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## Beyond Mastery: Evaluating Students' English Writing Achievement Based on Minimum Mastery Criteria in an Islamic Elementary School

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### Abstract

*This study evaluates students' English writing achievement based on Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM) in an Indonesian Islamic elementary school. The study addresses the need to critically examine whether students' attainment of mastery criteria reflects actual writing competence among young learners. Employing a quantitative descriptive evaluation design, the study involved 22 second-grade students whose writing scores were collected through classroom-based assessment records. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean score calculation, score distribution analysis, and mastery percentage evaluation. The findings reveal that all students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria of 75, resulting in a 100% mastery rate with a mean score of 87.36. However, further analysis demonstrates variation in achievement levels, with students distributed across minimum, moderate, and high achievement categories. These findings indicate that although all students met the established mastery threshold, writing competence remained differentiated across learners. The study concludes that KKM-based evaluation is useful for measuring baseline achievement but should not be interpreted as a comprehensive indicator of writing proficiency. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to complement mastery-based assessment with broader evaluation approaches to capture more complex dimensions of students' writing development.*

**Keywords:** *English writing achievement; minimum mastery criteria; classroom-based assessment; young learners; Islamic elementary school*

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi capaian kemampuan menulis bahasa Inggris siswa berdasarkan Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) di sekolah dasar Islam di Indonesia. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kebutuhan untuk mengkaji secara kritis apakah pencapaian KKM benar-benar merepresentasikan kompetensi menulis siswa sekolah dasar. Penelitian menggunakan desain evaluasi kuantitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 22 siswa kelas II yang datanya diperoleh melalui dokumen penilaian kelas. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik statistik deskriptif meliputi perhitungan rata-rata nilai, distribusi skor, dan evaluasi persentase ketuntasan belajar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh siswa mencapai KKM sebesar 75 dengan tingkat ketuntasan 100% dan rata-rata kelas sebesar 87,36. Namun, analisis lebih lanjut menunjukkan adanya variasi tingkat capaian, di mana siswa tersebar dalam kategori ketuntasan minimum, capaian sedang, dan capaian tinggi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun seluruh siswa memenuhi ambang batas ketuntasan, kompetensi menulis tetap bervariasi antarsiswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa evaluasi berbasis KKM bermanfaat untuk mengukur capaian dasar pembelajaran, tetapi tidak dapat dipahami sebagai indikator komprehensif atas kemahiran menulis siswa. Oleh karena itu, guru disarankan melengkapi penilaian berbasis KKM dengan pendekatan evaluasi yang lebih luas guna menangkap perkembangan kemampuan menulis siswa secara lebih menyeluruh.

**Kata Kunci:** capaian menulis bahasa Inggris; kriteria ketuntasan minimal; penilaian berbasis kelas; siswa sekolah dasar; sekolah dasar Islam

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## **Introduction**

English language learning at the elementary school level plays a crucial role in developing students' foundational literacy and communication skills (Artini, 2017; Kusumastiti, 2025; Tang et al., 2024). Among the four language skills, writing is often considered one of the most challenging for young learners because it requires the integration of vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, and the ability to organize ideas into meaningful written expressions (Amalia et al., 2021; Hamdani & Abid, 2025; Moses & Mohamad, 2019). In classroom practice, writing is not only treated as a productive language skill but also functions as an important indicator of students' academic achievement in English learning (Ariyanti, 2025; Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Udu, 2021). Therefore, students' writing performance frequently becomes one of the primary considerations in evaluating language learning outcomes at the elementary level.

In Indonesia, the implementation of Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM) serves as a benchmark for evaluating students' learning achievement in schools (Block & Airasian, 1971). The KKM provides teachers with a practical standard for determining whether students have achieved the expected level of competence in a particular subject. In English language learning, particularly writing, the use of KKM is important because it enables teachers to identify students' level of mastery and evaluate classroom instructional effectiveness (Rahim & Mustakim, 2025). However, reliance on numerical scores alone may not fully represent students' actual writing competence because writing involves complex cognitive and linguistic processes beyond simple score attainment.

Previous studies have shown that students' writing achievement at the primary level is strongly influenced by instructional practices, assessment methods, and classroom learning exposure (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2013). Other studies have also emphasized the importance of classroom-based assessment in monitoring students' language development and measuring learning achievement (Chong & Isaacs, 2023; Stoyhoff, 2012). Nevertheless, most previous studies have primarily focused on teaching strategies, writing development, or general learning outcomes, whereas limited attention has been given to how mastery-based assessment such as KKM reflects differentiated writing competence among young learners. Furthermore, studies examining English writing achievement in Indonesian Islamic elementary school contexts remain relatively limited.

This gap indicates the need for a more focused evaluation of students' writing achievement based on mastery criteria. Understanding not only whether students achieve the KKM but also how achievement is distributed across different performance levels is essential for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of classroom learning outcomes. In addition, evaluating students' achievement through authentic classroom assessment data can provide important insights into how mastery-based evaluation operates

in actual educational practice (Praseeda, 2025; Rennert Arie, 2020; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024). Such analysis is particularly important because complete mastery of minimum standards does not necessarily indicate uniform or advanced writing proficiency among learners.

Therefore, this study evaluates students' English writing achievement based on Minimum Mastery Criteria in an Indonesian Islamic elementary school. Unlike previous studies that generally describe students' writing achievement descriptively, this study critically examines the distribution of students' mastery levels and interprets the pedagogical meaning of mastery-based achievement in the classroom. The study aims to identify students' overall writing achievement, determine the proportion of students who achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria, and analyze the distribution of students' writing performance based on classroom assessment data.

## Methods

This study employed a quantitative descriptive evaluation design (Creswell & Creswell David, 2018; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2019) to examine students' English writing achievement based on Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM). Quantitative descriptive research is appropriate for describing and interpreting numerical data to identify patterns and trends without manipulating variables (Furidha, 2024; Lim, 2025). Descriptive statistical analysis was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe patterns of classroom achievement rather than examine causal relationships or statistical significance. The study was conducted in an Indonesian Islamic elementary school involving 22 second-grade students categorized as young learners. A total sampling technique was employed, as all students in the classroom were included in the study.

The data consisted of students' English writing scores obtained from classroom-based assessments conducted by the teacher during the semester. The writing assessments included vocabulary exercises, sentence completion, simple sentence construction, and short written responses designed to measure students' basic writing ability (Cooper, 1984; McMillan, 2012). The writing assessments were scored based on classroom assessment criteria established by the teacher, including vocabulary accuracy, sentence formation, spelling, and task completion. Each task was evaluated according to students' ability to produce correct and understandable written responses appropriate to their grade level. Data were collected through document analysis by examining official classroom assessment records. Content validity was ensured through the alignment between classroom instructional objectives, assessment tasks, and the Minimum Mastery Criteria used in the classroom evaluation process.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical techniques to calculate the mean score, highest score, lowest score, and score distribution in order to describe students' overall writing achievement. The mean score was calculated using the following formula (Block & Airasian, 1971; McMillan, 2012):

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

where  $\bar{X}$  represents the mean score,  $\sum X$  refers to the total students' scores, and  $N$  represents the total number of students. In addition, the mastery percentage was calculated using a classical mastery formula commonly employed in educational evaluation (Block & Airasian, 1971; McMillan, 2012):

This formula was applied by dividing the number of students whose writing scores reached or exceeded the Minimum Mastery Criteria of 75 by the total number of students

$$\text{Mastery Percentage} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of Students Meeting KKM}}{\text{Total Number of Students}} \right) \times 100\%$$

in the class, then multiplying the result by 100 to obtain the percentage of mastery. For example, if all 22 students achieved scores of 75 or above, the mastery percentage would be calculated as  $(22/22) \times 100 = 100\%$ . The results were interpreted descriptively to evaluate the overall level of students' writing mastery in the classroom. To ensure data reliability, the researcher cross-checked the assessment records with the classroom teacher and maintained students' anonymity throughout the research process.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students demonstrated satisfactory English writing achievement when evaluated based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/KKM) established by the school. Based on the classroom assessment data obtained from 22 second-grade students, all students achieved scores equal to or above the KKM threshold of 75. This finding indicates that all students successfully met the minimum expected standard of English writing achievement at their grade level. To provide a clearer overview of students' achievement, Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the writing scores.

Table 1. Students' English Writing Achievement Based on Minimum Mastery Criteria

Category	Result
Number of Students	22
Highest Score	100
Lowest Score	75
Mean Score	87.36
Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM)	75
Students Achieving KKM	22
Mastery Percentage	100%

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of the class was 87.36, which exceeded the KKM by 12.36 points. The highest score achieved by students was 100, while the lowest score was 75, indicating that even the lowest-performing student still met the expected

mastery criterion. From a classroom assessment perspective, these findings suggest that students generally demonstrated positive achievement in English writing activities.

However, the findings should not be interpreted solely from the perspective of mastery percentage. Although all students achieved the KKM, the distribution of scores indicates variation in students' writing performance. This suggests that mastery achievement does not necessarily represent uniform writing competence among learners. Some students only met the minimum expected standard, whereas others demonstrated considerably higher achievement levels. To further clarify the variation in students' achievement, Table 2 presents the distribution of students across achievement categories.

Table 2. Distribution of Students by Writing Achievement Level

Achievement Level	Score Range	Number of Students
Minimum Mastery	75–79	8
Moderate Achievement	80–89	7
High Achievement	90–100	7
Total		22

As presented in Table 2, eight students were categorized in the minimum mastery level, seven students were categorized in the moderate achievement level, and seven students achieved high performance scores. This relatively balanced distribution demonstrates that although all students fulfilled the minimum mastery criterion, students' writing achievement remained differentiated across performance levels. The presence of eight students in the minimum mastery category is particularly important because it indicates that more than one-third of the class achieved only the baseline standard rather than demonstrating strong or advanced writing performance.

This finding highlights an important issue regarding the interpretation of KKM-based achievement. In many classroom contexts, students who achieve the KKM are often considered equally successful. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that mastery-based evaluation may oversimplify the complexity of students' writing competence. Writing ability involves not only the ability to achieve minimum scores but also the development of vocabulary usage, sentence construction, accuracy, and the ability to express ideas effectively in written form. Therefore, students who achieve scores at the minimum mastery level may still require additional instructional support compared to students who demonstrate higher levels of achievement.

The findings further suggest that students' achievement may be closely related to the alignment between classroom instruction and assessment tasks. The writing assessments used in this study included vocabulary exercises, sentence completion, simple sentence construction, and short written responses. These activities focused primarily on foundational writing skills appropriate for young learners. As a result, students may have

achieved high scores because the assessment tasks reflected classroom learning activities that had been repeatedly practiced during instruction.

This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that classroom-based assessment can effectively measure students' mastery of instructional objectives when assessment tasks are aligned with classroom teaching activities (Graham et al., 2022; Hyland, 2023). Nevertheless, high performance in structured classroom-based writing tasks does not necessarily indicate broader writing proficiency. Students may perform successfully in guided writing activities while still experiencing difficulties in more independent writing situations that require idea development, creativity, and textual organization.

Another important implication of the findings concerns differentiated instruction. Since students demonstrated varying levels of achievement despite universal mastery, teachers should move beyond pass-fail interpretations of classroom achievement. Students who remain at the minimum mastery level may require reinforcement of basic writing skills, while students in higher achievement categories may benefit from more challenging writing tasks to support further language development. Therefore, mastery data should be interpreted not only as evidence of achievement but also as an important basis for instructional planning and classroom support.

At the same time, the findings of this study should be interpreted within the scope of the research context. Since the data were derived from classroom-based assessment records in a single classroom setting, the findings specifically reflect students' achievement in relation to teacher-designed writing tasks and classroom expectations. Consequently, the results should not be generalized as representing students' overall English writing proficiency beyond the observed classroom context.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students successfully achieved the expected level of English writing mastery based on the established Minimum Mastery Criteria. However, the study also emphasizes the importance of critically interpreting mastery-based achievement because complete mastery of minimum standards does not necessarily indicate homogeneous or advanced writing proficiency. Accordingly, KKM-based evaluation should be understood as a useful indicator of baseline learning achievement rather than a comprehensive measure of students' overall writing competence.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that students in the observed classroom demonstrated satisfactory English writing achievement based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria established by the school. All 22 students achieved scores equal to or above the KKM threshold of 75, resulting in a 100% mastery rate and a mean score of 87.36. These findings indicate that students successfully attained the expected minimum standard of English writing achievement in the classroom context.

However, the findings also reveal that complete mastery of the Minimum Mastery Criteria should not be interpreted as evidence of uniform writing proficiency among learners. Although all students achieved the required mastery threshold, the distribution of

scores across minimum, moderate, and high achievement categories demonstrates differing levels of writing competence within the classroom. The presence of students at the minimum mastery level suggests that achieving the KKM does not necessarily indicate advanced or equally developed writing ability.

Therefore, while KKM-based evaluation is useful for monitoring baseline learning achievement, it should not be treated as a comprehensive indicator of students' overall writing proficiency. Teachers are encouraged to interpret mastery data critically and to complement classroom-based evaluation with broader assessment approaches that can capture more complex dimensions of students' writing development. In addition, the findings highlight the importance of differentiated instructional support to address students' varying levels of writing achievement and learning needs.

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