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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Learning Mahārah Kitābah in the Digital Era: Students' Experiences and Challenges in Using Digital Technologies

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the learning of Arabic writing skills (*Mahārah Kitābah*) in higher education, creating new opportunities as well as challenges for students. This study aims to explore students' experiences and challenges in learning *Mahārah Kitābah* through the use of digital technologies at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study involved ten students from the Arabic Language Education Program as research participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that students utilized various digital platforms and artificial intelligence-based applications, including Google Docs, Canva, CapCut, ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, and LanguageTool, to support different stages of the writing process. These technologies assisted students in generating ideas, organizing texts, revising language, developing digital writing products, and presenting their work in more engaging formats. However, students experienced several challenges, particularly in transferring ideas from Indonesian into Arabic, constructing grammatically accurate sentences, and selecting appropriate Arabic vocabulary. The findings also reveal that limited digital literacy and insufficient experience in utilizing educational technologies hindered students from maximizing the potential of digital tools. In addition, limited creativity in developing writing content and digital products remained a significant challenge. Despite these challenges, digital technologies provided students with opportunities to engage in more flexible, interactive, and meaningful writing practices. The study concludes that the integration of digital technologies can enrich *Mahārah Kitābah* learning when supported by adequate digital literacy training, continuous pedagogical guidance, and learning activities that foster creativity, critical thinking, and independent learning.

Keywords: *Mahārah Kitābah*; Arabic Writing; Digital Technologies; Student Experiences; Digital Literacy.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan teknologi digital yang pesat telah mengubah proses pembelajaran keterampilan menulis bahasa Arab (*Mahārah Kitābah*) di perguruan tinggi, sekaligus menghadirkan peluang dan tantangan bagi mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman dan tantangan mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran *Mahārah Kitābah* melalui pemanfaatan teknologi digital di Universitas Ma'arif Lampung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan sepuluh mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab sebagai partisipan penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi pembelajaran, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memanfaatkan berbagai platform digital dan aplikasi berbasis kecerdasan buatan, seperti Google Docs, Canva, CapCut, ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, dan LanguageTool untuk mendukung berbagai tahapan proses menulis. Teknologi tersebut membantu mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan ide, mengorganisasi teks, merevisi penggunaan bahasa, mengembangkan produk tulisan digital, serta mempresentasikan karya dalam format yang lebih menarik. Namun, mahasiswa masih menghadapi sejumlah tantangan, terutama dalam mentransfer gagasan dari bahasa Indonesia ke bahasa Arab, menyusun kalimat yang sesuai dengan kaidah tata bahasa Arab, dan memilih kosakata yang tepat. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa keterbatasan literasi digital dan pengalaman dalam memanfaatkan teknologi pembelajaran menghambat mahasiswa dalam mengoptimalkan berbagai perangkat digital yang tersedia. Selain itu, keterbatasan kreativitas dalam mengembangkan isi tulisan dan produk digital menjadi tantangan yang cukup signifikan. Meskipun demikian, teknologi digital memberikan peluang bagi mahasiswa untuk terlibat dalam praktik menulis yang lebih fleksibel, interaktif, dan bermakna. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi teknologi digital dapat memperkaya pembelajaran *Mahārah Kitābah* apabila didukung oleh penguatan literasi digital, pendampingan pedagogis yang berkelanjutan, serta aktivitas pembelajaran yang mendorong kreativitas, berpikir kritis, dan kemandirian belajar.

Kata Kunci: *Mahārah Kitābah*; Menulis Bahasa Arab; Teknologi Digital; Pengalaman Mahasiswa; Literasi Digital.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to educational practices, including the teaching and learning of foreign languages in higher education. Digital platforms, collaborative writing applications, multimedia tools, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based applications have increasingly provided opportunities for students to access learning resources, construct ideas, receive feedback, revise texts, and present learning products in various formats. In higher education, the integration of technology is not merely intended to facilitate access to information but also to encourage active, collaborative, and self-regulated learning. Technology-enhanced learning environments can contribute to the development of students' digital literacy, self-regulation, and learning experiences when technology is integrated with appropriate pedagogical design (García-Sánchez et al., 2020). Therefore, digital transformation requires higher education institutions to reconsider how language learning, particularly productive skills such as writing, can be developed through meaningful technology-mediated activities.

In Arabic language learning, *Mahārah Kitābah* represents an important productive skill because it involves more than the ability to write Arabic letters correctly. Students are required to formulate

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ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatically accurate sentences, and organize ideas coherently into written discourse. Writing in Arabic is therefore a complex linguistic and cognitive activity that requires the integration of vocabulary, grammar, orthography, sentence structure, and the ability to express ideas logically (Munawarah & Zulkiflih, 2020). The complexity of these components makes *Mahārah Kitābah* one of the challenging areas of Arabic language learning. Previous studies have reported that learners commonly experience difficulties related to vocabulary, sentence construction, grammar, writing conventions, motivation, and limited opportunities for intensive writing practice (Al-Madani et al., 2023). These difficulties indicate that conventional writing instruction alone may not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice, revise, and develop their Arabic writing skills continuously.

The emergence of digital learning environments provides new possibilities for addressing some of these challenges. Digital products can transform writing activities from conventional classroom assignments into more authentic and communicative learning experiences. For example, students can compose texts collaboratively through digital writing platforms, design visual representations of their texts, create videos, and publish their writing products through online platforms. Research on digital-product-based *Mahārah Kitābah* learning has demonstrated that students can develop Arabic academic writing products and engage in digital publication activities through technology-supported learning (Mufidah et al., 2019). Similarly, the use of digital communication platforms has been reported to provide opportunities for students to practice *Mahārah Kitābah* beyond the physical classroom and to facilitate interaction between students and teachers (Sa'diyah, 2021). These findings suggest that digital technology can expand the learning environment for Arabic writing from a teacher-centered activity into a more interactive and participatory process.

The development of artificial intelligence has further expanded the range of digital tools available to language learners. AI-based applications such as ChatGPT can assist students in generating ideas, identifying language problems, revising sentences, expanding vocabulary, and obtaining immediate feedback during the writing process. However, the use of AI in writing instruction should not be understood simply as a mechanism for producing texts. Students need sufficient digital literacy and critical awareness to evaluate, revise, and take responsibility for AI-generated suggestions. Research on AI-assisted writing has indicated that AI tools can provide useful feedback and support students' writing processes, but the quality and appropriateness of such feedback cannot always be assumed and therefore require human evaluation (Yoon et al., 2023). In the context of Arabic writing, recent research has similarly highlighted the potential of ChatGPT to support academic writing while also emphasizing the importance of appropriate pedagogical guidance and critical use of AI tools (Qomariah et al., 2025).

Although previous studies have examined digital technology and AI in Arabic language learning, several gaps remain. First, a number of studies have focused on the effectiveness or implementation of a particular digital platform, while relatively limited attention has been given to students' actual experiences of using multiple digital technologies throughout the Arabic writing process. Second, previous research has frequently examined AI as an instructional intervention, whereas students may use a combination of conventional digital platforms, multimedia applications, AI-based tools, and language-support applications simultaneously. Third, the challenges experienced by students in using such technologies—including linguistic difficulties, limited digital literacy, dependence on technological assistance, and limited creativity in

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developing digital writing products—require further investigation from the students' perspective. Understanding these experiences is important because the availability of technology does not automatically guarantee meaningful learning. The pedagogical value of digital technology depends on students' technological readiness, their ability to evaluate digital information, and the extent to which technology is integrated into purposeful learning activities (García-Sánchez et al., 2020).

In the context of Indonesian higher education, these issues are particularly relevant for students of Arabic Language Education who are expected to develop both Arabic language proficiency and digital competencies. Previous research has demonstrated that technological literacy can support students in improving academic writing and publication practices, particularly when technology is accompanied by systematic guidance throughout the writing and revision process (Supriyadi et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there is still a need to understand how students experience the use of various digital technologies in *Mahārah Kitābah* learning and what challenges they encounter when integrating those technologies into their writing practices. Such an investigation can provide a more contextual understanding of the relationship between digital technology, Arabic writing practices, and students' digital literacy.

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' experiences and challenges in learning *Mahārah Kitābah* through the use of digital technologies at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung. Specifically, the study examines the types of digital and AI-based applications used by students, the ways in which these technologies support different stages of the writing process, and the linguistic, technological, and creative challenges experienced by students. By focusing on students' experiences, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more contextual and pedagogically appropriate digital approaches to Arabic writing instruction in higher education.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore students' experiences and challenges in learning *Mahārah Kitābah* through digital technologies at Universitas Ma'arif Lampung during the 2024/2025 academic year. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices within their natural educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The research participants consisted of ten students from the Arabic Language Education Program who were selected through purposive sampling based on their participation in *Mahārah Kitābah* learning, experience in using digital technologies for Arabic writing activities, ability to operate basic digital devices and online learning platforms, and willingness to participate in the research. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. Interviews explored students' experiences, the types and functions of digital applications used, perceived benefits, linguistic difficulties, digital literacy, and challenges in developing creative writing products. Observations focused on students' writing practices, interactions with digital technologies, revision activities, peer collaboration, and development of digital writing products. Documentation included students' initial and revised Arabic texts, screenshots of digital applications, digital storytelling products, Canva designs, CapCut videos, and other relevant learning artifacts. The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended

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to obtain rich and comprehensive research data and strengthen the credibility of the findings through triangulation (Hennink et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research data were analyzed through a systematic qualitative data analysis process involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were initially organized and coded according to the research objectives. The data were subsequently categorized into six main themes: types of digital technologies used, functions of digital technologies in the writing process, students' experiences and perceived benefits, linguistic challenges, digital literacy challenges, and creativity-related challenges. Thematic interpretation was used to identify patterns and relationships across the participants' experiences, as thematic analysis provides a systematic approach for identifying, organizing, and interpreting meaningful patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The credibility of the research findings was established through data triangulation and member checking. Information obtained from interviews was compared with observation results and students' learning documentation, while selected interpretations were confirmed with participants to minimize misinterpretation and strengthen the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The researcher also maintained ethical principles by informing participants about the purpose and procedures of the research, obtaining voluntary participation, protecting participants' identities, and using all research data solely for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The research findings were obtained from semi-structured interviews with ten students (S1–S10), classroom observations, and documentation of students' Arabic writing activities and digital products. The analysis identified four major themes: (1) students' experiences in using digital technologies for Arabic writing, (2) perceived benefits of digital technologies in the writing process, (3) linguistic challenges in producing Arabic texts, and (4) limitations in digital literacy and creativity. The findings indicate that students used digital technologies as supporting tools at different stages of *Mahārah Kitābah*, including idea generation, drafting, vocabulary selection, text revision, and presentation of writing products.

Students' Experiences with Digital Technologies in Arabic Writing

The interview findings indicate that students used multiple digital applications according to their individual writing needs. Google Docs was mainly used for drafting and revising Arabic texts, while ChatGPT, Gemini, and DeepSeek were used to generate ideas, search for vocabulary, translate expressions, and assist with sentence construction. Canva and CapCut were primarily used to transform written texts into visual and video-based products, whereas LanguageTool was used as an additional language-checking tool.

S1 explained that digital applications were particularly helpful when beginning a writing task. The student reported using ChatGPT and Gemini to obtain initial ideas and vocabulary before attempting to construct the Arabic sentences independently. This indicates that some students used AI as a form of preliminary assistance rather than allowing the application to produce the entire writing product.

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A similar experience was reported by S2, who used Google Docs to prepare and revise the first draft. When encountering difficulties in expressing particular ideas in Arabic, S2 consulted ChatGPT or other digital applications. This suggests that digital tools were integrated into the revision process rather than being used exclusively at the beginning of writing.

S3 emphasized the role of Canva and CapCut in developing the presentation of written work. According to S3, digital applications encouraged students to transform conventional Arabic writing assignments into more attractive products, such as posters and short videos. Observation data supported this finding, as students were observed combining written Arabic texts with visual and multimedia elements.

These findings demonstrate that students tended to combine several applications according to the specific requirements of each stage of the writing process. Digital technologies therefore functioned as complementary resources for planning, drafting, revising, and presenting Arabic writing. This finding is consistent with Mufidah et al. (2019), who found that digital products could be integrated into *Mahārah Kitābah* learning to support the production and presentation of Arabic writing. The finding also corresponds with Zhao et al. (2024), who explain that AI-based technologies can become part of changing writing practices rather than simply functioning as automated text-generation tools.

Perceived Benefits of Digital Technologies

The second theme concerns the benefits perceived by students when using digital technologies. The interview data indicate four major benefits: idea generation, vocabulary development, text revision, and presentation of writing products.

S4 reported that digital applications helped overcome difficulties in initiating a writing task. When students had a general understanding of the topic but were uncertain about what content to develop, digital tools provided examples and suggestions that could be used as starting points for developing their own ideas. This suggests that technology functioned as a form of cognitive support during the planning stage of writing.

S5 emphasized the usefulness of AI applications for vocabulary selection. The student reported that ChatGPT and Gemini could provide several possible Arabic vocabulary choices, after which the student selected the expression considered most appropriate for the intended context. This finding indicates that students did not necessarily accept all AI-generated suggestions but sometimes used them as alternatives for consideration.

The revision stage was also facilitated by digital tools. S6 reported using LanguageTool and other applications to identify aspects of the writing that required revision. The student perceived this process as useful because some errors were difficult to identify independently during the initial writing process. Documentation of students' drafts also indicated that several texts underwent changes between the initial and revised versions.

Digital technology also influenced students' motivation to develop their final writing products. S7 reported greater interest in completing writing assignments when the final text could be transformed into an attractive visual or video product using Canva or CapCut. The observation

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data showed that students paid attention not only to the linguistic content but also to the visual presentation of their writing.

Overall, these findings indicate that digital technologies supported several stages of *Mahārah Kitābah*, from planning and drafting to revision and presentation. This finding is in line with Qomariah et al. (2025), who reported that ChatGPT could assist Arabic language students in aspects of academic writing. However, the present research further demonstrates that students combined AI-based applications with conventional digital and multimedia platforms to complete different writing tasks.

Linguistic Challenges in Producing Arabic Texts

Despite the availability of various digital technologies, students continued to experience significant linguistic challenges. The interview data identified three recurring difficulties: transferring ideas from Indonesian into Arabic, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and constructing grammatically accurate sentences.

S8 explained that the student generally had a clear idea in Indonesian but experienced difficulty expressing the same idea naturally in Arabic. This difficulty was associated with uncertainty about vocabulary and sentence structure. The finding indicates that students' conceptual understanding of a topic did not always correspond to their ability to express the topic in Arabic.

S9 similarly reported difficulties with literal translation. The student could sometimes identify the meaning of individual words through digital translation tools, but the resulting sentence was not necessarily natural or appropriate according to Arabic usage. This suggests that word-level translation alone was insufficient for developing communicatively appropriate Arabic writing.

Grammatical competence also remained a major challenge. S10 reported difficulties related to *nahw* and *ṣarf*. Although digital applications could provide grammatically structured sentences, the student was not always able to explain the grammatical principles underlying those sentences. This finding is important because it demonstrates a distinction between obtaining a correct-looking sentence and developing actual grammatical competence.

The observation of students' initial and revised texts supported these interview findings. Students continued to require assistance with vocabulary selection, sentence structure, grammatical accuracy, and natural Arabic expressions. These findings are consistent with previous research identifying vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, and organization of ideas as important challenges in *Mahārah Kitābah* learning (Al-Madani et al., 2023; Munawarah & Zulkiflih, 2020).

The findings further indicate that digital technologies did not automatically eliminate students' fundamental linguistic difficulties. Instead, technology provided additional resources that could help students address particular problems. Students still required lecturer guidance to evaluate vocabulary, understand grammatical structures, and determine whether translated or AI-generated expressions were appropriate in context.

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Digital Literacy and Creativity Limitations

The fourth theme concerns students' digital literacy and creativity. The interview findings indicate that students' familiarity with digital applications did not necessarily correspond to their ability to use those technologies critically and strategically.

S3 reported that although the student was familiar with ChatGPT, difficulties remained in formulating effective prompts. When the initial response was too general, the student needed to modify the prompt or provide additional instructions. This finding indicates that effective use of generative AI requires more than basic operational knowledge.

S6 also expressed uncertainty about evaluating the accuracy of AI-generated Arabic sentences. The student sometimes accepted AI suggestions because of limited confidence in independently determining whether the suggested sentence was linguistically correct. This finding demonstrates a potential risk of excessive dependence on AI-generated feedback, particularly when students have insufficient Arabic linguistic knowledge to verify the output.

The findings concerning digital literacy are consistent with Robbani et al. (2023), who identified both opportunities and challenges in the use of ChatGPT among Arabic language students. The present research similarly indicates that students need to develop the ability to formulate appropriate prompts, verify information, evaluate language output, and revise AI-generated suggestions rather than accepting them automatically.

In addition to digital literacy, students experienced limitations in developing creative digital products. S7 reported that although Canva provided many templates, the student tended to rely on existing designs rather than develop an original visual concept. S10 similarly indicated that the focus on completing the Arabic writing sometimes resulted in relatively simple digital products.

Observation data also indicated that students' digital products varied in terms of creativity and originality. Some students were able to combine text, images, audio, and video elements effectively, while others relied heavily on ready-made templates. These findings suggest that access to digital applications alone does not guarantee creative learning outcomes. Students require structured assignments and pedagogical guidance that encourage experimentation, originality, and critical reflection.

Integrated Findings

The overall research findings demonstrate that digital technologies provided meaningful support for students' *Mahārah Kitābah* learning. Students used Google Docs for drafting and revision, ChatGPT, Gemini, and DeepSeek for idea generation and language assistance, LanguageTool for language checking, and Canva and CapCut for developing creative digital products. The integration of these technologies enabled students to experience writing as a process involving planning, drafting, revising, and presenting rather than merely submitting a final written assignment.

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that technology cannot replace fundamental Arabic language competence. Students continued to experience difficulties in transferring ideas from Indonesian into Arabic, selecting appropriate vocabulary, constructing grammatically accurate

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sentences, and producing natural Arabic expressions. Limited digital literacy also affected students' ability to formulate effective prompts and critically evaluate AI-generated content. At the same time, limitations in creativity influenced the originality of students' digital writing products.

Therefore, the findings indicate that the contribution of digital technology to *Mahārah Kitābah* learning depends on the interaction between digital tools, Arabic linguistic competence, digital literacy, and creativity. Digital technologies can provide valuable assistance, but students still require systematic pedagogical guidance to evaluate digital outputs, understand linguistic principles, revise their own writing, and develop original digital products. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing that AI-supported writing should be accompanied by critical evaluation and active student engagement rather than passive acceptance of automatically generated content (Qomariah et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2024).

The findings further reveal that the integration of digital technologies has gradually shifted students' writing practices from a product-oriented activity toward a more process-oriented learning experience. Students were not only engaged in producing Arabic texts but also in planning ideas, searching for vocabulary, drafting, revising, receiving digital assistance, and transforming written work into multimedia products. This process encouraged students to become more actively involved in evaluating and improving their own writing. However, the findings also demonstrate that meaningful digital learning requires a balance between technological assistance and students' independent linguistic development. When digital tools were used without adequate understanding of Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and contextual language use, students remained vulnerable to inaccurate translations, inappropriate expressions, and dependence on AI-generated suggestions. Therefore, digital integration in *Mahārah Kitābah* should be positioned as a pedagogical support system rather than a replacement for students' linguistic and cognitive efforts. This finding strengthens the view that effective technology-enhanced language learning requires the integration of technological competence, language proficiency, critical evaluation, and learner autonomy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Qomariah et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2024).

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that digital technologies have contributed to changes in students' learning practices in *Mahārah Kitābah*. Students utilized Google Docs, ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, LanguageTool, Canva, and CapCut to support different stages of the writing process, including generating ideas, selecting vocabulary, drafting, revising, and presenting Arabic texts in digital formats. These technologies transformed writing from a conventional product-oriented activity into a more interactive and multimodal learning experience. Artificial intelligence applications were particularly useful when students experienced difficulties in initiating writing, finding vocabulary, translating expressions, and constructing sentences. However, the findings also show that AI assistance did not automatically improve students' Arabic linguistic competence. Some students were able to obtain suggested sentences but were not always able to explain the

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grammatical principles underlying them. This finding is consistent with Kasneci et al. (2023), who explain that large language models can provide opportunities for personalized learning and academic assistance while simultaneously creating challenges related to accuracy, critical thinking, and learner dependence. Therefore, AI should function as a supplementary resource rather than a substitute for students' own linguistic and cognitive processes.

The research further reveals that students' digital literacy and creativity influenced their ability to maximize the benefits of digital technologies. Although students were generally able to operate several applications, some experienced difficulties in formulating effective prompts, evaluating AI-generated responses, and determining the grammatical and contextual accuracy of Arabic expressions. This finding confirms that digital literacy involves not only technical skills but also the ability to critically evaluate and responsibly use digital information (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In addition, Canva and CapCut provided opportunities for students to develop creative digital writing products, although some students remained dependent on existing templates and had difficulty producing original designs. This indicates that access to digital tools does not automatically produce creativity and therefore requires structured pedagogical guidance. Tlili et al. (2023) emphasize that the educational use of ChatGPT requires critical engagement and appropriate guidance because technological assistance also presents limitations and potential risks. Consequently, the integration of digital technologies into *Mahārah Kitābah* should be accompanied by systematic lecturer guidance in Arabic grammar, vocabulary, AI output verification, prompt formulation, and creative digital production so that technology strengthens rather than replaces students' linguistic competence, creativity, critical thinking, and independent learning.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on these findings, lecturers are encouraged to integrate digital technologies into *Mahārah Kitābah* through structured and pedagogically meaningful activities. Students should be guided to use AI applications as supporting tools rather than as substitutes for their own writing. Particular attention should be given to developing students' ability to verify AI-generated information, formulate effective prompts, revise Arabic texts independently, and understand the grammatical principles underlying the suggested sentences. In addition, learning activities should provide greater opportunities for students to develop creative digital products through platforms such as Canva and CapCut. For future researchers, further research is recommended with a larger number of participants, different educational contexts, and comparative or longitudinal designs to examine the effectiveness of specific digital technologies in improving Arabic writing competence. Future studies may also investigate the relationship between AI-assisted writing, students' digital literacy, creativity, and independent learning in *Mahārah Kitābah*.

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