

Best Practice of Summative Assessment for Arabic Writing Proficiency: Evidence from Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri, Indonesia

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Abstract:

Writing proficiency (*maharah kitabah*) is a fundamental yet demanding component of Arabic language education. In pesantren contexts, where tradition and discipline are central, effective assessment strategies remain underexplored. This study investigates the best practices in implementing summative assessment for Arabic writing at Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis. The study identified three significant best practices: (1) the contextual use of *imla' al-istima'i* (auditory dictation) as a summative tool that simultaneously assesses listening and writing skills; (2) the integration of formative and summative assessments to scaffold students' learning progress systematically; and (3) the application of standardized, transparent rubrics to ensure fairness and clarity in evaluation. These practices collectively foster writing accuracy, vocabulary enrichment, grammatical mastery, and learner autonomy. Despite these strengths, a notable percentage of students remain below the expected proficiency level, indicating a need for enhanced remedial support. Future research should explore how digital tools and AI-driven feedback systems can further optimize these best practices and promote scalable, individualized Arabic writing assessments.

Keywords: summative assessment, writing skill, Arabic language instruction, *pesantren*

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Praktik Baik Asesmen Sumatif untuk Keterampilan Menulis Bahasa Arab: Studi Kasus dari Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri, Indonesia

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Abstrak:

Kemampuan menulis (*maharah kitabah*) merupakan aspek penting namun menantang dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab, khususnya di lingkungan pesantren yang menekankan tradisi dan kedisiplinan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi praktik terbaik dalam pelaksanaan asesmen sumatif keterampilan menulis di Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Tiga praktik baik yang ditemukan sebagai temuan utama yaitu: (1) penggunaan *imla' al-istima'i* (dikte) secara kontekstual sebagai metode asesmen sumatif yang juga melatih kemampuan menyimak; (2) integrasi asesmen formatif dan sumatif secara sistematis untuk mendukung proses pembelajaran bertahap dan berkelanjutan; serta (3) penerapan rubrik penilaian yang terstandar dan transparan untuk menjamin objektivitas dan kejelasan evaluasi. Ketiga praktik ini terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan ketepatan menulis, pengayaan kosa kata, penguasaan tata bahasa, dan kemandirian belajar siswa. Meskipun demikian, sebagian besar siswa masih belum mencapai tingkat kompetensi minimal, sehingga diperlukan dukungan pembelajaran tambahan yang lebih intensif. Penelitian lanjutan disarankan untuk mengkaji pemanfaatan teknologi digital dan sistem umpan balik berbasis AI guna memperkuat dan memperluas praktik baik ini dalam asesmen keterampilan menulis bahasa Arab.

Kata Kunci: asesmen sumatif, *maharah kitabah*, pembelajaran bahasa Arab, pesantren

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic language instruction and its challenges have been a subject of interest among language researchers (Almelhes, 2024; Faraj & Zawawi, 2024). Language instruction consists of two main components: language as a content or purpose, and language pedagogy for the teaching and learning process (Aydoğdu & Göçen, 2023; Morton, 2018). These two aspects are interconnected and mutually influence each other, making the learning process dynamic and continuous. Arabic instruction has been an integral part of Indonesian curriculum since the establishment of educational institutions such as *pesantren* and *madrasah* (Furqan, 2019; Hikmawati & Muthohirin, 2024; Muslimah, 2021). In *pesantren*, Arabic receives significant attention, particularly in institutions that emphasize the teaching of Arabic grammar (*nahwu-sharf*) as a core component of their curriculum (Hamidah et al., 2024; Hanani et al., 2024).

For Muslims, learning Arabic is essential for understanding religious sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith (Kiki Irawan & Nurkholis, 2024; Rois & Rubini, 2021). Arabic language instruction aims to develop both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills, which are crucial for comprehending Islamic teachings in Arabic (Burhanuddin, 2024; Rusydi Amar, 2023). Additionally, Arabic language education addresses global challenges by fostering students' proficiency in the four language skills; *istima'* (listening), *kalam* (speaking), *qira'ah* (reading), and *kitabah* (writing) (Mufliah et al., 2024; Muslimah, 2018). Furthermore, it aims to enhance students' ability to express words and letters in accordance with linguistic rules that align with contemporary and future demands (Lysenko, 2023).

Writing (*maharah kitabah*) is one of the most complex language skills. Several factors make writing in Arabic particularly challenging, such as its right-to-left script orientation and distinct letter forms compared to the Indonesian writing system (Muslimah, 2022). These aspects pose significant difficulties for students who are new to Arabic. Writing requires cognitive engagement and the ability to express ideas clearly in written form (Kuznetsova, 2024). It is a complex activity that involves organizing thoughts logically and presenting them in an appropriate written format according to various linguistic and stylistic conventions (Hanifa et al., 2024; Munawarah & Zulkifli, 2021). However, in practice, developing Arabic writing skills often encounters numerous challenges, including curriculum design, instructional methodologies, and assessment strategies (Muslimah et al., 2025).

Assessment plays a crucial role in the educational process by providing an initial understanding of students' abilities (Muslimah et al., 2024; Muslimah & Karimah, 2024; Muslimah & Widiyanti, 2023). Before instruction begins, teachers need to gain insight into students' competencies to design appropriate learning experiences and select effective materials and methods (Sujinah et al., 2024). In the context of modern assessment, this process is not merely about measuring and collecting information based on specific criteria but also involves formative approaches that support continuous learning, the use of technology for more accurate data analysis, and competency-based assessment strategies tailored to individual student needs (Andriamisa et al., 2023; Khasawneh, 2024).

Summative assessment is a type of evaluation conducted at the end of an instructional period, such as after completing a specific topic or learning phase (Chamisah, 2024; Hadi et al., 2024). Its primary purpose is to measure students' proficiency and comprehension while providing them with feedback. Additionally,



summative assessment offers valuable insights to educators regarding the effectiveness of their teaching methods, supports the monitoring of academic standards and accountability, and motivates students to enhance their learning outcomes (Rao & Banerjee, 2023; Tongtummachat et al., 2024). The use of summative assessment encourages teachers to innovate in their instructional approaches. However, its implementation is given less emphasis in the curriculum than formative assessment in language pre-service teacher education programs in several countries (Yildirim et al., 2024).

The implementation of summative assessment in Arabic language instruction, particularly in writing skills, is crucial for ensuring that students achieve the expected competencies. Nevertheless, challenges in applying summative assessment often arise regarding how assessment results can be effectively utilized to improve learning quality. These challenges stem from issues such as curriculum alignment, skill measurement, rubric development, and standardization, all of which impact the accuracy and effectiveness of the assessments. A key challenge is curriculum alignment, where there is often a mismatch between the test content and the learning objectives, making it difficult to accurately measure student proficiency in Arabic writing (ElMeftahy, 2025; Pujiani, 2024; Tiana & Maruf, 2024). This misalignment can result in assessments that do not fully reflect the skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire, undermining the assessment's validity.

Another challenge concerns skill measurement, where traditional assessment tools often fail to capture the full scope of students' writing abilities. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic barriers can exacerbate these challenges, particularly when assessing students whose native languages differ significantly from Arabic (Almelhes, 2024; Sahrani et al., 2024). The narrow focus of many assessment tools means that they may not effectively assess the nuanced aspects of Arabic writing, such as the application of grammar, vocabulary, and writing style.

Rubric development also presents a significant challenge. Subjectivity in rubric design is a common issue, leading to inconsistencies in how assessments are scored. Additionally, the lack of detailed and constructive feedback in many rubrics prevents students from gaining a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement (Alshakhi, 2021; Nur Azizah et al., 2024; Saputra & Marfuah, 2022). Without clear, actionable feedback, students may struggle to improve their writing skills and may not understand the specific aspects of their work that need attention.

Standardization of assessment practices is another critical issue. Variability in how assessments are conducted and a lack of consensus on the criteria used to evaluate students' work contribute to inconsistencies in assessment outcomes. These disparities can create inequities in how students are judged and may result in unfair evaluations (ElMeftahy, 2025; Inayah et al., 2023; Tiana & Maruf, 2024). Standardizing assessment practices is essential for ensuring that all students are evaluated fairly and based on consistent criteria.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. One key strategy is the integration of diverse assessment methods that cater to different aspects of writing proficiency. Additionally, investing in teacher training is critical for ensuring that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to develop and implement effective assessments. Leveraging technology can also play a pivotal role in improving the accuracy and efficiency of assessments, while fostering collaboration among stakeholders—such as teachers, curriculum developers, and



administrators—can help ensure that assessments align with broader educational goals. By adopting these strategies, educators can create more effective and equitable summative assessments that more accurately reflect student proficiency in Arabic writing, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes for students.

This review of existing studies highlights the importance of addressing the challenges in summative assessment design to ensure that assessments are not only valid and reliable but also aligned with the broader goals of Arabic language education. The research gap lies in the need for further investigation into how these strategies can be effectively implemented, particularly in contexts where there are significant cultural and linguistic challenges. Thus, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive studies that explore innovative solutions to these challenges and contribute to the development of more effective summative assessment frameworks in Arabic writing education.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of summative assessment and its impact on *maharah al-kitabah* (writing skills) in an Islamic boarding school setting (Fernández-Ruiz et al., 2021). Conducted at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahman Kediri, the research involved 28 third-year KMI (*Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*) students and Arabic language teachers. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were carried out in Arabic writing classes to examine assessment practices, teacher-student interactions, and students' engagement with writing tasks. Semi-structured interviews with teachers explored their perceptions of summative assessment, while student interviews focused on their experiences and its perceived impact on writing skills. Additionally, assessment materials such as test papers, grading rubrics, and student writing samples were analyzed to understand assessment criteria, feedback mechanisms, and performance trends.

Data were analyzed using a descriptive thematic analysis approach, beginning with transcription and organization, followed by systematic coding to identify recurring themes (Naeem et al., 2023). Patterns were compared across data sources to ensure reliability through triangulation. The findings were interpreted in relation to existing literature on summative assessment in Arabic language education. Ethical considerations were maintained by obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and adhering to institutional ethical guidelines. This methodological framework ensures a rigorous investigation of summative assessment practices and their influence on Arabic writing skills among KMI students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Assessment in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has undergone several significant changes compared to the previous curriculum (Elmi et al., 2024; Hanifah et al., 2024). These changes are in line with the Ministerial Regulation on Educational Assessment Standards, which emphasizes the importance of holistic, high-quality, and student-centered assessment (Rifa'i & Muslimah, 2024). The primary goal of this standard is to ensure that assessment is conducted in a planned manner aligned with the targeted competencies, implemented based on principles of transparency and effectiveness, attentive to cultural contexts, and reported objectively and



accountably. These principles have been adopted at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri, where teachers are required to design and develop semester-long learning tools as a reference for both instructional implementation and student learning evaluation. The results of these evaluations are then reported to parents at the end of the semester through both formative and summative assessments.

The implementation of these principles directly influences assessment planning, particularly in evaluating writing skills (*maharah kitabah*), which is the main focus of this study. At Pondok Ar-Rahmah, writing assessment is not only based on the final output but also seen as an evolving process. Formative and summative assessments complement each other, offering a comprehensive overview of student progress and supporting the planning of subsequent instructional steps. In this assessment planning, the selection of appropriate methods—such as *imla'*, *insya'*, and *khot* (Arabic calligraphy)—as well as the use of clear and consistent scoring rubrics, play a crucial role in ensuring objectivity in evaluation and transparency in reporting student learning outcomes (Sa'idah et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2023).

By adhering to these principles, learning evaluation serves not only to measure students' competency achievement but also as a diagnostic tool that assists educators in planning more effective and needs-based instruction. This ensures that the learning process remains dynamic, with continuous adjustments informed by evaluation results. The best practices in assessment implementation at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah—including the contextual selection of assessment methods and the integration of formative and summative assessments—provide a strong foundation for improving the overall quality of Arabic language instruction. Therefore, summative assessment at Pondok Ar-Rahmah functions not only as a measurement tool but also as a strategic means to enhance the quality of Arabic language learning within the modern *pesantren* context (Muslimah & Abwa, 2022; Muslimah & Latifah, 2022; Wafiroh & Muslimah, 2023).

Strategic Planning of Summative Assessment in *Maharah Kitabah*

The planning of summative assessment in *maharah kitabah* (writing skills) at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri is carried out with thoughtful consideration and pedagogical awareness. Each step is systematically arranged, referring to the intended learning objectives, the unique characteristics of the students, and teaching approaches relevant to the *pesantren* environment. This planning is not merely administrative in nature but reflects the teacher's genuine effort to implement authentic and meaningful assessment.

One of the selected summative assessment methods is *imla' al-istima'i*, or auditory dictation. This method is considered the most appropriate as it simultaneously measures listening and writing skills in an integrated activity (Annabilah & MZ, 2023). When the teacher reads the text aloud, students are required to listen attentively and then transform the spoken input into written form. This activity demands accuracy in writing Arabic letters (*huruf hijaiyah*), correctness in word structure, and precision in the use of punctuation. Beyond that, it also trains students to focus, be disciplined, and respond to instructions accurately and promptly—skills that are highly essential in the *pesantren* learning context (Ikhlam et al., 2023).

The implementation of this method begins with the teacher reading the text in full, allowing students to grasp the general idea of the content. Then, the text is



read again in segments, part by part, and students write it down as they listen. Once all sections have been completed, the teacher reads the entire text once more. This final stage offers students the opportunity to review their writing and correct any errors. The process is conducted in a serious yet well-directed atmosphere, reflecting the values of discipline and earnestness cultivated within the *pesantren* culture (Ikhrum et al., 2023). With careful planning and a structured method, summative assessment in *maharah kitabah* learning at Ar-Rahmah is not merely a tool to measure learning outcomes, but also a medium for nurturing skills, character, and a strong learning ethic in a holistic manner.

Integration of Formative and Summative Assessment in Improving *Maharah Kitabah*

Although the primary focus of this study is on summative assessment, the role of formative assessment is equally significant within the overall strategy to strengthen students' writing skills. At Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri, formative assessment is not merely a supplement but an integral part of the learning process, designed to continuously track students' skill development. This approach emphasizes that learning is not solely about end results, but rather shaped and guided by ongoing monitoring throughout the instructional process.

Formative assessment is conducted regularly in various forms, such as daily *imla'* (dictation) exercises, weekly writing tests, and assignments to rewrite paragraphs or short texts. These activities not only train students' motor and visual memory regarding Arabic script, but also serve as early indicators to identify individual strengths and weaknesses. Teachers carefully examine these practice results, noting common errors such as incorrect letter formation, inconsistency in using *harakat* (vowel signs), or grammatical weaknesses.

Based on the outcomes of these formative assessments, teachers then design differentiated instructional interventions. For students demonstrating strong understanding, enrichment tasks are provided, such as more complex writing assignments or in-depth discussions on sentence structure. Meanwhile, students who have not yet reached the expected competency receive special remedial sessions with a more personalized approach, including guided writing practice, repetition of foundational material, or access to additional learning resources.

Only after these interventions have been effectively implemented do teachers proceed with the summative assessment as a final evaluation. At this stage, teachers are more confident that students have received adequate support and are ready to demonstrate their learning outcomes to the fullest. Thus, the summative assessment is not conducted abruptly, but becomes the culmination of a structured and student-centered learning journey.

This integrated framework of formative and summative assessment transforms the assessment process into more than just a measurement tool—it becomes a learning strategy in itself. At Pondok Ar-Rahmah, both types of assessment complement and reinforce each other to ensure that students' writing skills develop progressively, measurably, and sustainably, in alignment with the *pesantren's* values of character education and discipline.



Aspect	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Time of Implementation	Before or during the learning process	After the learning process or at the end of a unit/topic
Purpose	To identify students' initial understanding and learning needs	To evaluate the final achievement of writing skill competencies
Methods	Dictation (<i>imla'</i>), simple writing tasks, Q&A	<i>Imla' al-istima'i</i> , essay writing, sentence completion
Evaluation Focus	Diagnostic – to improve the learning process	Summative – to measure students' final learning outcomes
Teacher's Role	To provide feedback and instructional intervention	To assess and classify students' achievements
Outcome	Basis for further intervention/teaching methods	Final score of Arabic writing skills
Example Instruments	Oral questions, initial dictation exercises, short writing tasks	Final dictation test, essay assignments, writing assessment rubrics

***Comparison of Formative and Summative Assessment at
Pondok Ar-Rahmah***

Implementation of Summative Assessment for Evaluating Arabic Writing Skills

The implementation of summative assessment for Arabic writing skills at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah is carried out through a well-planned and structured process, emphasizing the principles of fairness, objectivity, and measurability. This assessment process is a crucial component in measuring the extent to which students' competencies have developed after going through various stages of *maharah al-kitabah* (writing skill) instruction.

The first step taken by the teacher is to establish clear and comprehensive assessment criteria, covering several key aspects of Arabic writing skills. These aspects include mastery of vocabulary relevant to the topic, sentence structure accuracy according to Arabic language rules, correct application of *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology), as well as the clarity and coherence of content. These criteria are designed to reflect the expected writing skills in a holistic way, not only in terms of mechanics but also in terms of substance and style of expression.

In practice, the teacher provides a variety of writing tasks to accommodate students' diverse proficiency levels and to assess their competencies in different contexts. These tasks include writing thematic essays, answering written questions in full sentences, and completing missing parts of sentences or paragraphs. This diversification in task format allows for a more in-depth evaluation of students' writing abilities, avoiding reliance on a single type of assessment.

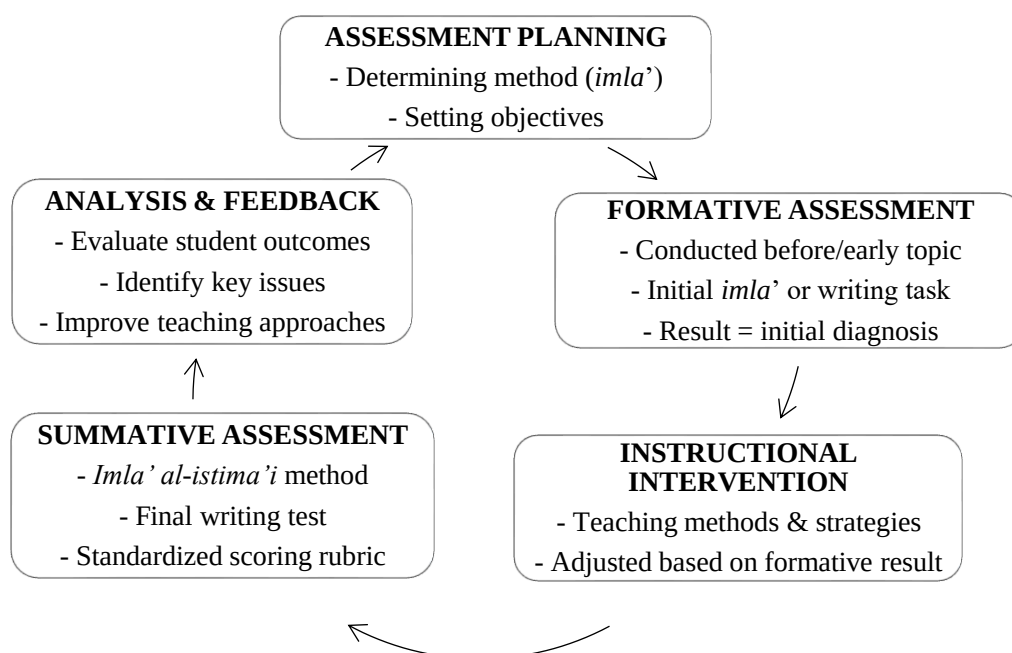
To ensure objectivity and fairness, the teacher uses a standardized and consistent scoring rubric. This rubric is shared with students from the beginning so that they understand the expectations they need to meet. With this rubric in place,



each student's writing is assessed based on the same parameters, minimizing subjectivity and enhancing the transparency of the evaluation process.

After the assessment is conducted, the results are analyzed to show the distribution of student achievement. The data indicate that only around 25.93% of students reached the "good" category according to the set standards, while 74.07% remained below the minimum target. This finding indicates that many students still struggle with writing in Arabic using correct rules and structures. This result is not merely a report but also serves as a key indicator for teachers and the institution to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed. The low level of achievement emphasizes the need for improvements in instructional approaches, reinforcement of foundational writing components, and the provision of additional support such as remedial programs, intensive writing guidance, or training in active vocabulary usage.

Therefore, the implementation of summative assessment at Pondok Ar-Rahmah serves not only as a final evaluation of a learning cycle but also as a pedagogical diagnostic tool. The results provide vital information for formulating more targeted policies and improvement steps to support the holistic and sustainable development of students' writing skills.



Flowchart of the Assessment Process at Pondok Modern Ar-Rahmah Kediri



CONCLUSION

The implementation of summative assessment for Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*) at Pondok Pesantren Modern Ar-Rahmah offers valuable insights into effective and contextually relevant assessment strategies in the pesantren education system. This study reveals several best practices that can serve as references for similar educational institutions aiming to optimize summative assessment. One notable best practice is the use of contextual assessment methods, particularly *imla' al-istima'i*, which aligns well with students' learning characteristics in the pesantren environment—emphasizing memorization, auditory learning, and transcription of classical Arabic texts. This method not only assesses writing accuracy but also enhances key competencies such as concentration, discipline, and responsive listening. Additionally, Ar-Rahmah effectively integrates formative and summative assessments into a cohesive, continuous process. Formative assessments are strategically used to identify students' progress and challenges, which then inform targeted interventions before conducting final summative evaluations.

To ensure fairness and consistency, standardized rubrics with clear criteria are employed, providing both teachers and students with transparent evaluation benchmarks. Moreover, the assessment outcomes are not merely treated as final scores but are analyzed to identify common errors and instructional gaps. This reflective use of assessment data empowers educators to make informed pedagogical decisions and tailor learning improvements accordingly. Through this approach, Ar-Rahmah demonstrates that summative assessment can evolve from a simple measurement tool into a meaningful and empowering learning strategy. The emphasis on contextual relevance, continuity, transparency, and reflective practice makes this model a promising example of how Arabic language instruction can be enhanced within a traditional yet forward-looking educational framework.

Future research is recommended to explore the integration of technology in these best practices—particularly in digitizing the assessment process, utilizing AI-powered feedback tools, and developing digital rubrics—to increase scalability, efficiency, and real-time diagnostics. Such innovation could further support teachers in implementing reflective, data-driven assessments while providing students with interactive and individualized learning experiences.



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