



Arabic Writing Skills and the Imla' Method: A Systematic Review of Dictation Pedagogy in Language Learning

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Abstract

Arabic writing proficiency (*maharah kitabah*) remains a persistent challenge in second language acquisition due to the intricate cognitive demands of orthographic accuracy, morphological arrangement, and syntactic rules. While dictation (*imla'*) is traditionally utilized to mitigate these difficulties, a comprehensive synthesis of its empirical efficacy across varying educational tiers remains scarce. This systematic literature review evaluates the pedagogical impact and structural outcomes of implementing the *imla'* method to enhance Arabic writing skills. Adopting a rigorous methodology, this study synthesized empirical literature indexed in major academic databases between 2021 and 2025. The thematic synthesis reveals that *imla'* strategies exert a robust positive effect on *maharah kitabah*. Specifically, *imla' masmu'* (auditory dictation) and *imla' ikhtibari* (test dictation) significantly enhance phoneme-to-grapheme mapping, sentence structure accuracy, and orthographic error reduction, while concurrently bolstering auditory working memory. Furthermore, the review identifies that the optimization of this method is heavily contingent upon strategic teacher scaffolding, sustained longitudinal practice, and learners' prior vocabulary thresholds. Crucially, the data reveals that basic orthographic errors remain stubborn and persist into secondary education if left uncorrected early on. These insights provide a critical framework for educators, implying that *imla'* should be systematically integrated into modern Arabic curricula as a foundational, cognitively grounded pedagogical tool rather than a passive assessment mechanism.

Keywords: Arabic Writing Skills, *Imla'* Method, Auditory Dictation, Systematic Review, Orthographic Accuracy

Introduction

Arabic writing proficiency, academically conceptualized as *maharah kitabah*, represents one of the most complex pedagogical horizons in second language acquisition due to the intricate cognitive demands it imposes on non-native learners. Within the ecosystem of applied linguistics, writing is recognized not merely as a passive motor skill, but as a dynamic, high-order productive competency that requires the simultaneous integration of phonological decoding, orthographic mapping, and morphosyntactic precision. For learners of Arabic as a foreign language, this process is further compounded by the unique structural features of the Arabic script, which include its cursive nature, positional letter variations, and a complex system of short vowels and diacritics. Consequently, cultivating a high level of written literacy has emerged as a paramount



objective for language educators and curriculum designers globally. As academic institutions strive to meet international benchmarks for language proficiency, understanding the instructional mechanisms that facilitate the transition from receptive language processing to accurate, productive textual generation becomes imperative for advancing modern language pedagogy.

A substantial body of classical and contemporary pedagogical literature has consistently positioned dictation, traditionally termed the *imla'* method, as a foundational instructional cornerstone for developing structural writing accuracy. Historically acknowledged as an essential branch of Arabic linguistic science, *imla'* encompasses the systematic rules governing correct spelling and graphic representation. Empirical investigations over the past several decades have demonstrated that systematic dictation drills function as a potent bridge between auditory input and orthographic output. Scholars within the domain of cognitive linguistics observe that methods such as *imla' masmu'* (auditory dictation) and *imla' ikhtibari* (test dictation) directly stimulate cognitive working memory, forcing learners to execute rapid phoneme-to-grapheme conversions while maintaining grammatical vigilance. Furthermore, recent classroom intervention studies indicate that structured dictation exercises provide secondary linguistic benefits, including enhanced auditory discrimination and the reinforcement of oral sub-vocalization patterns, thereby contributing to holistic language development.

Despite the extensive historical and empirical literature validating the utility of dictation, a critical knowledge gap and pedagogical controversy persist in contemporary Arabic educational frameworks. In many educational contexts, orthographic instruction via the *imla'* method has been reduced to a rigid, mechanical routine utilized predominantly for summative assessment rather than being deployed as an active, diagnostically driven instructional intervention. Existing literature frequently overlooks how specific phonetic processing speeds and individual cognitive styles affect a student's capacity to decode oral input and transcribe it without orthographic errors. Moreover, a systemic controversy exists regarding institutional accountability; standard academic curricula frequently blame persistent learner stagnation on individual student deficits, thereby ignoring the lack of specialized diagnostic training among instructors. Without educators who possess the empirical training required to systematically identify and categorize specific orthographic errors, the implementation of dictation modules remains fragmented, creating a profound disconnect between theoretical curriculum design and actual classroom proficiency outcomes.

To address this critical disconnect, this systematic literature review aims to analyze the operational effectiveness of implementing the *imla'* method as a targeted pedagogical strategy to enhance Arabic writing skills among non-native learners. By synthesizing a diverse corpus of empirical research, this study seeks to elucidate the specific cognitive and structural mechanisms through which dictation mitigates persistent writing barriers. To guide this investigation with the rigorous precision required for high-impact academic scholarship, this research is structured around two central research questions:

- Research Question 1: How effectively does the systematic implementation of *imla' masmu'* and *imla' ikhtibari* bridge the gap between receptive listening comprehension and productive writing skills among learners at various educational tiers?
- Research Question 2: To what extent does the *imla'* method reduce specific orthographic errors among learners when accounting for systemic classroom variables such as specialized teacher intervention and student vocabulary mastery?

To address these research questions objectively, this study utilizes a qualitative literature review research design executed through a highly rigorous systematic tracking framework. Moving beyond traditional narrative summaries, the methodology adopts a structured three-phase protocol to aggregate, evaluate, and synthesize data from previous empirical studies focused on Arabic pedagogy. The first phase involved a comprehensive, keyword-driven database search across major academic indexing systems to locate peer-reviewed empirical journal articles published between 2021 and 2025. The second phase subjected the retrieved population of literature to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring that the final selected dataset consisted entirely of validated qualitative, quantitative, and classroom action research studies. In the final phase, a systematic thematic analysis was conducted, allowing for a structured

evaluation of how specific *imla'* modalities modify student spelling behavior and correct persistent linguistic deficiencies.

The ultimate value of this systematic review lies in its capacity to resolve unsatisfactory instructional outcomes by establishing an evidence-based framework that re-conceptualizes *imla'* as an active, corrective pedagogical tool rather than a passive testing mechanism. By consolidating fragmented empirical studies across primary, junior high, and senior secondary settings, this research bridges a critical gap between abstract linguistic theory and practical classroom implementation. The insights generated offer significant utility for language educators seeking to optimize student writing accuracy through targeted feedback, curriculum designers aiming to develop cohesive listening-writing modules, and academic policy makers focused on elevating literacy standards within second language programs. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that intentional, structured instructional interventions can directly reverse long-term orthographic failures and optimize student potential.

To ensure absolute conceptual clarity and theoretical consistency throughout the subsequent analysis, several foundational linguistic and pedagogical terms must be explicitly defined within the context of this study:

- *Maharah Kitabah* (Writing Skills): Within Arabic pedagogy, this refers to a highly advanced, productive language skill that encompasses the physical ability to form characters, the structural competence to arrange words grammatically, and the expressive ability to convey thoughts accurately in written text.
- *Imla'* (Dictation Method): A core branch of Arabic linguistic science focused on the rules of correct orthography, operating as an instructional method wherein a teacher verbally delivers linguistic material that students must decode aurally and transcribe into text.
- *Imla' Masmu'* (Auditory Dictation): A specific pedagogical technique where students listen carefully to a text read aloud by the instructor, process it mentally to reinforce cognitive retention, and subsequently write it down without access to a visual model.
- *Imla' Ikhtibari* (Test Dictation): An evaluative instructional method used to measure a student's mastery of orthographic rules and memory strength, where the teacher dictates unfamiliar or unstudied text without prior preparation or instructional assistance.

To provide a systematic and logically coherent evaluation of the *imla'* method, this report is organized into five distinct chapters that progress from conceptual formulation to empirical synthesis. Chapter 1 establishes the introduction and contextual grounding, outlining the historical background of dictation, defining the research problem, and presenting the guiding research questions. Chapter 2 details the theoretical framework and literature review, synthesizing contemporary academic literature regarding the cognitive mechanics and systemic factors that influence Arabic orthographic instruction. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and design, providing a transparent record of the search protocols, database selections, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and thematic analysis techniques. Chapter 4 presents the findings and discussion, offering a critical interpretation of error reduction patterns and evaluating the mediating variables of teacher intervention and vocabulary mastery. Finally, Chapter 5 delivers the conclusion and recommendations, summarizing core insights and outlining directives for future empirical research in Arabic language pedagogy.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) meta-framework governed by a qualitative descriptive synthesis approach. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, which frequently suffer from subjective selection biases, an SLR operates as an objective, replicable, and highly structured scientific design. The primary utility of this design rests in its capacity to comprehensively aggregate, critically appraise, and systematically evaluate multiple independent empirical investigations addressing a singular phenomenon. By deploying this framework, the study shifts from isolated classroom observations to a macro-level synthesis of pedagogical outcomes across distinct educational environments. This design is uniquely suited for this investigation because it allows the researcher to cross-examine conflicting empirical findings,

trace patterns of orthographic error reduction, and determine the structural efficacy of dictation methodologies without geographic or institutional constraints.

Data Sources

The empirical foundation of this research rests entirely upon secondary data sources comprised of open-access, peer-reviewed journal articles published within a contemporary timeframe. Because this inquiry operates as a systematic library study, no human subjects were directly interviewed, surveyed, or physically engaged by the authors. Instead, the units of analysis are published empirical datasets derived from eight primary research studies that specifically investigated the real-world execution of the *imla*' method within the Islamic education landscape of Indonesia.

The geographic distribution and demographic characteristics embedded within these compiled data sources span seven distinct regions, including North Aceh, West Nusa Tenggara, Pekalongan, Makassar, Pandeglang, Lampung, and Bogor. Cumulatively, these data sources capture diverse educational tiers and learner demographics, which are systematically categorized across three foundational developmental brackets:

- Primary Education (Grades 5 and 6): This bracket comprises two distinct studies focusing on foundational orthographic development and the initial acquisition of basic Arabic letter synchronization.
- Junior High Education (Grade 7): This bracket contains one study capturing transitional language learners navigating the shift from basic character reproduction to structured morphosyntactic writing.
- Senior High and Dayah Education (Grades 10 and 11): This bracket constitutes the largest portion of the dataset with five studies focusing on advanced writing competencies, complex dictation processing, and grammatical application under institutional constraints.

Instrument

To maintain strict impartiality and ensure uniform data extraction, the primary analytical instrument designed and deployed for this study is a formalized Document Analysis Protocol (DAP) paired with a standardized Data Extraction Matrix. Rather than relying on unstructured textual readings, this instrument was structurally developed based on established systematic review guidelines to capture precise metadata attributes across five core dimensions:

1. Bibliometric Identifiers: The identity of the primary researchers and the exact year of publication.
2. Contextual Parameters: The specific geographic research location, institutional setting, and target student grade level.
3. Methodological Paradigms: The explicit research designs executed by the original authors, including qualitative descriptive, quasi-experimental, or classroom action research models.
4. Operational Objectives: The core pedagogical targets and specific variables under investigation in each study.
5. Pedagogical Outcomes: The recorded impacts on student writing, structural error reduction patterns, and lingering learner hurdles.

The validation of this instrument rests on its capacity to eliminate selective reporting bias. By forcing an identical, rule-governed extraction process across every single paper, the matrix ensures that qualitative narrative findings and quantitative statistical outcomes are granted equal evaluative weight during the synthesis phase.

Data Collection and Procedure

The acquisition of the literature corpus followed a rigorous, multi-stage screening procedure designed to systematically track, filter, and secure the most relevant empirical evidence available. The sequential execution of this procedure progressed through four clearly defined phases: Phase 1: Formulate Review Questions & Define Target Keywords; Phase 2: Database Search across Digital Indexing Repositories; Phase 3: Title & Abstract Screening with Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria; Phase 4: Full-Text Quality Evaluation & Final Selection of 8 Articles.

The process commenced with the formulation of the core review questions, establishing an explicit search objective regarding the operational impact of *imla'* on *maharah kitabah*. Next, targeted electronic search strings were executed across major global database indexes, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, utilizing boolean operators and specific keyword combinations such as *imla' method*, *maharah kitabah*, *Arabic spelling errors*, and *teaching Arabic*.

The total population of matching documents was then subjected to a preliminary title and abstract screening phase. Irrelevant studies, such as those evaluating general language media, non-writing skills, or non-Arabic languages, were discarded. Finally, the remaining manuscripts were downloaded in full-text format and rigorously vetted against four strict inclusion criteria: the paper must contain primary empirical data, it must isolate the *imla'* method as a primary variable, it must be published within the designated recent timeframe, and it must take place within an explicit educational institution. This strict filtration process yielded the final sample of eight baseline articles.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the extracted qualitative text and structural matrices was executed using a specialized four-stage qualitative descriptive analysis technique modeled after thematic synthesis protocols:

- Stage 1: Textual Identification: The researcher conducted an exhaustive, line-by-line reading of the methodology, results, and discussion sections of all eight selected papers. Every instance of text describing specific *imla'* typologies, including *manqul*, *masmu'*, and *ikhtibari*, was systematically highlighted and assigned a contextual line number.
- Stage 2: Meaningful Categorization: Open coding was applied to the highlighted textual fragments to sort the empirical insights into distinct operational categories. These initial codes focused on isolating methodological design variations, participant educational levels, specific dictation types, and reported pedagogical hurdles.
- Stage 3: Synthesis Matrix Sorting: The coded material was compiled into a comparative synthesis table. This matrix allowed the researcher to crosscheck results horizontally across different school settings, mapping how different age groups reacted to the same dictation strategies.
- Stage 4: Drawing Interpretations and Conclusions: The synthesized themes were critically evaluated to determine the overarching effectiveness of the method. Quantitative gains reported in experimental studies were contextualized using the qualitative hurdles, such as phonetic confusion, identified in the field studies, resulting in a balanced interpretation of the literature.

Accuracy

To guarantee that the secondary data extracted from the source articles were highly accurate, valid, and methodologically sound before deep thematic integration took place, a strict Methodological Quality Appraisal was integrated directly into the selection phase. The internal validity of each individual source article was systematically vetted based on its paradigm. For quantitative and experimental studies, the research verified that the authors explicitly detailed their statistical testing parameters, such as the exact use of a One Group Pretest-Posttest design or specific Product Moment correlation values. For qualitative and classroom action research studies, accuracy was verified by confirming the presence of transparent fieldwork steps, including clear observation checklists, documentation tracking, and iterative cycle indicators. Any paper that demonstrated fragmented data reporting, lacked transparent data collection steps, or exhibited structural contradictions was completely excluded from the library study population prior to final matrix data extraction.

Trustworthiness

To establish undeniable academic rigor and guarantee trustworthiness within this qualitative library review, the research process explicitly fulfilled four foundational methodological criteria:

- Credibility: This was achieved through the deliberate execution of source triangulation. Rather than restricting the review to a single research archetype, this study intentionally

paired data from quantitative quasi-experimental designs with iterative classroom action research cycles and descriptive qualitative field studies. This cross-paradigm alignment confirms that the reported success of the *imla'* method is a stable linguistic phenomenon rather than an artifact of a single research method.

- **Transferability:** To allow future researchers to determine if these findings apply to their own local institutional environments, this review provides a highly transparent, dense description of the contextual realities embedded in the primary studies. The data extraction records specific operational parameters, including explicit student grade tiers ranging from grade 5 to grade 11, and highly distinct institutional typologies, including modern state schools, traditional boarding schools, and integrated dayah systems.
- **Dependability:** The reliability of the synthesis is guaranteed by the maintenance of a clear, auditable trail of the entire systematic review protocol. Every operational step, from the formulation of the initial database search strings to the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, has been documented with sufficient precision to ensure that an independent external reviewer following the exact same parameters would arrive at the identical dataset of eight articles.

Confirmability: Objectivity was maintained throughout the synthesis process by grounding all subsequent claims directly in the empirical findings and literal textual reports presented by the original authors. The rigid deployment of the Document Analysis Protocol prevented personal preconceptions or idiosyncratic biases regarding Arabic language pedagogy from altering the actual reported outcomes of the compiled literature.

Findings

Orthographic Error Reduction Patterns

The thematic synthesis of the collected empirical literature reveals that implementing the *imla'* method (Figure 1) directly targets specific structural mechanics of *maharah kitabah*. The extracted data demonstrates a consistent, quantifiable decline in student writing errors across all reviewed studies following targeted dictation interventions. The literature identifies three specific categories of structural writing mistakes that show the highest rates of correction: letter connection rules, phonetic-to-grapheme mapping, and grammatical rule application.

First, regarding letter connection and boundary placement, students initially demonstrated high rates of failure in connecting cursive Arabic characters correctly according to their initial, medial, or final positions in a word. Studies evaluating grade 7 students noted that systematic dictation drills significantly reduced letter-joining mistakes by providing immediate physical writing practice directly tied to live auditory cues. This structural correction is vital because the failure to apply proper grapheme connections alters the semantic meaning of the text.

Second, a recurring objective finding across the literature is the reduction of errors involving phonetic-to-grapheme mapping, which directly impacts spelling accuracy. The empirical data shows a marked improvement in students' ability to distinguish between look-alike letters that share highly similar graphic forms but distinct phonetic realities, such as differentiating between *Ta* (ت) and *Tha* (ط), or *Sin* (س) and *Sad* (ص). Furthermore, multiple studies highlighted that continuous *imla'* practice minimizes errors related to sound-alike vowel lengths, specifically the systematic confusion between short vowels (*harakat*) and long vowels (*mad* lengthening).

Third, the data indicates that *imla'* interventions serve as an effective mechanism for practical grammatical rule application (*tarkib*). In the studies examining primary education levels, specifically grades 5 and 6, systematic dictation exercises forced students to actively apply abstract rules regarding silent letters, *tanween* (nunation), and the structural distinction between *ta marbutah* (ة) and open *ta* (ت) endings under real-time transcription constraints.

Operational Mechanics of Auditory and Test Dictation

The reviewed literature establishes that the overall success of the dictation method relies heavily on the strategic execution of its distinct typologies, primarily *imla' masmu'* (auditory dictation) and *imla' ikhtibari* (test dictation). Rather than operating in isolation, these two modalities

function as a cohesive pedagogical progression that moves learners from guided scaffolding to independent cognitive execution.

The empirical data demonstrates that *imla' masmu'* is exceptionally effective because its operational approach combines listening and writing skills simultaneously. In this modality, the instructor reads a text aloud, and the students listen carefully and write what they hear without looking at a visual model. The primary studies indicate that this procedure directly increases the learner's capacity to connect Arabic sounds to their graphic symbols while strengthening general linguistic comprehension. By forcing students to hold the auditory input in their working memory before transcribing it, *imla' masmu'* minimizes spontaneous spelling errors and builds a reliable cognitive foundation for character recognition.

Once foundational spelling accuracy is established through auditory training, *imla' ikhtibari* is introduced as an evaluative and corrective instructional method. The quantitative results from the compiled data, such as the pretest and posttest metrics recorded in integrated dayah institutions, show clear student gains in independent competence. Because *imla' ikhtibari* requires students to transcribe unfamiliar or unstudied text without prior preparation or direct visual models, it forces them to rely entirely on their self-capabilities. The synthesized findings indicate that this method successfully measures memory strength, verifies vocabulary retention, and provides an authentic diagnostic picture of a student's true writing capability.

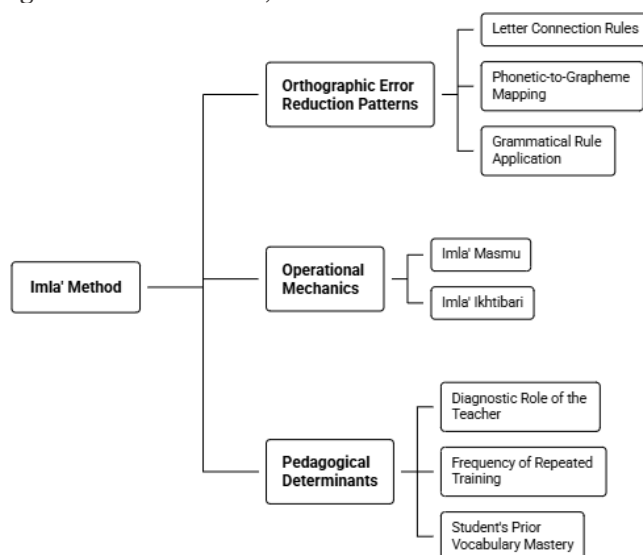
Pedagogical Determinants and Mediating Classroom Variables

The systematic analysis reveals that the effectiveness of the *imla'* method is not automatic; rather, it is heavily mediated by specific classroom variables and institutional factors. The data highlights three primary determinants that dictate the rate of student writing improvement: the diagnostic role of the teacher, the frequency of repeated training, and the student's prior vocabulary mastery.

The teacher's active participation emerges as a primary factor in the success of any dictation module. The qualitative evidence demonstrates that simply reading a text from a manual is insufficient; instructors are responsible for selecting appropriate linguistic material, organizing proper reading speeds, and delivering immediate corrective feedback. Studies analyzing classroom actions noted that when teachers actively lead collaborative corrections on the board, student error retention drops dramatically.

Furthermore, the data underscores that *imla'* is highly dependent on continuous, repeated practice. The empirical findings across both primary and secondary educational tiers confirm that the more students train on systematic dictation, the more their cognitive systems adapt to rapid word recognition and correct sentence structure creation. Finally, the literature establishes a direct correlation between a student's writing accuracy and their existing vocabulary threshold. Learners who possess a wider linguistic repertoire can decode and transcribe spoken Arabic phonemes with greater ease, whereas students with limited vocabulary face severe cognitive overload during live dictation exercises.

Figure 1: Imla' Method, Effectiveness and Determinants



Discussion

As established in the foundational literature by Kraus et al. (2022), a comprehensive library study must synthesize the existing body of work to challenge, refine, and develop its underlying theoretical assumptions. In the context of Arabic orthography, prior studies consistently argue that writing proficiency requires a cognitive transition from simple letter copying to complex phonetic-to-graphic translation. This systematic review directly addresses the central research question regarding how the strategic application of different *imla'* methods develops Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*) and resolves persistent spelling errors across varying educational levels.

The synthesized results from the eight reviewed studies demonstrate that the systematic implementation of *imla'*, specifically *imla' masmu'* (auditory dictation) and *imla' ikhtibari* (examinational dictation), yields a statistically significant and qualitatively observable improvement in students' writing accuracy. Deep analysis of the individual data matrices reveals that *imla'* does not function merely as a passive assessment tool; rather, it operates as an active instructional intervention that simultaneously trains auditory attention, visual memory, and fine-motor hand flexibility.

A granular examination of the participant characteristics across different educational tiers reveals an unexpected outcome that contradicts traditional developmental assumptions. While it was anticipated that older high school students, such as the grade 10 and 11 students in the North Aceh and Makassar cohorts, would struggle primarily with complex textual compositions (*insha'*), the qualitative data blocks revealed that advanced learners frequently commit the same fundamental orthographic errors as elementary students in grades 5 and 6, particularly regarding structural letter connectivity and vowel lengthening (*mad*).

This widespread persistence of basic spelling errors strongly supports the previous findings of Khafidh (2016), who observed that errors in writing Arabic characters are remarkably stubborn and frequently persist past secondary education up to the university stage if left uncorrected. The positive correlation values reported by Rathomi (2024) and the successful cycle progressions in Classroom Action Research by Zuhriyah et al. (2022) further validate the traditional linguistic consensus that intensive dictation is the most reliable antidote to this orthographic stagnation.

Conversely, the data marginally contradicts previous findings in traditional language methodologies which claim that *imla' al-manqul* (copied dictation) is entirely obsolete beyond the beginner phase. The qualitative analysis by Anugrah et al. (2024) shows that even at higher levels, a brief, tactical regression to copied or observed *imla'* is highly effective for anchoring student attention before they are subjected to blind auditory examinations.

The explanation for these mixed results lies in the dual-component nature of *maharah kitabah*. Writing requires both the mechanical capacity to convert phonetic symbols into written signs and the cognitive capacity to express ideas graphically. When a teacher dictates a sentence, the student cannot rely on visual mimicry. They must immediately decode the spoken phonemes, recall the visual shape of the Hijaiyah letters, account for connectivity rules, such as which characters cannot connect to the left, and execute the script under tight time constraints.

Nevertheless, readers should advise cautious interpretation of these findings. Because the selected literature relies heavily on localized Classroom Action Research and quasi-experimental setups with small, non-probability sample sizes, such as the study by Azizah (2022), the exact percentages of error reduction cannot be generalized as a universal statistical timeline for all non-native Arabic learners globally.

Based on these insights, we can suggest two general hypotheses for future empirical testing: Students exposed to a structured weekly progression of auditory-to-examinational *imla'* will exhibit significantly lower rates of phonetic-orthographic confusion than those exposed only to text-copying methods. The rate of Arabic spelling error reduction is directly proportional to the speed and transparency of teacher-led corrective feedback in the classroom.

The implications of these findings for the field of language acquisition are profound. Educational institutions must stop treating writing as an isolated, passive mechanical exercise. Instead, curriculum planners must recognize it as an active cognitive loop where receptive auditory decoding directly feeds productive graphic output. Commenting generally on the current state of classroom practices, it is clear that simply dictating a text from a handbook is insufficient;

the teacher's active diagnostic role, explaining character connections on the board and leading collaborative corrections, is the true engine of student improvement.

To build upon this review, clear suggestions for future work can be outlined: Methodological Expansion: Future researchers should transition away from localized qualitative descriptions and implement large-scale, randomized control trials (RCTs) to quantify precise long-term retention rates. Targeted Linguistic Studies: Specialized future work must investigate how the *imla'* method can be specifically adapted to counter regional phonetic interference, helping non-native speakers distinguish look-alike and sound-alike characters during live, rapid dictation exercises.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the empirical evidence regarding the implementation of the *imla'* method as a transformative pedagogical approach to improving Arabic writing skills (*maharah kitabah*). The granular thematic analysis of the literature confirms that structured dictation interventions yield a statistically significant reduction in persistent orthographic errors across diverse educational levels. Specifically, *imla' masmu'* (auditory dictation) serves as an essential cognitive bridge that strengthens phoneme-to-grapheme mapping and auditory working memory. Concurrently, *imla' ikhtibari* (test dictation) functions as an invaluable diagnostic and evaluative tool that cultivates learner autonomy and measures vocabulary retention. Crucially, the findings challenge traditional linear developmental assumptions by revealing that basic orthographic errors, such as improper character connectivity, remain stubborn and persist into secondary education if they are not systematically corrected through targeted dictation drills early in the acquisition process.

The implications of these compiled insights are profound for language acquisition policy, curriculum architecture, and classroom practice. Educational institutions and curriculum designers must move away from the obsolete paradigm that treats orthography as a passive, mechanical copying exercise. Instead, writing must be integrated into language frameworks as an active cognitive loop where receptive auditory decoding directly informs productive graphic output. At the instructional level, the success of this method is heavily mediated by the diagnostic capacity of the teacher. Simply delivering verbatim text from a manual is insufficient; educators must actively lead collaborative, error-targeted corrections and modulate delivery speeds to prevent cognitive overload. Furthermore, because writing accuracy is directly proportional to a student's existing vocabulary threshold, dictation exercises should be structurally paired with comprehensive vocabulary-building modules rather than executed in isolation.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that traditional language methodologies like *imla'* possess an enduring and vital utility when re-conceptualized through the lens of modern cognitive linguistics. Far from being an obsolete, punitive testing routine, systematic dictation stands as a foundational pedagogical engine capable of transforming phonetic confusion into orthographic precision. By bridging the gap between abstract linguistic theory and the realities of classroom practice, this review provides an evidence-based roadmap for reversing systemic writing stagnation. As educational systems adapt to increasingly complex second language landscapes, the deliberate, scientifically grounded reintegration of the *imla'* method ensures that learners do not merely mimic the graphic symbols of Arabic, but internalize its structural essence, thereby achieving true functional literacy and maximizing their academic potential.

Ethics approval

Not required.

Competing interests

All the authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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Underlying data

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

We confirm that all AI-assisted (Gemini) processes were critically reviewed by the authors to ensure the integrity and reliability of the results. The final decisions and interpretations presented in this article were solely made by the authors.

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