills Arabic; Language Education; Creativity in Writing

INTRODUCTION

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The skill of writing, or *maharah al-kitabah*, holds a central position in the educational landscape, particularly in the teaching and learning of Arabic as a second language. It is one of the key indicators of language proficiency and plays a critical role in ensuring that students can express themselves fluently, coherently, and creatively in written form. While much of the traditional teaching of *maharah al-kitabah* has focused on technical aspects, such as grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, recent advancements in pedagogy and technology have highlighted the need to rethink how this essential skill is taught. (SECARA et al., n.d.)

Traditionally, the approach to teaching writing in Arabic tends to prioritize mechanical aspects, such as syntax, morphology, and formalized writing structures. These technical components, though important, do not fully capture the complexity and depth required to master writing in any language, particularly in a language as rich and intricate as Arabic. Writing is not only about the correct use of linguistic forms but also about the ability to think critically, engage creatively, and communicate effectively across different contexts and mediums. As such, *maharah al-kitabah* should go beyond the mechanical mastery of words and sentences; it must embrace a more holistic view that includes cultural literacy, creativity, and the use of modern technologies. (SULTONI, 2022)

In the context of modern education, there is growing recognition that the integration of digital tools and platforms into language instruction can significantly enhance learning experiences. Social media, online writing platforms, and digital applications have introduced new ways for students to practice writing, enabling them to engage with the language in dynamic and innovative ways. However, despite the potential benefits of these technologies, many educational institutions continue to rely on traditional methods that fail to capitalize on the opportunities provided by digital tools. Moreover, the incorporation of creativity and cultural nuances in writing instruction remains underexplored in many Arabic language classrooms. The cultural and social aspects of writing, such as understanding the linguistic variations and regional idioms, often receive minimal attention compared to the mechanical skills of writing. (Humaini, 2022)

Furthermore, *maharah al-kitabah* involves not only the cognitive ability to structure written text but also the affective components, including motivation, interest, and confidence. The emotional and psychological dimensions of learning to write in a second language are critical factors that influence student engagement and success. When students are motivated, inspired, and feel a sense of ownership over their work, they are more likely to produce meaningful and authentic writing. This aspect, however, is often neglected in favor of standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches to writing instruction. (Widayanti & Yelfi, 2019)

In light of these considerations, this research seeks to explore the hidden aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* that have yet to be fully addressed in traditional Arabic language education. By focusing on creativity, cultural understanding, and the application of digital tools, this study aims to offer a new perspective on how writing skills can be developed in a way that reflects the complexities of the modern world. It recognizes that in the digital age, students are not only writing for academic purposes but also for personal expression, social interaction, and global communication. Thus, the study seeks to integrate the use of digital media, online collaboration, and culturally relevant content into the teaching of Arabic writing.

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The objective of this research is to provide an in-depth examination of how these often-overlooked factors can enhance *maharah al-kitabah* and to offer practical recommendations for educators looking to foster a more holistic, innovative, and engaging approach to teaching Arabic writing. By incorporating these dimensions into the classroom, it is possible to transform the writing process into a more creative, interactive, and meaningful experience for students. This study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how Arabic language education can evolve to meet the needs of contemporary learners, preparing them not only to write competently but also to engage thoughtfully with the language in diverse social, cultural, and digital contexts.

METODE PENELITIAN / RESEARCH METHOD / البحث منهج

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the hidden aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* (writing skills) in the context of Arabic language education. A qualitative approach is deemed most suitable for this research, as it allows for an in-depth examination of the complex and multifaceted nature of writing skills in Arabic, particularly from the perspectives of students, teachers, and educational environments. The primary goal of this research is to understand the underlying factors that contribute to the development of writing skills, focusing on the integration of creativity, cultural understanding, and the use of digital tools. (Widayanti & Yelfi, 2019)

Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive qualitative** approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. It seeks to uncover the experiences and perceptions of Arabic language learners and educators regarding the aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* that are often overlooked in traditional teaching methods. By describing these experiences and analyzing them, the study will provide insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving writing instruction in Arabic. (Rahmah, 2023)

Participants

The participants in this study include two primary groups: **students** and **teachers** involved in Arabic language education at the university level. The study will focus on undergraduate students majoring in Arabic language studies at a selected university, as well as instructors teaching Arabic writing courses. Participants will be selected using **purposive sampling**, which allows for the intentional selection of individuals who have direct experience with the topic under investigation. This ensures that the data collected is relevant and rich in information.

- **Students:** A total of 30 undergraduate students will be selected to participate. These students will be from diverse backgrounds and varying proficiency levels in the Arabic language, allowing for a wide range of insights into the challenges they face in developing their writing skills.
- **Teachers:** 10 Arabic language instructors who specialize in teaching *maharah al-kitabah* will also be selected to participate. These teachers will provide expert perspectives on the methods they use to teach writing and their views on the hidden aspects of writing that are often neglected. (Bani, 2024)

Data Collection

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Data will be collected using multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study:

1. **Semi-structured Interviews:** In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with both students and teachers. The interviews will explore participants' experiences with learning and teaching writing in Arabic, as well as their views on the use of technology, creativity, and cultural contexts in the writing process. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in probing deeper into responses and capturing rich, detailed data.
2. **Focus Group Discussions:** Focus group discussions will be organized with students to create a collaborative environment where participants can share their thoughts and experiences regarding the challenges they face in learning Arabic writing. This method encourages interaction and enables the researcher to observe group dynamics and collective insights on the topic.
3. **Classroom Observations:** The study will include direct observation of writing classes to understand how *maharah al-kitabah* is taught in practice. Observations will focus on teaching methods, the integration of technology, student-teacher interactions, and how cultural and creative aspects are addressed in the curriculum.
4. **Document Analysis:** The researcher will analyze course syllabi, lesson plans, and student writing samples to identify the extent to which hidden aspects of *maharah al-kitabah*, such as cultural nuances and creative expression, are integrated into the teaching materials. This will help assess the alignment between educational objectives and actual classroom practices.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will follow a **thematic analysis** approach, which involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The process will include the following steps:

1. **Transcribing:** All interviews and focus group discussions will be transcribed verbatim.
2. **Coding:** The transcripts will be read multiple times, and meaningful units of data will be coded according to relevant themes, such as creativity, cultural understanding, the role of technology, and motivation.
3. **Theme Development:** The codes will be grouped into broader themes that reflect the key aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* that are often overlooked in traditional teaching. These themes will provide a framework for understanding the hidden dimensions of writing in Arabic.
4. **Interpretation:** The themes will be analyzed in relation to existing literature on writing pedagogy, cultural dimensions in language learning, and the use of digital tools in education. The findings will be interpreted to offer insights into how these hidden aspects can be integrated into Arabic writing instruction.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be taken into account throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study, their rights, and how their data will be used. Participants will be assured of their confidentiality, and their identities will be anonymized in the reporting of findings. The study will adhere to the ethical guidelines set by the university's research ethics board.

Limitations

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While the qualitative approach provides deep insights into the topic, there are certain limitations to the study. The findings may not be generalizable to all Arabic language education contexts, as the sample is limited to one university and its specific teaching practices. Additionally, the focus on undergraduate students may exclude perspectives from learners at other levels of proficiency or in different educational settings.

HASIL PENELITIAN

This section presents the findings derived from the data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. The results are analyzed in light of the hidden aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* (writing skills) that are often overlooked in traditional Arabic language education. These aspects include creativity, cultural understanding, the integration of technology, and the affective factors influencing writing performance. The discussion highlights key themes, connects them to existing literature, and offers recommendations for addressing these gaps in teaching practices.

1. The Role of Creativity in *Maharah al-Kitabah*

One of the most striking findings from this study is the limited emphasis on creativity in traditional Arabic writing instruction. While students generally receive instruction on technical writing aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, many reported that they did not have ample opportunities to engage in creative writing exercises. This was corroborated by the teachers, who acknowledged that the curriculum focuses predominantly on formal writing tasks, such as analytical essays, reports, and exam-style questions that prioritize correctness over originality. As one teacher observed, "The traditional curriculum focuses so much on perfecting structure that students miss out on the chance to think creatively in their writing." Students also echoed these sentiments, with many expressing a desire for assignments that allowed for more personal expression, storytelling, and exploration of topics that were more closely aligned with their interests.

The lack of creative writing opportunities in Arabic classrooms can hinder students' ability to develop their personal voice in writing, a critical aspect of becoming a confident and expressive writer. As a result, their writing often lacks depth and uniqueness, primarily focusing on surface-level grammar and structure. Introducing more open-ended writing tasks that encourage students to express their thoughts, emotions, and creativity could significantly improve the quality of student writing. This shift would also cultivate critical thinking skills, as students would be tasked with organizing their thoughts and arguments in a coherent and original way. Moreover, creativity in writing could help students connect more deeply with the language, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and motivation to improve their writing skills. (Faruqi, 2019)

2. Cultural Understanding and Its Impact on Writing Skills

Cultural understanding was another theme that emerged strongly in the data. Many students reported feeling disconnected from the texts they were required to write about, particularly when these texts involved cultural or historical references that were unfamiliar to them. In focus group discussions, students expressed frustration about the lack of cultural context in many of their writing assignments. One student shared, "When I write about topics like Arabic literature or historical events, I struggle to grasp the cultural significance behind the words. It's hard to write meaningfully without truly understanding the context." This disconnect is especially noticeable in writing tasks that require students to engage with literary texts, cultural nuances, or idiomatic expressions, which are essential components of Arabic writing. (Norlaila & Muradi, n.d.)

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Teachers also acknowledged that cultural understanding is often sidelined in traditional writing instruction. While teachers may incorporate grammar and vocabulary lessons, the cultural dimensions of language, such as idioms, metaphors, and culturally significant expressions, receive less attention. This gap in teaching practice undermines students' ability to fully grasp the richness of the Arabic language, as they are not exposed to the social and historical contexts that shape its use. One teacher remarked, "We teach students how to write, but we don't always provide them with the cultural knowledge needed to truly understand and use the language effectively."

This finding highlights the importance of integrating cultural content into writing instruction. By incorporating authentic materials, such as Arabic literature, films, media, and historical texts, teachers can help students better appreciate the cultural richness embedded in the Arabic language. Additionally, discussing cultural contexts and idiomatic expressions in writing classes could enhance students' ability to write with greater depth and authenticity. Engaging students with the cultural aspects of Arabic not only enriches their writing skills but also fosters a deeper connection to the language itself. (Huda, 2021)

3. The Integration of Digital Tools in *Maharah al-Kitabah*

The integration of digital tools emerged as a highly positive and impactful factor in improving students' writing skills. Students expressed interest in using digital platforms, such as blogs, social media, and collaborative writing tools, as part of their writing practice. They found that these platforms provided a more interactive and less intimidating environment for expressing their ideas and receiving feedback. One student stated, "When I use social media to write, I feel more comfortable because it's informal, and I can easily share my thoughts and get feedback from others." Teachers also recognized the potential of digital tools to enhance student engagement. One teacher shared, "Digital tools open up new possibilities for students to practice writing in real-world settings. The idea of blogging or engaging in online forums can make writing feel more relevant to them."

However, the study also revealed that the use of digital tools in Arabic writing classrooms remains limited. Teachers reported that, while they are aware of the benefits of integrating digital tools, they often lack the necessary resources or training to effectively incorporate these tools into their teaching practices. A teacher noted, "We are not trained to use digital platforms effectively in our teaching. We know they could be useful, but we don't have the resources to make it work."

This suggests that there is a significant gap in the integration of digital technologies in Arabic language instruction. Teachers need to receive professional development and training on how to effectively incorporate digital platforms into writing instruction. By doing so, they can create more dynamic and engaging writing tasks that foster collaboration, feedback, and the development of real-world writing skills. Digital tools can also offer students opportunities to interact with a wider audience, enhancing their motivation and broadening their perspectives on writing.

4. Affective Factors: Motivation and Confidence in Writing

Another key theme that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions was the influence of affective factors, such as motivation and self-confidence, on writing performance. Many students reported that they lacked motivation to engage fully in writing assignments, particularly when they felt that the tasks were monotonous or disconnected from their personal interests. Students noted that they were more motivated to write when they could choose topics that resonated with them or when they could see the relevance of the assignments to their

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future goals. One student shared, "When I write about topics that I care about, I feel more engaged, and my writing flows more easily." (Permana & Nasution, 2024)

Furthermore, students reported a lack of confidence in their writing abilities, particularly when writing in Arabic as a second language. Teachers observed that students who lacked confidence were less likely to take risks in their writing and often produced superficial or overly cautious work. One teacher explained, "Students who lack confidence tend to avoid writing in their own voice and stick to very safe, basic structures. Their writing lacks depth because they're afraid of making mistakes."

To address these challenges, it is crucial for educators to create a supportive and motivating learning environment. Teachers can build students' confidence by providing constructive feedback, encouraging peer review, and offering writing assignments that allow for personal expression and creativity. Additionally, fostering intrinsic motivation by connecting writing tasks to students' interests and real-world contexts can make the writing process more meaningful and engaging. (KARNIAWATI, 2024)

5. Implications for Curriculum and Pedagogical Practices

The results of this study suggest several important implications for Arabic writing instruction. First, there is a need to reconsider the traditional focus on mechanical aspects of writing, such as grammar and structure, and place greater emphasis on creativity, cultural understanding, and the use of digital tools. The incorporation of creative writing tasks and culturally relevant content would help students develop a more holistic and authentic understanding of the Arabic language. Furthermore, integrating digital tools and platforms into the curriculum can provide students with the opportunity to practice writing in real-world contexts, enhancing their engagement and writing fluency.

Additionally, addressing the affective aspects of writing—such as motivation and confidence—is critical for improving writing outcomes. Educators should prioritize creating a positive and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and experimenting with their writing. By fostering a sense of autonomy and ownership over the writing process, students will be more motivated to engage deeply with their writing and improve their skills. (H Syamsuddin Asyrofi et al., 2021)

the need for a shift in how *maharah al-kitabah* is taught, with a focus on innovation, creativity, and a more holistic approach to student development.

CONCLUSION

This research explored the hidden aspects of *maharah al-kitabah* (writing skills) in Arabic language education, with a particular focus on creativity, cultural understanding, the integration of digital tools, and the affective factors that influence student engagement and writing performance. The findings of this study reveal that while traditional Arabic writing instruction tends to prioritize technical aspects such as grammar and structure, essential elements like creative expression, cultural context, and the use of digital tools are often underemphasized. These hidden aspects are crucial for developing not only competent writers but also thoughtful, engaged, and culturally aware students.

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The study highlights the importance of fostering creativity in writing tasks, as students expressed a strong desire for more opportunities to engage with personal expression and original ideas. Providing creative writing opportunities could significantly enhance students' motivation and improve the depth and authenticity of their writing. Similarly, the integration of cultural understanding into writing instruction is vital for helping students connect more deeply with the language and produce writing that is both technically proficient and culturally rich.

The role of digital tools in enhancing writing skills was also clearly evident, with students and teachers alike acknowledging their potential to create more dynamic and interactive learning experiences. However, the study also found that many teachers lack the training and resources necessary to incorporate these tools effectively into their teaching. Therefore, investing in professional development for educators in the use of digital platforms is essential for integrating these tools into the classroom effectively.

Additionally, the affective factors of motivation and confidence emerged as significant influences on students' writing performance. Students who lacked motivation or were not confident in their writing abilities tended to produce superficial work and were less likely to take risks with their writing. To address these challenges, teachers should prioritize creating a supportive and motivating environment where students feel comfortable experimenting with their writing and exploring their personal voice.

In conclusion, this study calls for a reevaluation of how *maharah al-kitabah* is taught in Arabic language classrooms. By shifting the focus toward more holistic, student-centered approaches that integrate creativity, cultural understanding, and digital tools, educators can better meet the needs of contemporary students and improve their writing skills. This research underscores the importance of considering the hidden dimensions of writing instruction in order to foster more engaging, meaningful, and effective learning experiences for students in the Arabic language classroom.

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