

## Student Progress Tracing of Arabic Learning: A Qualitative Investigation of Speaking Skills Formative Evaluation in Islamic Elementary School

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### Abstract

*Formative evaluation of Arabic language proficiency plays a crucial role in identifying students' progress in the learning process, particularly in speaking skills or maharatul kalam. The aim of this study is to explore the implementation of formative evaluation on Arabic speaking skills in the third-grade class of SDIT Harapan Bunda Manado. The research adopts a qualitative approach with data collected through interviews with Arabic language teachers and observations in three different classes. The findings indicate that the types of speaking skills tests implemented in this school align with the principles of Arabic language teaching for beginners. The formative evaluation method of maharatul kalam includes reading texts aloud and identifying vocabulary words presented by the teacher. This evaluation is conducted formatively throughout the learning process. Both evaluation methods aim to measure students' reading, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery as a foundation for developing more complex Arabic language skills in subsequent levels. Interactive evaluation, utilizing varied technologies and approaches, enables teachers to provide constructive feedback and customize learning according to individual student needs.*

**Keyword:** Formative Evaluation, Arabic Teaching, Speaking Skills.

### Abstrak

Abstrak Evaluasi formatif terhadap kemahiran berbahasa Arab memiliki peranan penting dalam mengidentifikasi perkembangan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran, khususnya dalam kemahiran berbicara atau *maharatul kalam*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi penerapan evaluasi formatif terhadap kemahiran berbicara Bahasa Arab pada kelas 3 SDIT Harapan Bunda Manado. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara dengan guru mata pelajaran Bahasa Arab dan observasi di 3 kelas berbeda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jenis tes kemahiran berbicara yang diterapkan di sekolah ini sesuai dengan prinsip-prinsip pengajaran bahasa Arab untuk tingkat pemula. Jenis tes evaluasi formatif *maharatul kalam* yang digunakan adalah membaca teks secara nyaring dan tes menyebutkan kosa kata yang ditunjukkan oleh guru. Evaluasi ini dilakukan secara formatif selama proses pembelajaran. Kedua metode evaluasi ini bertujuan untuk mengukur kemampuan membaca, pengucapan, dan penguasaan kosakata siswa sebagai dasar untuk mengembangkan kemahiran berbahasa Arab yang lebih kompleks di tingkat selanjutnya. Evaluasi yang dilakukan secara interaktif, dengan memanfaatkan teknologi dan pendekatan yang bervariasi, memungkinkan guru untuk memberikan umpan balik yang konstruktif dan menyesuaikan pembelajaran sesuai dengan kebutuhan individual siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** Evaluasi Formatif, Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab, Kemahiran Berbicara

## INTRODUCTION

The assessment of learning outcomes holds significant importance in educational environments, serving as a vital component within the broader spectrum of the learning journey (Arifin, 2012; Hula, 2021; Jundi, 2023c). Evaluation provides educators with invaluable insights into the effectiveness of their teaching approaches, the depth of student comprehension, and the overall academic accomplishments achieved across diverse educational landscapes. Through systematic evaluation of learning outcomes, educators can pinpoint areas of proficiency and those requiring enhancement, thereby informing instructional strategies aimed at optimizing student learning experiences (Suryadi & Husna, 2022).

Assessing learning outcomes provides a comprehensive insight into individual student progress and the overall effectiveness of educational programs (Hasibuan & Jundi, 2023a, 2023b; Jundi & Ali, 2023). This process allows educators to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse student needs and learning preferences, thereby creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Hasibuan, Fitriani, et al., 2023; Pinto et al., 2012). Moreover, by analyzing assessment data, teachers can identify any gaps in curriculum delivery or areas requiring additional support, empowering them to make well-informed decisions to optimize learning outcomes (Hajizadeh et al., 2023; Hasibuan, Haerullah, & Fitriani, 2023; Ridho, 2018). Additionally, evaluation serves as a means of accountability, enabling educational stakeholders to assess the overall effectiveness of educational initiatives and allocate resources accordingly (Ananda, 2017). Prioritizing the evaluation of learning outcomes allows educational institutions to continuously improve their practices and ensure the provision of high-quality education that prepares students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in an ever-evolving global context (Ali et al., 2023; Hasibuan et al., 2024).

In evaluating Arabic language learning, there are two productive skills: speaking skill and writing skill (Golkova & Hubackova, 2014; Namaziandost & Esfahani, 2018). Productive language skills refer to individuals' ability to generate or convey meaning to others, both speaking and in writing. Both of these skills play a crucial role in language learning, with one of them, speaking skill, being a significant focus of analysis. Speaking skill, as part of productive language skills, tends to be simpler than writing skills. Evaluating speaking skills in Arabic language learners can be done through various types of tests tailored to individual proficiency levels, ranging from beginner to advanced levels.

The evaluation of Arabic speaking skills is a crucial aspect of the language learning process (Hasibuan et al., 2024). This skill enables students to express themselves orally using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2021). The evaluation of Arabic speaking skills is conducted to assess students' ability to practice these skills, both in monologue and dialogue. Assessment may cover various aspects such as pronunciation accuracy (*makhraj*), vocabulary mastery (*mufrodāt*), correct grammar usage (*qowaid*), fluency in speaking, and the ability to communicate effectively. This evaluation can be conducted through various methods such as oral presentations, conversations, group discussions, or specially designed oral tests (Arifianto et al., 2021; Zaharo, Hangkiho, et al., 2024). The evaluation results provide valuable feedback for teachers and students to identify areas that need improvement and adjust learning strategies to ensure the continuous development of Arabic speaking skills (Ramadhanti et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have been conducted in recent years on the topic of this research. First, research by Ramadhani emphasized the importance of prioritizing a communicative approach in evaluating speaking skills (*maharatul kalam*). It highlights that in assessing students' speaking abilities, an approach focused on effective and meaningful communication should be prioritized (Ramadhani, 2018). Second, a study focusing on the

evaluation of Arabic speaking skills of students at Madrasah Aliyah found that the evaluation conducted by teachers is in line with the students' skill levels. This indicates that the evaluation conducted has been adjusted to the level of students' speaking skills at the Madrasah Aliyah level (Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2021). Third, a study revealed that in evaluating speaking skills at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Gembuk I, both test and non-test techniques were applied. The test technique in learning evaluation was applied well, especially in *maharah kalam* learning. However, non-test techniques have not been implemented effectively and are only carried out at the initiative of the teacher (Heriyanto, 2023).

Based on the review of the aforementioned previous studies, this research holds a distinct position among others. This study is aimed at exploring in-depth the implementation of speaking skills evaluation using beginner level speaking skill tests at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School Harapan Bunda. The implications of this research are to enhance our understanding of the effectiveness of speaking skills evaluation at the elementary level, particularly in the context of Arabic language teaching in elementary education environments. The benefits of this research can assist in identifying effective evaluation methods and provide insights for curriculum development and teacher training in improving Arabic speaking skills at the elementary level.

## **METHOD**

The main goal of this study is to explore the implementation of Arabic speaking skills assessment for basic level at Integrated Islamic Elementary School Harapan Bunda. With a specific focus on this aspect, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the evaluation of basic speaking skills for elementary students. Using a qualitative research approach (Rahardjo, 2023), this study enable a comprehensive understanding of the Arabic assessment process in elementary school settings (Afifuddin & Saebani, 2012; Ainin, 2016).

To gather data, this research employs two primary methods: observation and interviews (Rahardjo, 2011). Through observation, researchers directly observe the implementation of Arabic speaking skills assessment for basic level in 3 classes of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade consisting of 27 students each. Alongside observation, interviews are used to provide deeper insights into teachers' responses in implementing this evaluation. The data analysis process in this study utilizes qualitative methodology, employing an interactive analysis approach (Rahardjo, 2023; Sugiyono, 2016). This interactive method facilitates active engagement with data from the initial stages of data collection, allowing researchers to continuously reflect on their findings and refine their understanding throughout the research process. By adopting this approach, the study aims to ensure accuracy and reliability in its analysis while also promoting continuous learning and improvement.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Speaking Skills Tests as Productive skills**

Speaking is an important language activity in daily life, following listening activities. Humans learn to speak through hearing language sounds, which eventually enable them to master speaking skills. Speaking skills are part of the performance skill dichotomy (Rahmawati, 2021). Speaking skills heavily depend on the level of language complexity to be articulated, as oral language teaching entails varying levels of difficulty (Hasibuan & Fitriani, 2023). Speaking tests can generally be conducted in controlled or free formats. The purpose of speaking skills tests is to measure students' ability to use Arabic language as a means of oral communication. It is expected that students can communicate ideas, thoughts, and understand their

interlocutor's speech (Hilmi, 2019). However, various challenges are often encountered in achieving this goal (Nurlaela, 2020).

The learning objectives of Arabic speaking skills in current times have adopted a communicative approach, emphasizing systematic attention to the functional and structural aspects of language (Jundi & Hasibuan, 2023). In this regard, the learning objectives of Arabic speaking skills are for students to communicate fluently in Arabic in accordance with applicable rules. The main basic competency of Arabic speaking skills learning objectives is for students to be able to convey information orally in simple discourse forms (Ainin, 2018). Therefore, Arabic speaking skills learning is designed using various strategies and approaches (Mahbub & Tauhidiah, 2022).

Recognizing that learning evaluation is an integral part of the education process, as it is inseparable from learning-teaching activities, it is important to note that evaluation is also a crucial moment for making decisions related to learning outcomes, understanding student progress, and designing and improving previous learning programs (Alfianor, 2022). Therefore, in the context of speaking skills evaluation (*maharah kalam*), an evaluation formula adaptable to students' educational levels is required. This implies that in the learning process, there needs to be adjustment of evaluation techniques that can be applied at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, both in the learning and evaluation stages (Agel et al., 2021).

Beginner-level Arabic speaking skills tests encompass several types. Firstly, repetition or imitation, where students are asked to repeat utterances dictated by the teacher or recorded in the form of words or sentences. Secondly, reading aloud memorized texts, where students recite aloud one or several sentences from short passages in the Quran, hadiths, or Arabic phrases they have memorized. Thirdly, naming objects, where the teacher prepares several objects shown to students, who are then asked to name the objects in Arabic. Fourthly, reading texts, where the teacher provides material corresponding to previously taught texts, allowing students to practice accurate pronunciation. When assessing text reading, the teacher focuses only on pronunciation assessment, without incorporating questions such as I'rab or comprehension of the reading content to the students (Enramika, 2022; Matsna, 2018).

Besides the four types of tests mentioned above, there are other types for Beginner-level Speaking Skills Tests. The fifth type is completing or perfecting sentences. Students are given sheets containing incomplete sentences, and their task is to pronounce and complete the sentences. To achieve the test's objective, students should first be given a reading test that will be tested, so they can accurately complete the sentences presented by the teacher during the test. The sixth type is oral correlation (grammar). The teacher mentions example sentences in Arabic, and students are asked to make similar sentences with appropriate pronouns. For example: "يتناول الطالب الفطور" will become "قرأ الطالب الكتاب" or "فتح الطالب الباب". The seventh type is oral pattern sentence transformation, where students are asked to change positive sentences into negative ones, active into passive, from statements into questions, from past tense verbs to present or imperative forms, from singular to plural or collective forms, and so on. The eighth type, students are tested in responding to questions orally. The teacher asks several simple questions, such as about students' identities, residences, parents, and so on. Students are asked to

answer these questions. When evaluating students' answers, the examiner's attention should first be directed to the accuracy of students' pronunciation, then to the adequacy and completeness of the answers provided (Enramika, 2022; Matsna, 2018).

Beginner-level speaking tests also include several other types. The ninth type is generating questions from a phrase. The teacher presents a phrase and asks students to create questions based on that phrase orally. For example, the phrase "أذهب إلى المدرسة في يوم الإثنين حتى يوم الجمعة" can generate questions like "متى تذهب إلى المدرسة?". The tenth type, students are asked to create new expressions based on a given stimulus phrase. Students will be asked to produce other sentences related to the given sentence. For example, if given the phrase "الحقبة البيضاء", students can generate sentences like "ليس لي حقبة سوداء" or "أحب الحقبة البيضاء". Lastly, in this type of test, the teacher asks students to provide information. Students are asked to narrate information they know, for example, about their daily activities at home, using vocabulary, phrases, and sentences they have mastered (Enramika, 2022; Matsna, 2018).

### **Implementing Speaking Proficiency Tests for Beginner Levels**

The Arabic language teacher implements evaluation methods in the form of speaking proficiency tests for beginners in the learning process. These tests aim to measure students' ability to read Arabic texts and identify named objects within the text. The evaluation is conducted based on the principles of formative assessment, which is carried out continuously throughout the learning process to monitor students' understanding and skills development. Therefore, both types of tests are administered on various occasions during the learning process. These evaluation methods aim to provide constructive feedback to students and assist teachers in adapting learning materials according to individual student needs and abilities. Thus, the use of speaking proficiency tests in Arabic language learning at the beginner level is an important strategy in supporting the effective achievement of learning goals.

The testing of Arabic text reading proficiency is an essential step in the learning process that should not be overlooked (Amirul Amin et al., 2023). Although sometimes deemed trivial, the importance of accurate and proper reading in Arabic language is fundamental. This is because correct reading serves as the primary foundation for effective Arabic speaking skills (Hasibuan, Fitriani, et al., 2023). By emphasizing accurate pronunciation and paying sufficient attention to Arabic sentence pronunciation, it is hoped that students can develop good habits and become accustomed to proper pronunciation standards. Consequently, students will be better prepared to face more complex Arabic language skills in subsequent learning stages.

In classroom implementation, teachers deliver texts to students through available textbooks. Subsequently, teachers guide learning activities by encouraging students to read the text both in groups and individually alternately. This approach enables teachers to identify weaknesses or errors that students may make, thus enabling them to provide constructive feedback to improve their understanding and skills in the future. This procedure creates a dynamic and responsive learning environment, where interactions between teachers and students, as well as among peers, can enrich their understanding and learning experiences.

The second type of evaluation in assessing Arabic speaking skills at this level is by naming objects indicated or shown. This evaluation emphasizes mastery of *mufradat* (vocabulary) as one of the crucial aspects of Arabic language learning (Jundi, 2023b; Jundi & Ali, 2023). Mastery of *mufradat* is an indispensable foundation for an Arabic language learner (Ridwan & Awaluddin, 2019; Sa'diyah, 2018). In this context, the focus is not only on vocabulary mastery but also on proper pronunciation skills. When teachers indicate an object or show a picture, it is expected that students can name the Arabic word corresponding to that object. However, it is not just about naming words but also about pronouncing them correctly and fluently being essential in Arabic speaking evaluation.

The application of evaluation like this bears resemblance to the vocabulary drilling method employed in Arabic teaching in Islamic boarding schools (Elbaghdadi et al., 2023; Kadir et al., 2023). Students are taught by directly pronouncing what the teacher mentions or what the teacher points to. Such real-world application provides significant learning experiences for students. Certainly, with consistency and patience, students' vocabulary mastery can be enhanced and strong Arabic language environment can be build (Dalle & Jundi, 2021a, 2021b; Kadir et al., 2023). From here, it can be inferred that the method of naming objects indicated or shown can be applied as both a teaching and evaluation method.

In the implementation process of the test type that requires students to name objects indicated or shown in class, teachers employ various strategies. This includes using the test in various activities, including quizzes, games, or comprehension tests after explanations. This approach allows teachers to assess students' understanding interactively and deeply. Furthermore, the teacher also integrate this test type into technology by utilizing platforms such as Kahoot. The integration of technology into the learning process not only increases student engagement but also provides a more interesting and interactive learning experience (Fitri & Hasibuan, 2024; Hasibuan, Haerullah, & Machmudah, 2023; Siregar et al., 2023). Thus, this approach enables teachers to create a dynamic learning environment and facilitate holistic student understanding.

The evaluation method applied by Arabic language teachers using a formative approach is highly appropriate. Formative evaluation is an assessment process conducted continuously throughout the learning process. Its aim is to monitor student progress, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and provide constructive feedback (Bloom & Others, 1971; Fatmawati et al., 2023; Zaharo, Chamidah, et al., 2024). Thus, teachers can adjust learning strategies according to individual student needs (Azis & Lubis, 2023; Coughlan et al., 2019). This formative evaluation is in line with the principles of language learning that emphasize continuous process and individual adjustment (Sari et al., 2024).

Based on the theories presented earlier, the author argues that the types of speaking proficiency tests conducted at this school are in line with the principles of Arabic language teaching for beginners. Speaking proficiency tests that require students to read texts aloud and to name *mufradat* (vocabulary) indicated by the teacher are two appropriate types of tests to evaluate students' speaking skills at the beginner level.

The speaking skill tests, namely oral reading and vocabulary naming, aid in developing students' innate language learning abilities, aligning with Noam

Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device (LAD) theory positing humans possess an innate capacity for language acquisition (Chomsky, 1995; Nabila & Jundi, 2023; Wargadinata et al., 2021). These tests contribute to honing such inherent abilities through direct exposure to the target language, in line with the meaningful input principle in Second Language Acquisition theory (Al-Harbi, 2019; Krashen, 1982; Zghair, 2018). Oral reading enables students not only to practice reading skills but also to enhance pronunciation and intonation in Arabic.

Meanwhile, the vocabulary naming test conducted by the teacher proves effective in assessing students' lexical mastery, in accordance with VanPatten's Input Processing Theory emphasizing the necessity of effectively processing input before producing output in the target language (VanPatten, 2004). This theory underscores the importance of proficient vocabulary and pronunciation in facilitating effective language input processing, thereby aiding students in producing output (speaking or writing) in subsequent stages. Mastery of vocabulary and accurate pronunciation lays a robust foundation for advancing speaking skills in subsequent stages (Hasibuan & Siregar, 2023).

Within the realm of Arabic language learning, the necessity for an effective assessment instrument becomes even more pronounced, particularly concerning the measurement of students' comprehension of vocabulary (Jundi, 2023a; Nabila & Jundi, 2023). As vocabulary comprehension constitutes a fundamental aspect of language acquisition and proficiency development (Alobaydi et al., 2017; Alqahtani, 2015; Jundi, 2023b; Muhamad et al., 2023), the need for a robust assessment tool becomes apparent. Such an instrument must accurately gauge students' grasp of Arabic vocabulary, thereby facilitating their language learning journey and ultimately enhancing the quality of Arabic language education.

Furthermore, the implementation of these tests in classrooms involving interactions between teachers and students, as well as among peers, fosters a dynamic and responsive learning environment. This aligns with Interactionist theory, emphasizing the importance of interaction in the language acquisition process (Salaberry, 1997). Interaction enables students to receive immediate feedback, rectify errors, and adjust their understanding, fostering the negotiation of meaning—a critical component in the interaction theory.

The integration of technology such as the Kahoot platform in Arabic language assessment processes provides significant added value. This aligns with Multimedia Learning theory proposed by Mayer, suggesting learning is more effective when information is presented through a combination of words and images or animations (Mayer, 2002). Utilizing Kahoot allows the presentation of evaluation materials in an engaging multimedia format, thus enhancing students' motivation and engagement in the learning process.

In conclusion, the types of speaking skill tests implemented in this school, namely oral reading and vocabulary naming, align with the standard kalam skill test for beginners. These tests not only assess reading proficiency and lexical mastery but also aid in developing pronunciation, intonation, and overall Arabic language comprehension. Moreover, the implementation of tests involving interaction between teachers and students provides a conducive learning environment for students' language development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that the types of speaking skills tests conducted in this school align with the principles of Arabic language teaching for beginners. The types of speaking skills tests that require students to read texts aloud and identify vocabulary (*mufradat*) presented by the teacher are two appropriate types of tests for evaluating students' speaking abilities at the beginner level. This evaluation is carried out formatively during the learning process to monitor students' understanding and abilities. Meanwhile, the vocabulary test is conducted by showing objects or pictures to students and asking them to correctly pronounce Arabic words. Both evaluation methods aim to measure students' reading, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery as the basis for developing more complex Arabic language skills at the next level. Interactive evaluation, utilizing technology and varied approaches, allows teachers to provide constructive feedback and tailor learning to individual student needs.

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