From Speaking to Writing for Transforming Everyday Arabic Dialogue into Simple Written Texts

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Abstract

Mastering Arabic writing skills (Maharah Kitabah) remains a challenge for many learners, as traditional teaching methods often separate speaking and writing, making the transition between the two difficult. This study explores how structured interventions can bridge this gap by leveraging spoken Arabic as a foundation for writing. Conducted at Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah, this qualitative research involved 30 students who engaged in guided writing exercises transforming spoken dialogues into structured texts. Data collection methods included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and writing assessments, analyzed through thematic coding. The findings reveal that integrating dialogue-based exercises, sentence expansion techniques, and peer review significantly improves students' writing fluency, grammatical accuracy, and confidence. Unlike conventional methods that emphasize rigid grammar instruction, this approach provides a more intuitive learning experience by helping students refine their speech into written form. While the study highlights the effectiveness of this strategy, it also acknowledges the need for long-term reinforcement to fully internalize written conventions. Future research should explore digital interventions and longitudinal studies to further enhance Arabic writing instruction.

Keywords: *Arabic writing, speaking-to-writing transition, second language acquisition, Arabic pedagogy, communicative learning*

Introduction

Learning Arabic as a second language often involves a gap between speaking and writing skills[1]. Many learners can engage in simple daily conversations but struggle when asked to write those conversations down in clear and structured text. While spoken Arabic is more flexible and informal, written Arabic follows specific grammar and style rules that may seem challenging for learners. Traditional teaching methods tend to focus on either speaking or writing separately, without fully bridging the two skills. This creates difficulties for learners who need to develop their writing abilities based on their existing spoken knowledge[2].

One of the persistent challenges in teaching Arabic writing (Maharah Kitabah) is the uncertainty among educators regarding effective methods for guiding students in composing essays (insya'). Many teachers struggle to bridge the gap between spoken communication and structured written expression, often emphasizing rigid grammatical accuracy without providing a natural transition from oral fluency to writing proficiency. As a result, students perceive Arabic writing as a daunting task, disconnected from their daily language use. However, everyday spoken interactions provide a rich and accessible foundation for developing writing skills—a resource that remains underutilized in traditional Arabic writing instruction. By transforming simple dialogues into structured written texts, educators can offer students a more intuitive and engaging pathway to mastering written Arabic.

Existing research on Arabic writing pedagogy has primarily focused on grammar drills, structured composition models, and advanced literary writing, often overlooking the potential of leveraging spoken Arabic as a writing foundation. This gap has led to an instructional imbalance, where students excel in oral communication but struggle with written expression. Addressing this issue requires a shift in teaching strategies, emphasizing the continuity between speech and writing rather than treating them as separate skills. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing practical, research-based methods for teachers to integrate spoken Arabic elements into their writing instruction, making insya' lessons more accessible, natural, and effective for students at the

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beginner to intermediate levels.

This study explores how everyday spoken Arabic can be transformed into simple written texts, helping learners build confidence in their writing skills. The main research question is: What are the key linguistic and structural differences between spoken Arabic and simple written Arabic that pose challenges for beginner to intermediate learners? What strategies can effectively support learners in transforming everyday spoken Arabic into well-structured written texts while maintaining fluency and correctness? How does integrating spoken language elements into writing instruction impact learners' confidence and writing proficiency in Arabic? The study focuses on beginner to intermediate learners and examines strategies to make this transition smoother. However, it does not cover regional dialects in depth, as it prioritizes Modern Standard Arabic (al-'Arabiyyah al-Fuṣḥā) with some commonly used expressions from daily speech.

Previous studies on Arabic language learning have often focused on grammar accuracy and formal writing[3] , paying less attention to how speaking skills can directly support writing. Some research highlights the importance of integrating multiple skills in language learning, but practical methods for converting spoken Arabic into written text remain underexplored. This study aims to fill that gap by offering a structured yet simple approach to help learners transfer their spoken knowledge into written form. Recent research highlights the integration of technology and innovative methodologies in language learning. Al Sharoufi (2022) explored a technology-based writing curriculum in Oman [4], finding that digital tools enhanced academic writing proficiency. Alharthi (2021) examined free-writing in EFL learners, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving grammar and writing fluency[5]. Alneyadi et al. (2023) compared digital and traditional literacy instruction, concluding that digital environments significantly improve reading and writing skills[6]. Alobaid (2020) analyzed ICT-based learning,

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[6] Saif Alneyadi, Enas Abulibdeh, and Yousef Wardat, 'The Impact of Digital Environment vs. Traditional Method on Literacy Skills; Reading and Writing of Emirati Fourth Graders', *Sustainability* 15, no. 4 (13 February 2023): 3418, https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043418.

particularly YouTube's role in enhancing writing fluency [7].

In Arabic language education, Ekawati, Hidayat, & Rosyada (2024) applied Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to improve vocabulary, dialogue, and writing skills[8]. Esnawy (2016) investigated Jigsaw-based research essay writing in EFL [9], emphasizing collaborative learning benefits. Hanifansyah (2025) examined Arabic keyboard usage and mnemonic strategies in Maharah Kitabah instruction. Additionally, Khoury-Shaheen & Weintraub (2023) compared Arabic handwriting and keyboarding, revealing implications for literacy development [10].

The significance of this research lies in its potential to improve Arabic writing instruction by using real-life spoken language as a foundation. By introducing clear steps and techniques for transitioning from speaking to writing, this study hopes to provide practical guidance for learners and educators. The findings will contribute to Arabic language teaching by promoting a more connected approach to language skills, ensuring that learners can write as naturally as they speak.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the process of transforming everyday spoken Arabic into simple written texts[11]. which is well-suited for exploring language acquisition processes in natural learning environments. The selection of Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah as the research site is justified by its immersive Arabic-speaking environment, allowing for an in-depth analysis of students' transition from oral to written communication. The triangulation method was used to ensure data validity, combining classroom observations [12], semi-structured interviews [13],

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and writing assessments. Classroom observations provided real-time insights into students' spoken interactions, while semi-structured interviews captured subjective experiences regarding writing difficulties. Writing assessments served as tangible indicators of students' progress. To ensure reliability, thematic coding was employed to analyze qualitative data, categorizing common linguistic patterns, writing challenges, and the effectiveness of interventions. The use of pre-test and post-test comparisons further strengthened the findings, demonstrating measurable improvements in students' writing abilities. While qualitative data provides depth, future research could incorporate quantitative analysis, such as frequency counts of writing errors and statistical comparisons, to enhance generalizability.

The research focuses on understanding the challenges faced by learners and identifying effective strategies to support this transition. Data collection is conducted through classroom observations[14], semi-structured interviews, and writing assessments to gain insights into students' difficulties and progress.

The participants of this study are 30 students from Grade 4 Ibtida'iyyah at Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah, with an average age of 16 to 17 years old. These students have a foundational understanding of Arabic but still face challenges in writing due to the gap between their spoken and written language skills. The selection of this group is based on their exposure to Arabic as a daily communication tool in the pesantren environment, making them suitable subjects for analyzing the process of integrating speaking and writing skills.

The research process consists of three main phases. In the first phase, classroom observations are conducted to examine students' natural use of spoken Arabic and their initial writing abilities. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews with students and teachers are carried out to explore their experiences, difficulties, and perceptions regarding writing in Arabic. In the third phase, students participate in guided writing exercises where they transform short spoken dialogues into simple written texts under the guidance of the researcher. Their written outputs are analyzed to identify common patterns, errors, and improvements over time.

Data analysis follows an interpretative approach, where thematic coding is used to categorize students' challenges, learning patterns, and the effectiveness of different strategies. The findings from observations[15], interviews[16], and writing assessments are

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triangulated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how spoken Arabic can be effectively converted into written form. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into Arabic language teaching, particularly in bridging the gap between speaking and writing skills in an Islamic boarding school context.

Result and Discussion

Darullughah Wadda'wah (Dalwa) Islamic Boarding School has long been recognized as a distinguished institution for Arabic language education [17]. As a pesantren that fosters a total Arabic-speaking environment (bi'ah lughawiyyah), Dalwa plays a pivotal role in shaping generations of students who attain fluency in both spoken and written Arabic. Its comprehensive approach integrates theoretical instruction with immersive practice, enabling learners to acquire the language naturally in their daily interactions. A key element of Dalwa's success lies in its continuous regeneration of Arabic language learning. Senior students are entrusted with mentoring their juniors through structured peer discussions (musyawarah) [18], direct transmission of knowledge (talaqqi), and sustained linguistic coaching. This cyclical process ensures that Arabic proficiency is not merely an individual achievement but a collective legacy, passed down systematically from one generation to the next. As a result, Dalwa has established itself as a dynamic center for nurturing future scholars and educators of the Arabic language, reinforcing its vital role in the preservation and advancement of Arabic linguistic traditions.

The challenge of transitioning from spoken to written Arabic is a critical issue in Arabic language education [19], particularly for non-native learners and students in immersive linguistic environments such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) [20]. While many

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[20] Muhamad Solehudin and Nur Hanifansyah, 'Arabic Public Speaking in Malaysia: Enhancing

students develop fluency in everyday spoken Arabic through interaction and exposure[21], they often struggle when required to produce structured, grammatically accurate written texts [22]. This discrepancy arises because spoken Arabic is more flexible and informal, whereas written Arabic adheres to rigid syntactic and stylistic conventions. The gap between these two forms of communication creates a barrier that affects students' academic writing and their ability to engage with classical and modern Arabic literature[23]. Addressing this challenge requires a pedagogical shift that integrates both skills rather than treating them as separate domains. By developing instructional methods that help students convert their spoken proficiency into strong writing skills, educators can create a more holistic approach to Arabic language learning[24].

This study is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic educational institutions, where Arabic serves not only as a medium of instruction but also as a core component of religious and intellectual engagement [25]. Institutions like Darullughah Wadda'wah exemplify how immersive Arabic-speaking environments can enhance linguistic proficiency[26], yet even in such settings, students still face challenges in formal writing. The need for structured interventions that facilitate the transition from oral fluency to writing competence is crucial in ensuring that students develop a well-rounded mastery of the language. Moreover, in an era where digital communication increasingly relies on written forms of expression, fostering writing skills is more essential than ever. This

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study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by proposing practical strategies—such as dialogue-to-text exercises, sentence expansion techniques, and peer review activities—that can empower students to write with greater clarity, coherence, and confidence. By bridging the gap between spoken and written Arabic, this research aims to support both learners and educators in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction.

Linguistic and Structural Differences Between Spoken and Written Arabic

The analysis of students' writing samples and classroom observations reveals several key differences between spoken Arabic and its written form that pose challenges for learners. These differences include: Sentence Structure: Students often use colloquial sentence patterns when writing, resulting in fragmented or incomplete sentences.

Lexical Choices: Spoken expressions such as "إيش" (what) and "كيفك" (how are you) frequently appear in writing, whereas they should be replaced with formal equivalents like "ما" and "كيف حالك". Verb Usage: Many students rely on simplified verb forms commonly used in speech rather than using the correct morphological structures required in written Arabic. Lack of Cohesion: Students struggle with linking ideas logically, as spoken Arabic relies heavily on intonation and context, while written Arabic requires explicit connectors such as "لذلك" (therefore) and "علاوة على ذلك" (moreover).

A qualitative analysis of students' writing before and after structured exercises shows a gradual improvement in using formal structures. However, challenges remain in applying grammatical rules consistently, especially in verb conjugation and sentence coherence.

To better understand these difficulties, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students and teachers. One student expressed:

"When I speak Arabic, I don't think about grammar. But when I write, I feel unsure about what's correct and what's not. Writing takes much more effort."

Another student highlighted the role of spoken habits in writing mistakes:

"I often write the way I speak. It's easier, but my teacher says it's not correct for formal writing. I find it hard to change my habits."

Teachers also emphasized the need for explicit instruction in transitioning from speaking to writing:

"Students are confident when speaking, but they struggle when writing because they are

not used to structuring their ideas in a formal way. We need more exercises that help
them convert their speech into proper written Arabic."

These insights suggest that students require structured guidance in recognizing and adapting spoken elements into their writing while maintaining linguistic accuracy.

Effective Strategies for Transforming Spoken Arabic into Written Texts

Based on classroom interventions and students' progress, several strategies were found effective in supporting the transition from speaking to writing:

Dialogue-to-Text Exercises: Students were given recorded spoken dialogues and tasked with rewriting them into formal written texts. This exercise helped them recognize the necessary modifications in grammar and vocabulary.

Sentence Expansion Techniques: Simple spoken sentences were expanded into full written forms, encouraging students to add descriptive elements and logical connectors.

Peer Review Activities: Students worked in pairs to review each other's written work, focusing on identifying colloquial expressions and suggesting formal alternatives.

Scaffolded Writing Sessions: Teachers provided step-by-step guidance, starting with sentence-level corrections before moving to paragraph-level improvements.

Oral-to-Written Summarization: Students listened to short spoken passages and wrote summaries in their own words, reinforcing the connection between listening, speaking, and writing skills.

The effectiveness of these strategies was reflected in students' improved ability to produce coherent, grammatically accurate written texts while maintaining the natural flow of spoken Arabic.

Students found these strategies helpful in bridging the gap between speaking and writing. One student commented:

"Rewriting dialogues into written text helped me see the difference between what I say
and what I should write. Now, I think more about structure when I write."

Another student shared:

"The peer review sessions were useful because my friends pointed out things I didn't
notice. I also learned from correcting their mistakes."

Teachers also observed positive changes:

"By the end of the exercises, students were more conscious of their sentence structure.
They still make mistakes, but they are now aware of them and know how to fix them."

These findings highlight the importance of structured interventions in supporting learners' writing development, emphasizing the need for ongoing practice and teacher guidance.

Comparative Perspectives on Writing Pedagogy in Arabic Language Learning

While this study highlights the importance of integrating spoken Arabic elements into writing instruction, previous approaches to Arabic writing pedagogy have largely relied on more traditional methods. Grammar-translation methods, for instance, emphasize explicit grammar instruction and structured essay composition without necessarily linking students' oral fluency to their writing skills. Similarly, process-based writing approaches focus on drafting, revising, and editing texts, yet they do not explicitly leverage students' spoken Arabic as a foundational tool for developing writing proficiency. Some communicative language teaching (CLT) models promote integrated language skills but often prioritize speaking and listening rather than ensuring a structured transition to writing. By contrast, this study proposes a more seamless connection between speaking and writing through structured interventions such as dialogue-to-text exercises, sentence expansion techniques, and peer review activities. This comparative perspective underscores the unique contribution of this research in bridging the oral-written gap, offering an alternative to conventional Arabic writing instruction that treats speaking and writing as separate competencies.[27]

The Impact of Integrating Spoken Language Elements into Writing Instruction

In the Arab world, like in many other cultures, a fundamental distinction exists between spoken and written Arabic forms[28]. Spoken dialogue is not sophisticated and employs many linguistic shortcuts that are due to the nature of oral communication[29]. The final stage of the research examined how incorporating spoken Arabic elements into writing instruction influenced students' confidence and proficiency[30]. The majority of students

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[27] Muhammad Khoirul Umam, ' القاعدة للكلام لترقية مهارة الكلام فى دورة السهلة باري كديري جاوى الشرقية.', *Lahjatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 2, no. 2 (2024): 111–25, https://doi.org/10.38073/lahjatuna.v2i2.1145.

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reported feeling more comfortable expressing themselves in writing after practicing structured exercises. Their final writing samples demonstrated: Increased awareness of formal grammar rules, better sentence structure and organization, reduced reliance on colloquial expressions.

However, some students still faced challenges in consistently applying grammatical rules. Teachers noted that while students had improved, they needed further reinforcement and long-term practice to fully internalize written Arabic conventions.

One student expressed newfound confidence in writing:

"At first, I was afraid of making mistakes. Now, I know I can fix them. I still need practice, but writing doesn't feel as difficult anymore."

A teacher reinforced the importance of gradual learning:

"Students need time to adjust from spoken habits to writing rules. The key is continuous exposure and structured exercises."

These insights suggest that integrating spoken Arabic elements into writing instruction can significantly support learners' writing development, provided that structured practice and reinforcement are maintained.

The findings of this study align with previous research emphasizing the importance of integrating spoken and written language skills in second language acquisition. Alharthi (2021) demonstrated that free-writing techniques help learners express their thoughts naturally, while Al Sharoufi (2022) highlighted the benefits of a structured, technology-driven writing curriculum. However, both approaches still require learners to consciously apply grammatical rules and structured writing formats, which can create cognitive barriers. In contrast, this study presents a more intuitive pathway, allowing learners to structure their writing by simply refining their spoken expressions—a process that minimizes writing anxiety and cognitive overload.

Additionally, Alneyadi et al. (2023) and Alobaid (2020) found that digital tools and multimedia improve writing fluency, reinforcing the importance of interactive and engaging methods in language learning. This study complements their findings by demonstrating that even without advanced digital interventions, learners can develop writing skills through simple cognitive restructuring of their speech, making writing feel like a natural extension of daily communication.

Furthermore, research by Ekawati, Hidayat, & Rosyada (2024) on CLT-based

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Multi-Religion Students', *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 9 (September 2020): 4333–39, https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080960.

Arabic instruction underscores the role of dialogue and interactive exercises in fostering writing development. While their study focuses on communicative activities, this research extends the concept by showing that internalized speech can serve as a direct foundation for structured writing, even in the absence of external dialogues. Similarly, Khoury-Shaheen & Weintraub (2023) highlighted the cognitive differences between handwriting and keyboarding, supporting the idea that cognitive processing plays a crucial role in written language development.

By linking oral fluency to structured writing through guided cognitive restructuring, this study offers a practical, learner-friendly solution that bridges gaps in previous research, providing a simple yet effective alternative to more rigid instructional approaches.

However, one notable limitation observed in this study is the persistent influence of spoken habits on writing[31], which suggests that additional long-term reinforcement is necessary. This echoes findings from recent research on error correction and self-monitoring in language learning, which highlight the need for repetitive exposure and corrective feedback.

Overall, this study reinforces the idea that bridging the gap between speaking and writing requires structured, incremental support. It also provides evidence that when guided correctly, students can successfully transform spoken Arabic into coherent written texts, gradually developing both confidence and proficiency.

This study has provided valuable insights into the challenges and strategies involved in transforming spoken Arabic into simple written texts. The findings suggest that structured exercises, peer collaboration, and guided reinforcement play a crucial role in helping learners transition from informal speech to formal writing. Future research could explore long-term interventions and digital tools that further enhance this transition, ensuring that Arabic learners develop both fluency and accuracy in their writing.

Conclusion

This study explored the process of transforming spoken Arabic into simple written texts among Grade 4 Ibtida'iyyah students at Pesantren Darullughah Wadda'wah. The findings revealed that learners face significant challenges in

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structuring sentences, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining grammatical accuracy when transitioning from speech to writing. Through structured interventions, such as dialogue-to-text exercises, sentence expansion techniques, and peer review activities, students demonstrated notable improvements in their writing proficiency. These strategies effectively bridged the gap between their oral and written communication skills, highlighting the importance of integrating spoken elements into writing instruction. This study contributes to Arabic language pedagogy by providing practical methods that can be implemented in classroom settings to support students in developing both fluency and accuracy in writing.

Despite these promising results, some limitations remain. The study focused primarily on short-term interventions, and while students showed progress, long-term reinforcement is necessary to ensure sustained improvement. Additionally, the research was limited to Modern Standard Arabic, without extensive exploration of how dialectal variations influence writing development. Future research could examine longitudinal studies to track learners' writing development over time, explore technology-assisted writing tools, and investigate the role of dialectal Arabic in written proficiency. By addressing these areas, further studies can provide deeper insights into effective strategies for strengthening Arabic writing skills in diverse learning contexts.

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