



Optimizing Writing Skills through Problem-Based Learning and Scrabble Media in Elementary Schools

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Abstract:

Maharah kitabah (writing skills) is an important component in Arabic language learning that requires an innovative approach. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of using the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model and scrabble media in improving Arabic writing skills of students at SDIT Al Hidayah Palembang. This study uses a combination research method (mixed method) with a sequential explanatory model, involving 23 fifth-grade students who became the experimental class. The research instruments include observation, interviews, documentation, pre-test, and post-test. The results showed that the application of PBL and scrabble media significantly improved Arabic writing skills, with an average increase in post-test scores reaching 85.87 compared to the average pre-test of only 65.00. The findings of the study revealed that the combination of the PBL model and scrabble media was effective in optimizing maharah kitabah, increasing active participation, learning motivation, and students' creativity in writing Arabic. This study provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of innovative and interactive Arabic language learning strategies.

Keywords: *Maharah Kitabah, Problem-Based Learning, Scrabble Media, Arabic.*

Abstrak:

Maharah kitabah (keterampilan menulis) merupakan komponen penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang membutuhkan pendekatan inovatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis efektivitas penggunaan model Problem Based Learning (PBL) dan media scrabble dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis bahasa Arab siswa SDIT Al Hidayah Palembang. Penelitian menggunakan metode penelitian kombinasi (mix method) dengan model sequential explanatory, melibatkan siswa kelas V yang menjadi kelas eksperimen berjumlah 23 orang. Instrumen penelitian mencakup observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, pre-test dan post-test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan PBL dan media scrabble secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan menulis bahasa Arab, dengan peningkatan nilai rata-rata post-test mencapai 85,87 dibandingkan rata-rata pre-test yang hanya 65,00. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa kombinasi model PBL dan media scrabble efektif dalam mengoptimalkan maharah kitabah, meningkatkan partisipasi aktif, motivasi belajar, dan kreativitas siswa dalam menulis bahasa Arab. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis dan praktis dalam pengembangan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Arab yang inovatif dan interaktif.

Kata Kunci: *Maharah Kitabah, Problem-Based Learning, Media Scrabble, Bahasa Arab.*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing (maharah al-kitabah) is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, requiring not only vocabulary knowledge but also the ability to express ideas coherently, grammatically, and logically. Among the four language skills, listening (istima'), speaking (kalam), reading (qira'ah), and writing (kitabah), writing is considered the most complex because it demands simultaneous integration of productive language functions (Ismail et al., 2023; Mottaghizadeh & Khanabadi, 2020; Ritonga et al., 2021). In Arabic language education, especially at the elementary school level, the mastery of writing plays a vital role in reinforcing students' linguistic comprehension, including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary (Khalid & Aslam, 2024; Rouabhi et al., 2024). Despite its significance, Arabic writing instruction in early education often faces pedagogical challenges, including limited student motivation, insufficient scaffolding, and conventional teaching practices that fail to engage young learners.

To address these instructional gaps, innovative learning models and interactive media are increasingly seen as essential. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is one such student-centered approach that promotes critical thinking, collaborative exploration, and real-life problem-solving, which aligns with the developmental needs of elementary students (Pujiati, 2022; Solimando, 2022). In the context of Arabic language instruction, PBL facilitates deeper engagement with linguistic content and encourages students to apply grammar and vocabulary meaningfully within writing tasks. Moreover, PBL nurtures learner autonomy and participation, key elements often missing in traditional Arabic writing instruction (Li et al., 2023; Visser et al., 2020). However, the successful implementation of PBL requires complementary learning tools that are both pedagogically effective and appealing to young learners.

Scrabble, as an educational game, offers potential as an engaging medium for supporting writing development. Adapted into Arabic, Scrabble can help students explore word structures, reinforce vocabulary, and stimulate active language production through play-based learning (Yang et al., 2024; Yayuk & Husamah, 2020). It also cultivates critical thinking and spelling accuracy, which are essential for early writing skill formation. When used alongside a PBL framework, Scrabble becomes more than a game; it transforms into a tool for inquiry-based writing that enhances both motivation and retention. Prior studies have shown that integrating game-based learning with language instruction significantly improves students' participation and learning outcomes.

Despite the growing literature on PBL and game-based learning, few studies have explored the synergy between both approaches in Arabic writing instruction, especially in elementary Islamic schools. Most existing works treat PBL and educational games as separate interventions, overlooking their combined potential to optimize maharah kitabah in an integrated and developmentally appropriate manner. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the effectiveness of combining the PBL model with Arabic Scrabble media to enhance students' writing skills. Focusing on elementary-level learners, the research aims to improve their writing performance, increase motivation, and introduce a replicable strategy for creative Arabic instruction. The originality of the study lies in the integration of two active learning strategies within a linguistic and age-sensitive framework, contributing to both the theory and practice of Arabic language education at the foundational level.

RESEARCH METHOD

The approaches used in this study are qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative

approach is used to describe quantitative data related to the effectiveness of maharah kitabah learning using the problem-based learning model and assisted by Scrabble media (Mao et al., 2020). The qualitative approach to explain the reasons for the effectiveness of the problem-based learning model and assisted by Scrabble media, is reviewed from the perceptions of experimental students who were given treatment. Therefore, this study uses a combination research method with a sequential explanatory model, because this study begins by collecting quantitative data and then continues by collecting qualitative data as an explanation of the data from the results of the quantitative analysis carried out (Gupta et al., 2020).

The population in this study was students of Al-Hidayah Palembang Integrated Islamic Elementary School. The sample taken was 5th-grade students, totaling approximately 23 people, as an experimental class that would be given treatment. The data collection method was by using a test to measure the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning model and the assistance of Scrabble media and interviews to describe opinions related to student perceptions during the treatment using the Problem-Based Learning model and the assistance of Scrabble media in the maharah kitabah learning process. The data analysis used was quantitative data analysis, which began with a descriptive analysis test, a normality test, a Wilcoxon test, a homogeneity test, and a comparative Mann-Whitney test using SPSS. The qualitative data used the Miles and Huberman technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Maharah kitabah learning using the Problem-Based Learning model and assisted by Scrabble media on the Fil-Ma'mal wal-maktabatil Madrasati material. The material taught was taken directly by the researcher from the book used to find out whether this approach is suitable for Maharah Kitabah learning at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School level. The researcher conducted several tests as follows:

Descriptive Analysis

To describe research data such as the number of data points, the highest value, the lowest value, the average, etc., descriptive analysis is carried out with the following data:

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nilai Pre-Test	23	60	70	65.00	3.989
Nilai Post-Test	23	80	90	85.87	3.252
Valid N (listwise)	23				

Based on the table above, it is explained that there are 23 students in the experimental class. The experimental group experienced a significant increase in average scores, from 65.00 in the pre-test to 85.87 in the post-test. This provides an initial picture of how the experimental class developed during the study.

Normality Test

To test the effectiveness of the results of this treatment, a normality test was carried out with the following data:

Table 2. Normality Test

Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a	Shapiro-Wilk
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		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Hasil Belajar Siswa	Pre-Test Kitabah	,199	23	,018	,810	23	<,001
	Post-Test Kitabah	,301	23	<,001	,788	23	<,001

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the significance value (Sig.) for all data in both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test is <0.05 , so it can be concluded that the research data is not normally distributed. Because the research data is not normally distributed, a non-parametric statistical test is used, namely the Wilcoxon test, as a substitute for the parametric statistical test.

Wilcoxon Test

The Wilcoxon test is used to test whether there is a difference in the average between two paired samples. This test is part of non-parametric statistics and can be used as an alternative to the paired sample t-test when the data is not normally distributed. Because the previous data was not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon test was carried out as follows:

Table 3. Wilcoxon Test

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post-Test Kitabah - Pre-Test Kitabah	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	0,00	0,00
	Positive Ranks	23 ^b	12,00	276,00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	23		

a. Post-Test Kitabah < Pre-Test Kitabah

b. Post-Test Kitabah > Pre-Test Kitabah

c. Post-Test Kitabah = Pre-Test Kitabah

Test Statistics^a

	Post-Test Kitabah - Pre-Test Kitabah
Z	-4.262 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on the table above, it is known that Asymp Sig (2-tailed) has a value of 0.000. Because the value of $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that there is a difference between the learning outcomes for the pre-test and post-test. So it can also be concluded that there is an effectiveness of using the Problem-Based Learning approach in learning maharah kitabah in students who are given treatment.

Homogen Test

The homogeneity test is used to determine whether data from two or more groups have the same (homogeneous) or different (heterogeneous) diversity (variance). This test is important in statistical analysis, especially as a requirement for using parametric tests such as the t-test. If the data between groups have the same variance, then the parametric test can be carried out more validly. Conversely, if the data is not homogeneous, then it is advisable to use a non-parametric test. In this study, the homogeneity test was applied to check whether the pre-test and post-test data in the experimental class had similar variances or not. By knowing the results of this test, researchers can determine the right type of statistical test to use in testing the hypothesis. If the results show that the data is homogeneous, then a parametric test can be carried out. However, if not, then alternatives such as the Mann-Whitney test are more appropriate choices in analyzing differences between data groups.

Tabel 4. Homogen Test

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Student Learning Outcomes	Based on the Mean	,911	2	20	,418
	Based on the Median	,637	2	20	,539
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	,637	2	19,632	,539
	Based on the trimmed mean	,944	2	20	,406

Based on the table above, the significance value (Sig.) based on Mean is 0.418, which is greater than 0.05. This shows that the variance of the pre-test and post-test data in the experimental class is the same or homogeneous. This homogeneity is one of the requirements in conducting parametric tests such as the independent sample t-test. However, even though the data is homogeneous, the t-test can only be used if both requirements are met, namely the data must be normally distributed and homogeneous. In this case, although the data is homogeneous, the data is not normally distributed, so the t-test cannot be used. Therefore, the researcher used an alternative non-parametric test, namely the Mann-Whitney U test. This test does not require data normality and is suitable for comparing two unpaired samples. The use of this test allows researchers to still test the differences between the pre-test and post-test statistically even though the normal distribution assumption is not met.

Mann-Whitney U Test

To find out whether there is a difference in the average between two unpaired samples, the Mann-Whitney test is used. This test is included in the type of non-parametric statistics, so it does not require the data to be normally distributed like other parametric tests. This makes the Mann-Whitney test very useful when the data does not meet the assumption of normality or when the sample size is relatively small. This test works by comparing the ranks of all the values in both groups, not the raw values, so it is more robust

Table 5. Mann-Whitney Signed Ranks

Kelas		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Hasil Belajar Kitabah	Post-test	23	35,00	805,00
	Pre-test	23	12,00	276,00
	Total	46		

Test Statistics^a

	Student Learning Outcomes
Mann-Whitney U	,000
Wilcoxon W	276,000
Z	-5,932
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<0,001

a. Grouping Variable: Kelas

non-normal data distributions. In practice, the Mann-Whitney test is used as an alternative to the independent sample t-test when the assumption of normality is not met. Thus, this test is widely used in social, educational, and health research that uses ordinal data or non-normal interval/ratio data. The results of this test help researchers determine whether the difference between the two groups of data is statistically significant or not.

Based on the table above, the Asymp Sig (2-tailed) value is <0.001. Because <0.001 < 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a difference between the pre-test and post-test values in learning Maharah Kitabah after the use of the problem-based learning model and the assistance of Scrabble media for students in the experimental class. Because this difference is significant, it can be concluded that the use of the problem-based learning approach and the assistance of Scrabble media are effectively applied in learning Maharah Kitabah at SD Islam Terpadu Al-Hidayah Palembang.

Discussion

The results of this analysis are by the results of an interview with ANA, one of the students who stated that, "Learning Arabic, which was previously taught using conventional methods, felt boring when studying. However, after the application of the problem-based learning approach and the assistance of Scrabble media, learning became more enjoyable because we collaborated with other friends and felt challenged to solve problems formed from the problem-based learning approach and Scrabble media. Even though we studied in groups, we still received guidance and direction, so we could ask questions if we had difficulty. " The same thing was also conveyed by AKA, one of the students who stated that "I am not very good at writing Arabic without looking at books, but

after studying with the PBL model and scrabble media, it helped me to recognize the description of letters from vocabulary and I can connect them myself." DY, one of the students, also added that, "I enjoy learning Arabic with the PBL model and scrabble media, because I like to learn in a fun and exciting atmosphere so that I am enthusiastic to follow the learning process until the end".

Based on the results of interviews with several students, it appears that students are very enthusiastic about learning Arabic with a problem-based learning approach and Scrabble media, because several factors include the Interactivity Aspect, interactive games such as Scrabble encourage social and cognitive interaction between students. Scrabble media allows students to collaborate, communicate, and help each other in composing Arabic words, creating a dynamic and enjoyable learning experience (Abdullah, 2024; Gouraguine et al., 2022; Wachidah et al., 2020). The problem-based learning approach emphasizes that PBL builds student interest through real challenges. In the context of Arabic scrabble, students are faced with the "problem" of composing words with limited letters, triggering curiosity and creative thinking (Arifin et al., 2024; Setiawan Putri et al., 2024; Shevchenkoa et al., 2024).

The need for a responsive education system drives a change from traditional teaching methods to a more interactive and student-centered learning model. Which is in line with the concept of PBL and scrabble media. In the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model approach, and scrabble media are innovative approaches that position students as active subjects in the learning process (Franchi et al., 2023; Mislikhah, 2021). PBL encourages students to explore problems independently, develop critical thinking skills, and build knowledge through hands-on experience. In the context of Arabic, this means that students do not simply receive information from teachers, but actively seek, process, and use vocabulary in real contexts through the challenge of playing Scrabble (Isnin, 2024; Sain, 2025; Susilawati et al., 2023).

The use of PBL and scrabble media has the potential to change the paradigm of learning to write Arabic from a conventional, passive approach to an active, interesting learning strategy that can stimulate students' cognitive development (Aziz & Sain, 2025; Baharun, 2023; Umar & Khaer, 2024). The essence of learning Arabic. A comprehensive approach to learning Arabic goes beyond just mastering linguistic skills, but rather focuses more on building a positive affection for the language. The growth of love and interest will encourage the emergence of intrinsic motivation that is much more meaningful than external motivation, which is temporary and dependent on external factors. Quality Arabic learning is reflected in a pleasant and responsible learning atmosphere (Bali & Heru, 2024; Nisa' & R, 2024; Putri, 2024). Authentic assessment is an important indicator, which is not limited to cognitive aspects alone. Language is seen as a cultural work of art that requires happiness in the practice of its use, although still within the scope of learning materials.

Arabic writing skills are mandatory material for elementary school students. The most optimal phase of language development occurs in childhood, especially before entering adolescence. During this period, the brain's capacity to receive, process, and express foreign languages, including Arabic, is at its peak. Writing skills (maharah kitabah) are an integral component in building holistic language skills. Through a continuous learning process, it is hoped that students will be able to develop Arabic writing skills, which will increase their chances of mastering Arabic as a foreign language when they are adults, and provide additional useful Islamic insights. Therefore, learning Arabic, especially maharah kitabah, requires comprehensive planning, including materials,

methods, and a mature evaluation system. The main goal is not just to complete the material, but to create intellectual challenges that encourage students to master Arabic efficiently and interestingly.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach in learning Maharah Kitabah at SD Islam Terpadu Al-Hidayah Palembang showed high effectiveness, with a success rate of <0.001 . This shows that PBL and Scrabble media are suitable for implementation at the elementary school level to overcome students' difficulties in writing Arabic by presenting a more interactive and enjoyable learning model. The use of Problem-Based Learning allows students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while Scrabble media helps students enrich their vocabulary and understand the structure of writing words in Arabic in an interesting and competitive way, so that learning becomes enjoyable. For further research, it is recommended to explore other learning methods that can be combined with the problem-based learning model or scrabble media, such as cooperative learning or think-pair-share, to increase student motivation and good learning outcomes.

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