

Improving Arabic Writing Skills through the *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* Method among Grade VIII Students of an Integrated Islamic Junior High School

Nurmiati¹, Magfirah², Andi Arif Pamessangi³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Palopo

Agatis Street, Balandai, Bara District, Palopo City, Indonesia

nurmiati@uinpalopo.ac.id

Abstract. This study aims to improve the Arabic writing skills of grade VIII students through the *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* (guided composition) method at Bajo Barat Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Luwu. This classroom action research, based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, was conducted in two cycles involving eight female students. The study collected data through writing tests assessing four indicators (writing, word completion, word choice, and word arrangement) and field notes. The results showed that the mean score increased from 30.38 in the pre-cycle to 73.00 in Cycle I and 84.75 in Cycle II, with a class N-Gain of 0.78 (high). Learning mastery rose from 0% to 62.5% and finally 100%. Word arrangement showed the greatest gain but remained the weakest sub-skill. These findings indicate that guided composition, supported by model texts and structured substitution practice, effectively improves the writing skills of beginning Arabic learners.

Keywords: *Insya' Al-Muwajjah*; Guided Composition; Arabic Writing Skills; Classroom Action Research; Arabic Learning.

1. Introduction

Writing is the most complex productive skill in foreign language learning because it requires learners to control spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and the organisation of ideas at the same time (Hyland, 2003). In Arabic, this complexity increases because beginners must manage letter forms that change according to their position, verb conjugation according to person and gender, and a word order that differs from Indonesian. Writing skills (*maharah al-kitabah*) are therefore often regarded as the most demanding of the four Arabic language skills for students in Indonesian madrasahs.

Empirical studies confirm these difficulties. Interviews with Arabic lecturers show that learners struggle with limited vocabulary, constructing grammatically correct sentences, and a lack of practical exercises that link grammatical theory to real writing (Awang et al., 2025). Indonesian learners also tend to transfer Indonesian grammatical patterns into their Arabic sentences, producing interference at the grammatical, morphological, and semantic levels (Yuslizar & Bahrudin, 2021). At the junior secondary level, students from non-madrasah backgrounds often have to start writing instruction from the basics, while low motivation further slows their progress (Khairani, 2024).

These problems are closely related to how writing is taught. A bibliometric review of Scopus-indexed studies shows that research on Arabic writing skills remains limited and is concentrated on learning outcomes, e-learning, and technological support (Safrudin et al., 2024). In classrooms,

effective writing instruction integrates structured learning stages, guided practice, visual media, and student worksheets (Aizza et al., 2026). Conversely, learning that offers little variety tends to lower students' interest and learning outcomes, as found in Islamic Religious Education classes in Palopo (Izzah et al., 2026). Teachers therefore need structured strategies that lead beginners step by step from words to sentences.

A similar problem was found at Bajo Barat Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Luwu, South Sulawesi. Preliminary observation and an interview with the Arabic teacher showed that grade VIII students had weak understanding of the material and difficulty applying it, partly because they came from different educational backgrounds. Their writing skills were low, which in turn reduced their motivation and class participation. In the pre-cycle test, none of the eight students reached the minimum mastery criterion of 75, and the class mean was only 30.38. Most students could copy letters and words but almost could not arrange words into Arabic sentences.

One method suited to this level is *Insya' Al-Muwajjah*, or guided composition. In guided composition, students write within limits set by the teacher: they substitute an element of a sentence, complete sentences with missing words, rearrange given words into sentences, or construct sentences based on pictures and prompts. Because the task controls the vocabulary and structures that students must produce, beginners can focus on accuracy before they are asked to write freely (*insya' hurr*). This approach is consistent with the principle that novice second-language writers need models and controlled practice before free composition (Hyland, 2003).

Previous research supports the use of guided composition and structured writing strategies. A quasi-experiment with grade XII students found that the experimental class taught with *insya' muwajjah* achieved a post-test mean of 80.43, compared with 51.74 in the control class (Irdan et al., 2024). Picture-based controlled writing with AI-generated visual stimuli produced a moderate N-Gain of 0.53 among grade X students (Nandatasia & Nugrahawan, 2026). Qualitative studies report that guided composition helps students organise their sentences, although vocabulary retention and creativity remain obstacles (Qomariyah & Fauziyah, 2024), and that continuous *insya'* practice improves i'rab accuracy, vocabulary mastery, and sentence construction (Sholihah & Fanani, 2026).

Classroom action research has also shown that structured strategies can raise Arabic writing achievement within a few cycles. The scramble cooperative model increased the writing scores of senior high school students from 55.32% in Cycle I to 86.61% in Cycle II (Rahing et al., 2022), and animated digital media helped students understand the vocabulary needed for writing (Maula, 2022). In other language skills, the Think-Pair-Share strategy improved the speaking ability of grade 8 madrasah students (Zaid et al., 2024), and the DRTA strategy improved intensive reading among madrasah ibtidaiyah students (Fitriya et al., 2026). Studies in English as a foreign language likewise show that scaffolded writing instruction outperforms conventional teaching (Bataineh & Obeiah, 2016), while arranging words into longer sentence patterns remains the most difficult task for junior secondary students (Juhansar et al., 2022).

Despite this evidence, important gaps remain. Most studies of *insya' muwajjah* either describe its implementation qualitatively or test it with senior secondary and university students. Few studies document how guided composition develops each sub-skill of writing, cycle by cycle, among junior secondary beginners in small rural schools with mixed educational backgrounds. Previous studies also tend to report only overall scores or mastery percentages, so it remains unclear which sub-skill improves first and which remains weakest, information that teachers need to sequence guided writing tasks.

Based on these gaps, this study applied the *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* method through classroom action research and analysed students' progress on four writing indicators: writing, word

completion, word choice, and word arrangement. The study aims to (1) describe the implementation of the *Insyah' Al-Muwajjah* method in Arabic writing lessons and (2) analyse the improvement of students' Arabic writing skills from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. The novelty of this study lies in its indicator-level analysis across cycles, which shows how guided composition moves beginning writers from word-level accuracy to sentence construction. The findings are expected to offer practical guidance for Arabic teachers in madrasahs and integrated Islamic schools with limited resources.

2. Method

This study used Classroom Action Research (CAR) with the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, which consists of four iterative stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2013). The research was conducted collaboratively: the first author acted as the teacher-researcher, while the Arabic teacher of the school acted as the observer and collaborator. The research was conducted in two cycles, and the results of reflection in Cycle I were used to revise the plan for Cycle II.

The subjects of this study were all eight grade VIII students of Bajo Barat Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, all of whom were female. The school is located in a rural area and had 28 students in three classes. The research was conducted in August–September 2024. The learning material was daily activities at home (*al-a'mal al-yaumiyyah*), focusing on present-tense verbs (*fi'l mudari'*) conjugated according to pronouns.

The actions applied four guided composition techniques: substituting one element of a sentence (*istبدال*), completing sentences with missing words, rearranging given words into sentences, and constructing sentences based on pictures. Cycle I consisted of two meetings of 2 × 45 minutes. Cycle II consisted of two meetings of 2 × 60 minutes and included revisions from the reflection of Cycle I: students first examined a model text and its sentence structure, and practised substituting pronouns and verbs orally and on the board before writing individually.

Data were collected through writing tests, field notes, an interview, and documentation. The writing test was administered before the actions (pre-cycle) and at the end of each cycle. It was prepared based on the learning objectives of the topic and assessed four indicators, each with a maximum score of 25, as shown in Table 1. Field notes recorded the learning process, student participation, and difficulties in each meeting, while the interview with the Arabic teacher provided preliminary information about students' problems.

Table 1. Indicators of Arabic Writing Skills

Indicator	Aspect Assessed	Maximum Score
Writing (<i>kitabah</i>)	Forming Arabic letters and words correctly	25
Word completion (<i>ikmal al-kalimah</i>)	Supplying missing words or letters in sentences	25
Word choice (<i>ikhtiyar al-kalimah</i>)	Selecting the word that fits the sentence context	25
Word arrangement (<i>tarkib al-kalimah</i>)	Ordering words into correct simple sentences	25
Total		100

Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis focused on test results, while qualitative analysis described the learning process based on field notes. Individual scores, class mean, learning mastery, and normalised gain were calculated using the following formulas:

a) Class mean: $X = \Sigma X / N$

- b) Learning mastery (Guskey, 2010): $\text{Mastery (\%)} = (\text{number of students scoring } \geq 75 / \text{total students}) \times 100$
- c) Normalised gain (Hake, 1998): $g = (\text{score in Cycle II} - \text{pre-cycle score}) / (100 - \text{pre-cycle score})$

Students' scores were classified into the categories shown in Table 2, and N-Gain was interpreted as high ($g \geq 0.70$), moderate ($0.30 \leq g < 0.70$), or low ($g < 0.30$) (Hake, 1998).

Table 2. Categories of Writing Scores

Score Range	Category
93-100	Excellent
84-92	Good
75-83	Adequate
< 75	Below mastery

A student was considered to have achieved mastery when she scored at least 75, in accordance with the school's Minimum Completeness Criteria (MCC). The action was considered successful when at least 80% of students achieved mastery. If this criterion was met in Cycle II, the cycles were stopped.

3. Results

This classroom action research was conducted in grade VIII of Bajo Barat Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Luwu, and involved eight students. The *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* method was applied in two cycles, each consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The results showed a consistent increase in students' writing scores and learning mastery from the pre-cycle to Cycle II.

Before the actions were taken, students' Arabic writing skills were very low. Pre-cycle scores ranged from 19 to 40, with a mean of 30.38, and none of the students reached the MCC. Students could form some Arabic letters and words, with a mean of 15.38 out of 25 on the writing indicator, but they could hardly arrange words into sentences, with a mean of only 1.88 on the word arrangement indicator.

During Cycle I, students practised substitution, sentence completion, word arrangement, and picture-based sentence tasks on the topic of daily activities. Field notes showed that students began to construct sentences that matched the pictures, wrote short guided paragraphs using present-tense verbs and pronouns, and volunteered to write their answers on the board. The class mean increased to 73.00, and five of the eight students (62.5%) reached the MCC. However, this result did not meet the success criterion of 80%.

The reflection stage of Cycle I identified that three students still made errors in conjugating the verb to match its subject when constructing their own sentences. Therefore, the plan for Cycle II was revised: the teacher-researcher began each lesson with a model text, discussed its sentence structure, and guided students to practise pronoun-verb substitution orally and on the board before writing individually. The duration of each meeting was also extended from 2×45 minutes to 2×60 minutes.

After these improvements, Cycle II showed further progress. Field notes recorded that students answered the test independently and used a wider range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. The class mean increased to 84.75, and all eight students (100%) reached the MCC, so the success criterion was met. Each student's scores in every stage are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Writing Scores per Cycle

Student	Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II	N-Gain	Category (Cycle II)
S1	40	82	90	0.83	Good
S2	27	75	84	0.78	Good
S3	30	79	89	0.84	Good
S4	36	77	85	0.77	Good
S5	31	70	86	0.80	Good
S6	25	62	79	0.72	Adequate
S7	19	62	78	0.73	Adequate
S8	35	77	87	0.80	Good

Table 3 shows that every student improved in each cycle. The individual N-Gain ranged from 0.72 to 0.84, so all students were in the high category. The two students with the lowest pre-cycle scores (S6 and S7) also achieved high gains and reached mastery in Cycle II. The comparison of class results per cycle is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of Learning Outcomes per Cycle

Stage	Mean Score	Lowest-Highest	Mastery (%)	Category
Pre-cycle	30.38	19-40	0.0	Not achieved
Cycle I	73.00	62-82	62.5	Not achieved
Cycle II	84.75	78-90	100.0	Achieved

The mean score increased by 42.62 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle I and by a further 11.75 points from Cycle I to Cycle II. The class N-Gain from the pre-cycle to Cycle II was 0.78, which is in the high category. Learning mastery increased by 62.5% in Cycle I and by a further 37.5% in Cycle II.

Analysis of each indicator showed that all four aspects of writing improved, although at different rates (Table 5 and Figure 1). Word completion and word choice increased sharply in Cycle I, reaching 20.88 and 18.38, respectively. Word arrangement showed the largest overall gain (+17.62), but it remained the lowest indicator in Cycle II, with a mean of 19.50. The writing indicator, which was already the strongest in the pre-cycle, showed the smallest gain (+6.50).

Table 5. Mean Score per Indicator (Maximum 25)

Indicator	Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II	Gain
Writing	15.38	19.00	21.88	+6.50
Word completion	8.75	20.88	22.88	+14.13
Word choice	4.38	18.38	20.50	+16.12
Word arrangement	1.88	14.75	19.50	+17.62

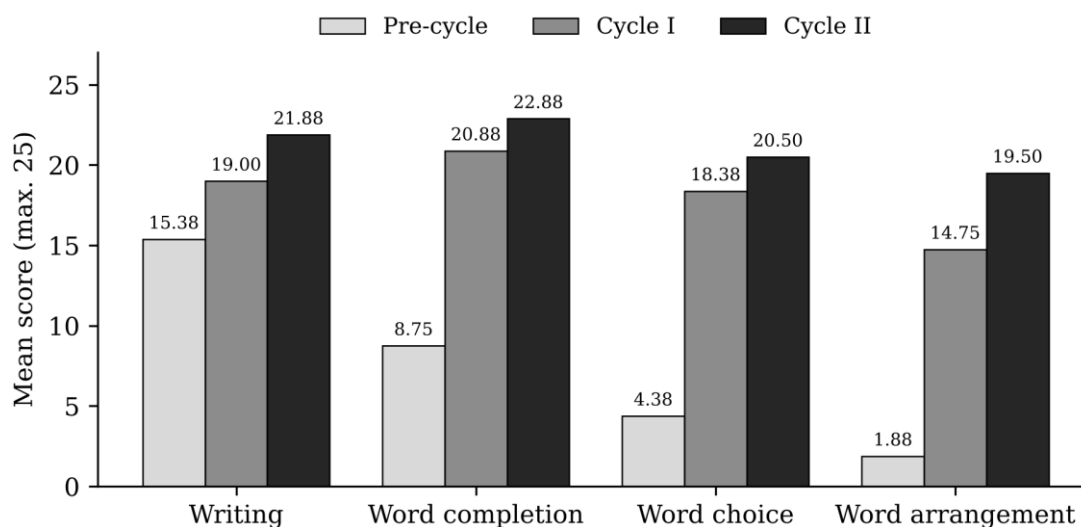


Figure 1. Mean Score per Writing Indicator across Cycles

Qualitative data from field notes were consistent with the test results. In Cycle I, students were enthusiastic about writing on the board, but several still hesitated when they had to build sentences without a complete model. In Cycle II, after studying the model text and practising substitution together, students completed the tasks more independently, used more varied vocabulary and sentence examples, and found it easier to construct sentences on different topics.

4. Discussion

This study shows that the *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* method consistently improved the Arabic writing skills of grade VIII students. The class mean rose from 30.38 to 73.00 in Cycle I and 84.75 in Cycle II, and learning mastery increased from 0% to 62.5% and finally 100%, exceeding the success criterion of 80%. The class N-Gain of 0.78, together with individual gains between 0.72 and 0.84, indicates that the improvement was not limited to the more able students. The two students with the lowest initial scores also reached mastery, which suggests that guided composition is accessible to beginners with weak foundations.

The pattern across indicators explains how the method works. Guided composition controls the language that students must produce: in substitution and completion tasks, the sentence frame is already provided, and students only need to supply one element. This reduces the cognitive load on beginners, allowing them to focus on a single decision at a time (Sweller, 1988). As a result, word completion and word choice increased sharply in Cycle I. Word arrangement, in contrast, requires students to coordinate word order, verb conjugation, and subject-verb agreement simultaneously, so it developed more slowly and remained the weakest indicator. This sequence is in line with the view that second-language writers progress from controlled to freer production as their command of forms becomes secure (Hyland, 2003).

The persistence of word arrangement as the most difficult sub-skill is also consistent with previous findings. Juhansar et al. (2022) found that junior secondary students performed worst when arranging words into longer sentence patterns, while Yuslizar and Bahrudin (2021) showed that Indonesian learners tend to transfer Indonesian word order and grammatical patterns into Arabic. The errors observed in Cycle I, namely conjugating the verb incorrectly according to its subject, reflect this difficulty. Awang et al. (2025) similarly identified sentence construction as one of the main obstacles in Arabic writing and recommended more systematic, structured exercises.

The revisions in Cycle II played an important role in overcoming this difficulty. Examining a model text and practising pronoun-verb substitution orally before writing functioned as scaffolding, a form of temporary support that enables learners to complete tasks they cannot yet perform alone (Wood et al., 1976). Word arrangement rose from 14.75 to 19.50 in Cycle II, the largest gain of any indicator in that cycle, and the three students who had not reached mastery in Cycle I all achieved it. This finding is consistent with Bataineh and Obeiah (2016), who reported that scaffolding-based writing instruction outperformed conventional teaching in overall writing performance and its sub-skills. It also demonstrates the value of the reflective cycle in classroom action research, in which the second cycle specifically targets the weakness identified in the first (Kemmis et al., 2013), as also shown by Al-Mulk et al. (2026) in Islamic Religious Education learning.

The findings of this study strengthen and extend previous research on guided composition. The Cycle II mean of 84.75 is comparable to the post-test mean of 80.43 achieved by the experimental class in Irdan et al. (2024). However, that study involved senior secondary students and a control group. Sholihah and Fanani (2026) reported that continuous *insya'* practice improved vocabulary mastery and sentence construction, the same areas that showed the largest gains in this study. The difficulty in turning vocabulary into coherent sentences noted by Qomariyah and Fauziyah (2024) is reflected in the slower development of word arrangement found here. This study adds indicator-level evidence showing the order in which these sub-skills develop among junior secondary beginners.

The results are also consistent with other classroom action research on Arabic writing. Rahing et al. (2022) found that the scramble cooperative model increased writing scores from 55.32% to 86.61% in two cycles, a pattern of improvement similar to that found in this study. Both studies indicate that structured tasks requiring students to rearrange or complete given language elements are effective for beginners. Aizza et al. (2026) likewise found that structured learning stages, guided practice, and student worksheets contributed to consistent development of sentence construction in elementary Arabic writing.

The N-Gain of 0.78 in this study is higher than the 0.53 reported by Nandatasia and Nugrahawan (2026) for picture-based controlled writing. However, the two results should not be compared directly, because this study involved a very small class without a control group, whereas their study used a quasi-experimental design. What both studies share is the principle of controlled writing: limiting what students must produce so that they can build accuracy step by step.

Theoretically, this study supports the view that writing development in a foreign language moves from controlled practice to independent composition. Guided composition provides the controlled practice stage, while model texts and oral substitution act as scaffolds that are gradually withdrawn as students become more independent. The indicator pattern found in this study, in which word-level accuracy is achieved first and sentence-level arrangement follows, offers a practical sequence for designing *insya'* activities for beginners.

Practically, Arabic teachers can apply guided composition by starting with word completion and word choice tasks, then giving more time and modelling to word arrangement, particularly to verb-subject agreement. The method requires few resources, which makes it suitable for small rural schools. At the same time, guided composition can be enriched with learning technology. Research trends show that technology and e-learning are important clusters in Arabic writing research (Safrudin et al., 2024); digital media have helped students understand writing vocabulary (Maula, 2022); and AI-generated pictures have been used as prompts for controlled writing (Nandatasia & Nugrahawan, 2026). Digital word-ordering exercises with immediate feedback could therefore strengthen the weakest sub-skill identified in this study.

This study has several limitations. The participants were one class of eight female students, so the results cannot be generalised to other contexts. As classroom action research without a control group, the study demonstrates improvement within this class. However, it cannot separate the effect of guided composition from other factors, such as repeated testing and increased teacher attention. The study also relied on test scores and field notes, without structured observation of student activity or student questionnaires. Future research should use a quasi-experimental design with larger and mixed-gender classes, parallel test forms, and delayed post-tests. It should examine whether improvements in guided writing transfer to free composition (*insya' hurr*).

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of this classroom action research, it can be concluded that the *Insya' Al-Muwajjah* method improves the Arabic writing skills of grade VIII students at Bajo Barat Integrated Islamic Junior High School, Luwu. The method was implemented through substitution, sentence completion, word arrangement, and picture-based tasks, and was refined in Cycle II through model texts and oral pronoun-verb substitution practice. The class mean increased from 30.38 in the pre-cycle to 73.00 in Cycle I and 84.75 in Cycle II, with a high N-Gain of 0.78, and learning mastery increased from 0% to 62.5% and 100%. All four indicators improved; word arrangement showed the greatest gain but remained the weakest sub-skill.

Arabic teachers are advised to apply guided composition in stages, beginning with completion and word choice tasks and giving additional modelling to sentence arrangement and verb-subject agreement. Further research is recommended to test this method with larger samples and a control group, to examine the transfer of guided writing to free composition, and to integrate guided composition with digital learning media to strengthen students' sentence construction.

6. References

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