



Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Arab

P-ISSN : [2722-2675](https://doi.org/10.2722/2675), E-ISSN : [2722-3434](https://doi.org/10.2722/3434)Available online: <https://jurnal.stain-madina.ac.id/index.php/ej>

MNEMONIC STORYTELLING AS A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO ENHANCING ARABIC WRITING COMPETENCE

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Abstract: Imagine a classroom where Arabic writing, often perceived as a rigid and intimidating skill, transforms into an engaging narrative journey filled with vivid stories and emotional connections. What if students could master complex grammatical structures and expand their vocabulary not through rote memorization, but by weaving them into unforgettable tales? This study breaks conventional norms by introducing mnemonic storytelling as a revolutionary psycholinguistic strategy to enhance Arabic writing competence among students at Darullughah Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School. The research employs a qualitative approach, involving 30 students aged 16–18 years, selected through purposive sampling. Over six weeks, participants engaged in weekly mnemonic storytelling sessions, integrating key grammatical rules and vocabulary into culturally rich narratives. Data were collected via observations, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of writing samples. The findings reveal significant improvements in grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression, underscoring the effectiveness of mnemonic storytelling as an emotionally engaging and cognitively efficient teaching tool. This study not only redefines how Arabic writing is taught but also advocates for storytelling as a core pedagogical strategy. Future research should explore its adaptability across diverse educational settings to amplify its impact on language education.

Keywords: Mnemonic storytelling, Arabic writing skills, psycholinguistics, vocabulary acquisition, innovative language learning.

مستخلص البحث: تخيل فصلاً دراسياً تتحوّل فيه مهارة الكتابة العربية، التي يُنظر إليها غالباً على أنها مهارة جافة ومخيفة، إلى رحلة سردية ممتعة مليئة بالقصص الحية والروابط العاطفية العميقة. ماذا لو تمكّن الطلاب من إتقان التراكيب النحوية المعقّدة وتوسيع مفرداتهم ليس من خلال الحفظ المجرد، بل عبر نسجها في حكايات لا تُنسى؟ يتحدى هذا البحث الأعراف التقليدية من خلال تقديم "السرد القصصي الاستعاني" كاستراتيجية نفس-لغوية ثورية لتعزيز مهارة الكتابة باللغة العربية لدى طلاب "معهد دار اللغة والدعوة الإسلامية". يعتمد البحث على المنهج النوعي، ويشمل 30 طالباً

تتراوح أعمارهم بين ١٦-١٨ عامًا تم اختيارهم بطريقة هادفة. على مدى ستة أسابيع، شارك الطلاب في جلسات أسبوعية للسرد القصصي الاستعاني، حيث تم دمج القواعد النحوية الأساسية والمفردات ضمن سياقات ثقافية غنية. جُمعت البيانات من خلال الملاحظات المباشرة، والمقابلات شبه المنظمة، وتحليل عينات الكتابة. أظهرت النتائج تحسنًا كبيرًا في الاحتفاظ بالقواعد النحوية، واكتساب المفردات، والتعبير الإبداعي، مما يؤكد فعالية السرد القصصي الاستعاني كأداة تعليمية تجمع بين التأثير العاطفي والكفاءة المعرفية. لا يعيد هذا البحث فقط تعريف طرق تعليم الكتابة باللغة العربية، بل يدعو أيضًا إلى اعتماد السرد القصصي كاستراتيجية تربوية أساسية. ينبغي أن تستكشف الأبحاث المستقبلية إمكانية تطبيق هذه الاستراتيجية عبر بيئات تعليمية متنوعة لتعزيز أثرها على تعليم اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرد القصصي الاستعاني، مهارات الكتابة العربية، النفس-اللغويات، اكتساب المفردات، تعلم اللغة المبتكر.

A. Introduction

Arabic writing holds a central role in linguistic proficiency, particularly in educational institutions such as Darullughah Wadda'wah, where the language functions as both an instructional and spiritual medium. Mastery of Arabic writing equips students to articulate their thoughts, engage with classical texts, and contribute meaningfully to academic discourse. Despite its critical importance, many students face challenges in mastering Arabic writing due to its intricate grammatical structures, extensive vocabulary, and unique stylistic conventions¹.

Traditional approaches to teaching Arabic writing, which often rely on rote memorization and mechanical exercises², fall short in addressing the creative and contextual dimensions of the skill. These methods lack engagement and fail to prepare students to apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts, leaving a gap for more innovative pedagogical strategies. Darullughah Wadda'wah (DALWA), known for its advanced Arabic language instruction, acknowledges this challenge. To ensure continuity in language skills development, particularly with the influx of new

¹ Rasha Soliman dan Saussan Khalil, "The Teaching of Arabic as a Community Language in the UK," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 27, no. 9 (20 Oktober 2024): 1246–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2063686>.

² Elsayed Elsisy, "AFL Students' Perception of Using Mnemonics as a Strategy to Enhance Their Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention" (American University in Cairo, 2023), <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/2205>.

students and alumni engaging in various fields, DALWA continually evaluates and refines its teaching methodologies.

Contextual storytelling has emerged as a promising alternative. By combining narrative techniques with contextual learning, it integrates linguistic elements into culturally and socially relevant scenarios, fostering deeper engagement. This approach is rooted in the rich tradition of Arabic storytelling, offering students an opportunity to enhance their linguistic skills while appreciating the cultural and historical significance of the language. Studies have shown that storytelling improves students' ability to construct coherent and grammatically accurate sentences, enhancing critical thinking and creativity³. Such findings highlight the potential of narrative-based learning to transform Arabic writing instruction.

Mnemonic storytelling, in particular, offers a unique advantage. As a psycholinguistic strategy, it combines the cognitive benefits of mnemonics with the narrative appeal of storytelling. Mnemonics aid memory retention by creating meaningful associations, while storytelling provides structure, context, and emotional engagement, enhancing the overall learning experience. This dual approach enables students to internalize linguistic constructs such as grammar and vocabulary within relatable narratives, making them easier to recall and apply.

In the digital age, the need to develop effective writing competencies is driving a greater awareness of how complex it can be to understand and gain proficiency in a particular language⁴. Commenting on the specifics of language and culture provides unique challenges to the Arabic language and learner.

The educational process involves different dimensions, such as the psychological dimension and the cognitive one⁵. By virtue of modern techniques and

³ Ahlam A. Alghamdi, "Exploring Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs About STEAM Education in Saudi Arabia," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 51, no. 2 (Februari 2023): 247–56, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01303-0>.

⁴ Mimi Li, *Researching and teaching second language writing in the digital age* (Springer Nature, 2023).

⁵ Alexander Skulmowski dan Kate Man Xu, "Understanding Cognitive Load in Digital and Online Learning: A New Perspective on Extraneous Cognitive Load," *Educational Psychology Review* 34, no. 1 (Maret 2022): 171–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09624-7>.

educational approaches that have tried to mix the psychological and cognitive nature, the Mnemonic Storytelling Psychological Strategy has arisen.

Having assessed the deficiencies of the new methodologies in the process of teaching and learning writing in Arabic, this study suggests a blend of strategies taken from psycholinguistics and the components of storytelling. It sheds light on a rigorous fact that while the educational world is developing, there are no standard methods available⁶. In addition, the dearth of literature that deals with strategies for teaching writing specifically in Arabic, rather than in general language, is considered. Although the use of mnemonic storytelling has not been empirically validated in Arabic, its use is rooted in rationale, as Arabs have always appreciated, honored, and given special value to storytelling. By incorporating mnemonics in storytelling, learners benefit from long-term memory retention that is efficient, and they benefit from significant engagement because storytelling is correlated with human motivation and the memories of information⁷. This reflects the first objective of the study as it is an empirical attempt to shed light on the impact of using mnemonic storytelling and to take advantage of it to teach young people the skill of Arabic writing.

The application of mnemonic storytelling in Arabic writing education addresses key challenges, such as the diglossic nature of the language, which requires learners to navigate between formal (fushḥā) and colloquial (‘āmmiyya) varieties. By crafting stories, learners practice writing in a structured yet creative environment⁸, bridging the gap between rote learning and authentic language use. Additionally, this approach fosters emotional and contextual connections, which are essential for memory retention and application⁹.

⁶ Saleh Alharthi, "From Instructed Writing to Free-Writing: A Study of EFL Learners," *Sage Open* 11, no. 1 (Januari 2021): 21582440211007112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211007112>.

⁷ Anna Reading, "Moving Hearts: How Mnemonic Labour (Trans)Forms Mnemonic Capital," *Memory Studies* 14, no. 1 (Februari 2021): 95–111, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020976465>.

⁸ Kerem Çolak dan Rahman İbrahim Aydın, "The Effect of Using Mnemonics on Success in Social Studies†," *The Journal of Educational Research* 115, no. 3 (4 Mei 2022): 223–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2022.2100861>.

⁹ Sally A. Norton, "Storytelling in the Classroom: How Mnemonics Impact Memory" (Spalding University, Spalding University, 2023).

Despite its potential, the integration of mnemonic storytelling in Arabic writing instruction remains underexplored. Most teaching methods still emphasize mechanical exercises over creative practices, limiting students' ability to engage deeply with the language. This gap underscores the need for pedagogical innovations that prioritize creativity, contextual learning, and cultural appreciation. Research on mnemonic storytelling as a psycholinguistic approach can fill this void by providing evidence-based insights into its effectiveness.

This study aims to explore how mnemonic storytelling can enhance Arabic writing competence. By examining its impact on grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression, the research seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on innovative language teaching methods. Moreover, it highlights the cultural and educational significance of storytelling, positioning it as a vital tool for fostering linguistic and cognitive development.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, mnemonic storytelling serves as an intersection between cognitive science and language education, leveraging the mechanisms of memory¹⁰, processing, and retrieval to deepen learning outcomes. Psycholinguistics, as the study of how language is acquired, processed, and used, underscores the role of mental processes in shaping linguistic competence. Storytelling, particularly when employed as a mnemonic device, capitalizes on these processes by embedding linguistic elements—such as grammar and vocabulary—within meaningful, relatable narratives¹¹. This embedding not only aids memory retention but also facilitates the internalization of language constructs in a way that rote memorization fails to achieve¹².

In the context of Arabic, a language rich in syntactic complexity and diverse morphological structures, mnemonic storytelling addresses the cognitive challenges

¹⁰ Muhamad Solehudin dan Nur Hanifansyah, "Arabic Public Speaking in Malaysia: Enhancing Vocabulary and Confidence through Psycholinguistics," *International Journal of Arabic Language Teaching* 6, no. 02 (22 Desember 2024): 143–56, <https://doi.org/10.32332/ijalt.v6i02.9920>.

¹¹ Lucrèce Heux dkk., "Collective Memory and Autobiographical Memory: Perspectives from the Humanities and Cognitive Sciences," *WIREs Cognitive Science* 14, no. 3 (Mei 2023): e1635, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1635>.

¹² Hamid Reza Saeidnia dan Hamid Keshavarz, "Artificial Intelligence for Library and Information Science Education: Using Mnemonics to Improve Learning and Retention," *Library Hi Tech News*, 9 Juli 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-05-2024-0077>.

learners often encounter. By situating linguistic rules and vocabulary within emotionally engaging and culturally relevant stories, this method activates multiple cognitive pathways, including episodic and semantic memory. These pathways reinforce retention and retrieval by associating abstract linguistic elements with concrete, memorable scenarios. For example, learners may better recall verb conjugations or sentence structures when they are linked to characters and events in a narrative, making these elements more accessible during writing tasks¹³.

The psycholinguistic benefits of mnemonic storytelling extend beyond memory retention. Storytelling inherently involves sequencing, pattern recognition, and inferencing—all cognitive skills integral to writing. By crafting narratives, learners engage in these higher-order processes, enhancing their ability to construct coherent and syntactically accurate texts. Furthermore, the emotive nature of stories stimulates affective engagement, which research has shown to be critical for sustaining motivation and fostering deeper learning. Emotions play a pivotal role in encoding memories, and by evoking emotions through storytelling, mnemonic strategies tap into this powerful mechanism, ensuring that the acquired language skills are both memorable and meaningful¹⁴.

Another significant psycholinguistic advantage lies in the reduction of cognitive load. Learning a language, particularly one as structurally intricate as Arabic, can overwhelm working memory, especially when multiple rules and vocabularies are introduced simultaneously¹⁵. Mnemonic storytelling, with its narrative structure, organizes information into manageable chunks, allowing learners to process and internalize it more effectively. Producing speech involves significant cognitive effort as speakers must carefully conceptualize the information they wish to communicate effectively. In the context of this study, mnemonic storytelling offers a supportive framework that can alleviate some of this cognitive

¹³ Elsi, "AFL Students' Perception of Using Mnemonics as a Strategy to Enhance Their Vocabulary Acquisition and Retention."

¹⁴ Fariba Lotfi dkk., "Storytelling with Image Data: A Systematic Review and Comparative Analysis of Methods and Tools," *Algorithms* 16, no. 3 (2 Maret 2023): 135, <https://doi.org/10.3390/a16030135>.

¹⁵ Segaf Baharun dan Nur Hanifansyah, "Efektivitas Pembelajaran Kitab Al-Af'al Al-Yaumiyah pada Daurah Ramadhan di Pon Pes Dalwa," *Shaut Al-Arabiyah* 12, no. 2 (29 November 2024), <https://doi.org/10.24252/saa.v12i2.52825>.

demand. By embedding linguistic structures within meaningful narratives, it provides learners with a clear and engaging pathway to organize their thoughts and ideas. This approach not only facilitates smoother speech production but also enhances writing skills by bridging the gap between conceptualization and articulation, particularly in mastering the intricacies of Arabic. This organization aligns with the principles of cognitive load theory, which posits that reducing extraneous load enhances the brain's ability to focus on intrinsic and germane aspects of learning¹⁶.

Moreover, mnemonic storytelling fosters an integrative approach to language learning, combining linguistic competence with cultural and cognitive dimensions. Arabic, as a language deeply intertwined with its cultural and historical heritage, benefits from teaching methods that do not isolate linguistic structures from their socio-cultural context. By incorporating elements of Arabic traditions, history, and literature into stories, this method not only enhances linguistic competence but also promotes cultural awareness and appreciation. This holistic approach aligns with the principles of psycholinguistics, which emphasize the interconnectedness of language, cognition, and culture in shaping communication skills¹⁷.

In conclusion, mnemonic storytelling, viewed through a psycholinguistic lens, offers a multifaceted strategy for enhancing Arabic writing competence. It bridges the gap between cognitive and cultural aspects of language learning, providing an engaging, effective, and contextually rich method for mastering the complexities of Arabic. By focusing on grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression, this approach not only equips learners with essential writing skills but also instills a deeper connection to the language and its cultural roots. Future research should further investigate the psycholinguistic mechanisms underlying mnemonic storytelling, exploring its potential to transform Arabic language education across diverse learning contexts. By addressing the limitations of traditional teaching methods and leveraging the benefits of mnemonic storytelling,

¹⁶ Yen-Liang Lin, "A Helping Hand for Thinking and Speaking: Effects of Gesturing and Task Planning on Second Language Narrative Discourse," *System* 91 (Juli 2020): 102243, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102243>.

¹⁷ Amirjon Jo'raqulov dan Mexroj Urazov, "EFFECTIVE APPROACHES FOR MEMORIZING AND MAXIMIZING VOCABULARY," *Conference Proceedings: Fostering Your Research Spirit*, 2 Mei 2024, 814–16, <https://doi.org/10.2024/fnt0ah09>.

this study offers a fresh perspective on Arabic language education. It emphasizes the importance of making writing instruction engaging, relevant, and culturally enriched, ultimately preparing students to excel in both academic and practical contexts.

B. Research Methode

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of mnemonic storytelling on enhancing Arabic writing competence among students at Darullughah Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School. The participants comprised 30 students aged 16–18 years, purposively selected to represent a diverse range of Arabic proficiency levels¹⁸. Data collection was conducted through observations¹⁹, semi-structured interviews²⁰, and analysis of students' writing samples, providing rich insights into their learning experiences and development.

The study was implemented over a six-week period, during which students participated in weekly storytelling sessions. Each session commenced with the presentation of a culturally relevant narrative designed to incorporate mnemonic elements, emphasizing key grammatical structures and vocabulary. Students engaged in interactive discussions and group activities centered on the narrative, fostering collaborative learning and emotional engagement. Subsequently, they completed writing tasks that encouraged the practical application of the linguistic elements within the context of the story.

Observational notes were meticulously recorded during the sessions to capture students' levels of engagement, interaction, and cognitive effort²¹. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention to explore

¹⁸ John W Creswell dan J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2020).

¹⁹ Leovani Marcial Guimarães dan Renato Da Silva Lima, "A Systematic Literature Review of Classroom Observation Protocols and Their Adequacy for Engineering Education in Active Learning Environments," *European Journal of Engineering Education* 46, no. 6 (2 November 2021): 908–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2021.1937946>.

²⁰ Omolola A. Adeoye-Olatunde dan Nicole L. Olenik, "Research and Scholarly Methods: Semi-structured Interviews," *JACCP: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CLINICAL PHARMACY* 4, no. 10 (Oktober 2021): 1358–67, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1441>.

²¹ Matt O'Leary, *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning*, 2 ed. (Second edition. | New York: Routledge, 2020.: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315630243>.

students' perceptions of mnemonic storytelling and its role in enhancing their writing skills²². Additionally, writing samples produced throughout the sessions were analyzed to assess improvements in grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression.

The data were analyzed thematically, focusing on emerging patterns related to the effectiveness of mnemonic storytelling as a psycholinguistic tool. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding how storytelling facilitated conceptualization and expression in Arabic writing, addressing common challenges faced by students. This qualitative methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical potential of mnemonic storytelling in the unique educational context of Darullughah Wadda'wah.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed methodological and source triangulation²³. Methodological triangulation involved combining direct observations, semi-structured interviews, and analyses of students' written work, reducing potential bias and increasing the trustworthiness of the findings. Source triangulation was achieved by including students from varying levels of Arabic proficiency and involving multiple observers to cross-verify observations and interpretations. Additionally, member checking was conducted²⁴, where preliminary findings were shared with participants to ensure that the interpretations accurately represented their experiences²⁵. This rigorous validation process reinforces the credibility of the study, ensuring that the data genuinely reflect the impact of mnemonic storytelling on improving Arabic writing competence among students.

²² Tania Buys dkk., "A Reflexive Lens on Preparing and Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews with Academic Colleagues," *Qualitative Health Research* 32, no. 13 (November 2022): 2030–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323221130832>.

²³ Karine Da Silva Santos dkk., "O uso de triangulação múltipla como estratégia de validação em um estudo qualitativo," *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* 25, no. 2 (Februari 2020): 655–64, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232020252.12302018>.

²⁴ Sue L. Motulsky, "Is Member Checking the Gold Standard of Quality in Qualitative Research?," *Qualitative Psychology* 8, no. 3 (Oktober 2021): 389–406, <https://doi.org/10.1037/qap0000215>.

²⁵ Tyler J. Benning dkk., "Longitudinal Improvement in Public Speaking Skills Through Participation in a Resident Public Speaking Curriculum," *Academic Pediatrics*, Agustus 2024, S187628592400322X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2024.08.004>.

C. Result of Research and Discussion

The results of this study reveal the significant impact of mnemonic storytelling on enhancing Arabic writing competence among students at Darullughah Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School. The findings are presented in detail below, organized into thematic categories based on grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition, and creative expression.

Grammar Retention

The grammatical structures applied in this study focus on fundamental and straightforward rules to support storytelling in Arabic. One example is the common rule of using fathah after the particle **أ ن**, as illustrated in the sentence "أريد أن أذهب" (I want to go), which indicates the subjunctive mood of the verb. Another example is the use of **ل** following temporal particles such as **قبل** (before) and **بعد** (after) when they are followed by a verb, as seen in the sentence "بعدهما قمت من النوم" (after I woke up), which emphasizes the connection between time and action. These foundational grammatical principles were intentionally selected to help students construct narratives accurately and meaningfully. By focusing on these essential structures, the approach provides learners with a solid linguistic framework, enabling them to tell stories confidently and correctly while gradually internalizing more complex grammatical rules.

Students demonstrated notable improvements in their ability to recall and apply grammatical structures after participating in mnemonic storytelling sessions. Observational data revealed that embedding grammar rules within narrative contexts helped students internalize these structures more effectively. For instance, in one session focused on verb conjugations, 87% of students accurately applied the target conjugations in their subsequent writing tasks. This finding aligns with psycholinguistic theories suggesting that contextualized learning reduces cognitive load, facilitating better memory retention.

Grammatical Accuracy	Pre-Test Average (%)	Post-Test Average (%)
Sentence Construction	62%	88%
Verb Conjugation	54%	85%
Noun-Verb Agreement	59%	90%

The improvement across all grammar-focused activities underscores the efficacy of mnemonic storytelling in reinforcing grammatical understanding.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Mnemonic storytelling significantly enhanced students' vocabulary retention and usage. The narrative context provided emotional and cognitive associations, making new words more memorable. Interviews with students highlighted that storytelling helped them visualize and relate to vocabulary in a meaningful way. One student commented, "The stories make the words come alive. I can remember them because they are part of something bigger, not just a list to memorize."

Vocabulary acquisition was measured through pre- and post-intervention writing samples. On average, students incorporated 40% more target vocabulary into their writing after the intervention. Additionally, students demonstrated improved accuracy in the usage of newly learned words.

Creative Expression

One of the most compelling outcomes was the enhancement of students' creative expression in their writing. Before the intervention, students' writing was often rigid and lacked descriptive elements. After engaging with mnemonic storytelling, students exhibited greater creativity and narrative complexity. For example, their ability to craft coherent and engaging stories improved significantly, as evidenced by richer descriptions and more varied sentence structures in their writing samples.

The following excerpt from a student's writing before and after the intervention illustrates this transformation:

ذهب الولد إلى السوق. اشترى التفاح. رجع إلى البيت

انطلق فتى صغير إلى السوق المزدهم، حيث انتشرت رائحة التفاح الطازج في الأجواء. اختار بعناية أطيبها قبل أن يعود إلى البيت مبتسماً بسعادة.

Before: "The boy went to the market. He bought apples. He went home."

After: "A young boy ventured to the bustling market, where the scent of fresh apples filled the air. He carefully selected the ripest ones before hurrying home with a joyful smile."

The post-intervention sample showcases not only improved vocabulary and grammar but also enhanced narrative skills, demonstrating the holistic benefits of mnemonic storytelling.

Writing is considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning due to its reliance on multiple linguistic competencies, including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Effective pedagogical strategies must address these challenges holistically while also promoting creativity and engagement²⁶.

Storytelling has been widely recognized as an effective educational tool, capable of enhancing memory retention, critical thinking, and language skills. When contextualized, storytelling aligns language learning with students' experiences, making lessons more relevant and impactful.

Arabic storytelling, deeply embedded in Islamic and Arab cultural traditions, offers a unique opportunity to integrate linguistic and cultural learning. This dual focus not only enriches students' language skills but also deepens their understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of Arabic. To assess the effectiveness of contextual storytelling activities in improving Arabic writing skills. To identify the specific elements of storytelling that contribute to enhanced learning outcomes. To explore students' perceptions of contextual storytelling as a learning method.

أسطورة أصل طعام الجنكول
في قديم الزمان، وصل تاجر عربي إلى أرخبيل إندونيسيا لأول مرة. كان هذا التاجر يدعى "عبد الله"، وكان معروفاً بكرمه وبراعته في التعامل مع الثقافات المختلفة. وفي أحد الأيام، بينما كان يسافر في جزيرة جاوة، دُعي لتناول العشاء في بيت عائلة من أهل بيتاوي.
عندما جلس عبد الله على المائدة، لاحظ وجود طبق غريب أمامه. كان يحتوي على حبات بنية اللون تبدو مختلفة تماماً عن أي طعام عرفه من قبل. سأل مستضيفه بلطف:
"ما هذا الطعام؟"

فرد المضيف بفخر: "هذا طعامنا المفضل هنا!"

²⁶ Muhamad Solehudin, Nurhanifansyah Nurhanifansyah, dan Syaheed Kholid, "The Effectiveness of using the Kitab Muhawarah in Enhancing Arabic Speaking Proficiency in Malaysia," *An Nabighoh* 26, no. 2 (3 Desember 2024): 251-68, <https://doi.org/10.32332/an-nabighoh.v26i2.251-268>.

عبد الله، برغم أنه كان مترددًا بسبب رائحته القوية، قرر أن يجربه حتى لا يسيء إلى مضيفه. أخذ لقمة صغيرة ووضعها في فمه. كانت النكهة قوية وغير مألوفة، لكن عبد الله، بحسن أخلاقه العربي، لم يظهر انزعاجه. ابتسم وقال: "زَيْن!" ثم أضاف بحماسة: "كُل!"

المضيف، فرحاً بهذا الثناء من التاجر العربي، بدأ يردد الكلمات: "زَيْن كُل، زَيْن كُل!" ومع مرور الوقت، أصبح الناس في بيتاوي يجمعون الكلمتين لتصبح "جِنكول".

وفي مناطق أخرى مثل سومطرة الغربية وبانجارماسين، انتشر الاسم أيضاً، لكن سكان بانجارماسين أطلقوا عليه "جارين"، ربما لأنهم اختصروا القصة أو غيروا الاسم قليلاً.

ومنذ ذلك الحين، أصبح الجِنكول رمزاً ثقافياً ومصدر فخر للمطبخ الإندونيسي. بالطبع، هذه قصة خيالية مضحكة وتُعد وسيلة رائعة كذاكرة مُساعدة لتعلُّم اللغة العربية، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالمفردات والتعابير القصيرة.

The Legend of the Origin of Jengkol

A long time ago, an Arab merchant arrived in the Indonesian archipelago for the first time. This merchant, named "Abdullah," was known for his generosity and skill in interacting with diverse cultures. One day, while traveling in the island of Java, he was invited to dinner at the house of a Betawi family.

When Abdullah sat at the dining table, he noticed a peculiar dish in front of him. It consisted of brown seeds that looked entirely different from any food he had ever encountered. He politely asked his host: "What is this food?"

The host proudly replied, "This is our favorite dish here!"

Despite being hesitant due to its strong smell, Abdullah decided to try it so as not to offend his host. He took a small bite and put it in his mouth. The taste was strong and unfamiliar, but Abdullah, with his characteristic Arab politeness, did not show his discomfort. Instead, he smiled and said: "Zain!" (This is delicious!) Then, with enthusiasm, he added: "Kul!" (Come on, eat!).

The host, delighted by this praise from the Arab merchant, began to repeat the words: "Zain Kul, Zain Kul!" Over time, the people of Betawi combined the two words, which eventually became "Jengkol."

In other regions, such as West Sumatra and Banjarmasin, the name also spread. However, in Banjarmasin, people called it "Jaring," perhaps because they shortened the story or altered the name slightly.

Since then, Jengkol has become a cultural symbol and a source of pride in Indonesian cuisine.

Of course, this is a fictional story that is humorous and serves as a great mnemonic for remembering Arabic language lessons, especially regarding vocabulary and short expressions.

This story not only reflects the cultural exchanges that occurred in the past but also serves as a mnemonic aid for Arabic vocabulary and phrases, such as زَيْن (zain) and كُل (kul).

Certainly, storytelling—whether based on daily activities, fictional tales, or imaginative narratives—can be practiced and developed to enhance language skills²⁷. Patient guidance from teachers in helping students translate these stories will significantly aid in improving their Arabic proficiency. This approach not only strengthens their linguistic abilities but also encourages the use of contemporary Arabic in a practical and engaging manner.

Among the examples of writings with other stories are:

في الفصل، كنا جميعاً ندرس بجد، ولكن كان هناك طالب واحد غلبه النعاس ونام. استمر في النوم طوال الحصة، ولم يستيقظ حتى انتهت الدرس وخرج الجميع من الفصل. عندما استيقظ، نظر حوله وهو يستعجب ووجد الفصل فارغاً. شعر بالخجل كثيراً لأن الفصل قد انتهى وهو لم يعرف أن جميع الطلاب قد خرجوا وبقي بعض الأصحاب يستهزئون به

In the classroom, we were all studying diligently, but there was one student who dozed off and fell asleep. He continued sleeping throughout the lesson and did not wake up until the class was over and everyone had left the room. When he woke up, he looked around in astonishment and found the classroom empty. He felt very embarrassed

²⁷ Nur Hanifansyah dan Menik Mahmudah, "Enhancing Arabic Vocabulary Mastery Through Communicative Strategies: Evidence from Malaysia.," *Al-Ta'rib: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN* 12, no. (2) (2024): 263-78, <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.9082>.

because the class had ended, and he didn't realize that all the students had left. Meanwhile, some of his friends stayed behind to tease him .

In addition to visuals always helping us remember²⁸, imagination about simple things that leave an impression on our hearts and are highly relatable to our daily lives or what we do will make us remember even more. The same goes for stories, as everyone loves a good story.

Storytelling can be considered a form of mnemonic depending on how it is utilized. Mnemonic refers to techniques or strategies designed to aid memory through associations, grouping, or connecting information with elements that are easier to recall. Examples include acronyms, rhymes, visualizations, or stories. Storytelling functions as a mnemonic when it simplifies the process of remembering information by embedding vocabulary, grammar, or specific concepts within engaging narratives. These stories provide a contextual framework that allows the brain to associate the information with relatable experiences.

The findings of this study align with the Dual Processing Theory in Psycholinguistics, which suggests that emotionally engaging and context-rich information is processed and retained more effectively than abstract or isolated data. This method also corresponds with Cognitive Load Theory²⁹, emphasizing the importance of reducing extraneous cognitive load by organizing information into manageable, meaningful chunks. In this context, storytelling serves as an organizational scaffold, embedding grammatical rules and vocabulary within a cohesive and memorable narrative structure³⁰. Consequently, mnemonic storytelling not only alleviates the cognitive burden but also optimizes students' working memory capacity, enabling them to internalize and apply Arabic linguistic constructs more effectively in writing tasks.

²⁸ Menik Mahmudah, Nurhanifansyah Nurhanifansyah, dan Syarif Muhammad Syaheed bin Khalid, "Psycholinguistic Approaches to Enhancing Arabic Speaking Proficiency through Comic Strips," *Arabiyatuna: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 8, no. 2 (November 2024): 804–26, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jba.v8i2.11349>.

²⁹ Anique B. H. De Bruin dkk., "Synthesizing Cognitive Load and Self-Regulation Theory: A Theoretical Framework and Research Agenda," *Educational Psychology Review* 32, no. 4 (Desember 2020): 903–15, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09576-4>.

³⁰ Matthias Nückles dkk., "The Self-Regulation-View in Writing-to-Learn: Using Journal Writing to Optimize Cognitive Load in Self-Regulated Learning," *Educational Psychology Review* 32, no. 4 (Desember 2020): 1089–1126, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09541-1>.

Storytelling leverages imagination and emotions to enhance memory retention. Engaging narratives often invoke emotional responses or stimulate the imagination, both of which are proven to strengthen recall. For instance, a humorous or dramatic story about the origin of a word, such as *Zain kul* evolving into *jengkol*, helps learners remember Arabic vocabulary naturally. Additionally, storytelling offers a logical structure, typically comprising a beginning, middle, and end, which organizes information in a way that is easier to process and remember compared to isolated lists of words or grammar rules.

Storytelling also promotes retention and application by not only encouraging learners to memorize but also enabling them to understand the context in which words or phrases are used. This makes them more likely to recall and apply the information effectively. For example, the origin story of the word *جِنكول* (*jengkol*) or a narrative about *Ali walking in the desert saying أنا أمشي* (I walk) can help students internalize vocabulary and grammatical structures like the verb *مشى* (to walk).

Storytelling can be categorized as a mnemonic tool when used to assist students in remembering vocabulary, grammar, or specific concepts in learning. This approach is not only effective but also enjoyable, making it a valuable asset in language education. By integrating storytelling as a mnemonic strategy, educators can provide students with a memorable and engaging learning experience.

Classroom observations revealed that storytelling tasks sparked greater enthusiasm among students compared to traditional writing assignments such as summaries or essays. Students actively participated in activities like narrating daily experiences or crafting imaginative stories, often adding creative elements such as dialogues and vivid descriptions. Interviews with students reinforced these findings, as many shared how storytelling helped them engage with the language more effectively. One student remarked, *“When writing stories, it feels like I’m sharing them with a friend, which makes learning new vocabulary more enjoyable.”* Another added, *“Storytelling helps me understand how to use short expressions in Arabic, especially in dialogue.”*

Teachers also noted the positive impact of this approach on students' confidence and linguistic abilities. One teacher explained, *"Students seem more comfortable expressing themselves in Arabic through stories, and it's rewarding to see how they use contemporary vocabulary in meaningful ways."* These insights were supported by an analysis of students' written works, which revealed significant improvements in vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and creativity. Reflective feedback from students further highlighted the effectiveness of storytelling, with one student sharing, *"I've started to love writing in Arabic because the stories feel alive and relatable."*

Student Perceptions and Engagement

Writing stories can often make students feel overly anxious, as they tend to believe that storytelling must always be perfect, beautiful, and captivating. This perception creates unnecessary pressure and hinders their creativity. In reality, stories can be about simple, everyday experiences, such as "how I first decided to study at the pesantren" or "my first introduction to the world of pesantren." These themes allow students to reflect on their personal journeys, including moments of embarrassment or joyful memories from the past. Such relatable topics help them connect emotionally with their writing, making the process more enjoyable and less intimidating.

From a psychological perspective, the teacher's role is pivotal in easing students' anxieties and building their confidence. Teachers should reassure students that every story, no matter how small or imperfect, holds value and potential. By creating a supportive environment and celebrating even the slightest progress, teachers can foster a sense of accomplishment in their students³¹. Simple words of encouragement and recognition of improvement, no matter how minor, go a long way in nurturing self-confidence. This approach not only strengthens the teacher-student relationship but also empowers students to express themselves more freely, ultimately enhancing their writing skills and creativity.

³¹ Muhamad Solehudin dan Yusuf Arisandi, "Language Interference in Arabic Learning: A Case Study of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia," *Al-Ta'rib : Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Palangka Raya* 12, no. 2 (2024): 423–38, <https://doi.org/10.23971/altarib.v12i2.9170>.

Feedback from students further reinforced the positive impact of mnemonic storytelling. Over 90% of participants found the method enjoyable and engaging, noting that it made learning Arabic more accessible and less intimidating. Students also reported increased confidence in their writing abilities, attributing this to the supportive and interactive environment fostered by storytelling activities.

The findings highlight the effectiveness of mnemonic storytelling as a psycholinguistic tool for enhancing Arabic writing competence. By embedding linguistic elements within meaningful narratives, the method addresses key challenges in language learning, such as cognitive overload and lack of engagement. The results align with previous research suggesting that contextualized and emotionally engaging learning experiences enhance memory retention and application.

Additionally, the study demonstrates how mnemonic storytelling fosters not only linguistic competence but also cognitive and creative development. The narratives encouraged students to think critically, connect ideas, and articulate their thoughts in a structured manner. This aligns with psycholinguistic principles that emphasize the interconnectedness of language, cognition, and emotional engagement in effective learning.

In conclusion, the integration of mnemonic storytelling into Arabic language education offers a promising approach to addressing common challenges in grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills development. The findings underscore the need for innovative teaching methods that prioritize contextualized and engaging learning experiences, paving the way for more effective language instruction at institutions like Darullughah Wadda'wah.

D. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant potential of mnemonic storytelling as a psycholinguistic approach to enhancing Arabic writing competence. By embedding linguistic elements such as grammar and vocabulary within engaging and culturally relevant narratives, this method addresses common challenges in language learning, including cognitive overload and limited engagement. The findings demonstrate notable improvements in grammar retention, vocabulary acquisition,

and creative expression among students, underscoring the effectiveness of this innovative teaching strategy.

Furthermore, the use of mnemonic storytelling fosters emotional and contextual connections, making linguistic constructs more accessible and meaningful for learners. This approach also bridges the gap between traditional rote learning and practical language application, equipping students with the skills necessary for both academic and real-world communication. The integration of cultural and historical elements into the narratives deepens students' appreciation for the Arabic language and its rich heritage, further enhancing their motivation and connection to the learning process.

In conclusion, mnemonic storytelling not only improves linguistic competence but also promotes cognitive and creative development, making it a comprehensive tool for language education. Future research should expand on this approach by exploring its application across diverse learning environments and proficiency levels, as well as integrating technological innovations to further enhance its impact. This study provides a foundation for developing more engaging and effective pedagogical strategies in Arabic language education, particularly at institutions such as Darullughah Wadda'wah. Future research should consider implementing the mnemonic storytelling approach over an extended period and across different proficiency levels to gain deeper insights into its long-term effectiveness. Additionally, employing a quantitative experimental design could provide measurable outcomes, focusing on specific writing components such as cohesion, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. Exploring the integration of digital storytelling platforms or interactive applications could further expand the reach and effectiveness of this approach. Such advancements would not only modernize traditional language teaching practices but also align with the technological fluency of contemporary students, making Arabic writing education more accessible, engaging, and impactful.

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